

PARANOIA XP

PARANOIA

//Service Pack One//



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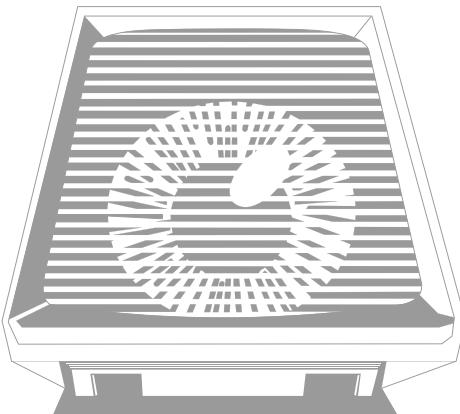
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**WELCOME, CITIZEN, TO ALPHA COMPLEX.
WELCOME TO YEAR 214 OF THE COMPUTER.
WELCOME TO...**

PARA HIA

//Service Pack One//



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TM

NOIA

XP



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Based on material published in previous editions of **PARANOIA**: the first edition (published in 1984 by West End Games) and the second edition (published in 1987 by West End Games). None of this material is 'open game content' this version, **PARANOIA XP**, as well.

Note on pronoun usage: The Computer suggests any citizen concerned about this game's usage of 'he' for the generic third-person pronoun, instead of 'he or she,' should attend to more important matters, such as serving The Computer with fervent loyalty.
E-mail questions and comments about this game to sales@mongoosepublishing.com, or write to PO Box 1018, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 1DG, UNITED KINGDOM. Visit us on the World Wide Web: www.mongoosepublishing.com.

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PARANOIA XP — Service Pack 1

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Now commencing **PARANOIA...**

SECURITY CLEARANCE INFRARED— CLEARED FOR ALL CITIZENS

May I be of assistance?

Sure. Why don't you tell me how this roleplaying game works?

I'm sorry, citizen. That information is not available at this time.

Huh? Most games are really eager to teach you the rules.

Not **PARANOIA**. In **PARANOIA** you don't know the rules. You don't know who your enemies are. You don't know how your equipment works. You're never sure why you're doing anything. One thing you do know: Everyone is out to get you.

Ignorance and fear; fear and ignorance. These are your watchwords.

Uhh... The back cover says something about a computer.

In **PARANOIA** you play a Troubleshooter in service to The Computer. Trust The Computer! The Computer is your friend! You are The Computer's trusted agent and protector of Alpha Complex, The Computer's underground city of the far future.

Why am I a Troubleshooter?

You turned in a friend for treason. The Computer had him executed for betraying Alpha Complex. The Computer rewarded you for your loyalty.

Now you root out all traitors and apprehend or execute them. You uncover corruption among The Computer's servants and turn them in to Internal Security. You find trouble, and you shoot it.

What's a 'traitor'?

A traitor is a malevolent human citizen who has betrayed his friend The Computer and seeks to destroy The Computer, Alpha Complex, humanity and life as we know it. You must unmask and destroy all traitors. Watch out! Traitors are everywhere!

Mutants are traitors. These genetic freaks have uncontrollable abilities they selfishly use for their own advancement, rather than to serve Alpha Complex. You must subdue or eliminate them.

Members of **secret societies** are traitors. In organizations unsanctioned by The Computer they conspire irresponsibly to undermine the good order of Alpha Complex. You must destroy them.

By the way... you are a mutant, and a member of a secret society. You are a traitor.

Wait, I'm a traitor?

That is correct. Your fellow Troubleshooters would be eager to unmask you as a traitor and execute you. You work with many Troubleshooters. They all carry powerful weapons.

Let me get this straight. My job is to hunt and kill traitors. I work with other people who have the same orders. They all want to kill me?

Not quite. They all want to kill *traitors*. They don't know you're a Commie mutant traitor. Yet.

If they find out?

They'll apprehend or kill you, as any right-thinking citizen would. Of course, if you convict them of treason *first*, The Computer will have them executed, and you may survive. Note, though, false accusations of treason are themselves treason.

So I want to prove they're traitors before they can prove I'm a traitor. If I don't, I die?

Precisely. Dead traitors cannot testify to their own innocence, or to your guilt. It is convenient to be the last Troubleshooter on your team left alive.

The good news is, Troubleshooters routinely get shot, stabbed, incinerated, mangled, poisoned, blown to bits, and occasionally stapled, so you have many opportunities to ensure your teammates meet their just end.

Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy!

...Are you sure this will be fun?

Certainly, citizen! Fun is mandatory. The Computer says so, and The Computer is your friend. Do you doubt The Computer? Doubting The Computer is treason.

Uh! No, certainly not. If The Computer says fun is mandatory, then this certainly will be fun. Only a Commie mutant traitor could believe otherwise.

Excellent! You're getting the idea. As a sign of its trust, The Computer promotes you to Security Clearance RED. Welcome to **PARANOIA**.

Attention, player!

Obtain paper and a pencil. Obtain one 20-sided polyhedral die, available in hobby stores. Obtain three to six other players, one of whom will be the Gamemaster (GM) who runs the game.

Whether or not you are familiar with the concept of roleplaying games, read the **Non-example of play** later in this introduction. If you are already familiar with other roleplaying games, also read the **boxed text** titled 'What You Must Forget.'

Now you may begin to play **PARANOIA**. True, you know nothing about the game yet. This is acceptable and even desirable for **PARANOIA**.

If you insist, you may read all of the **Player section**, which begins on page 7 and ends on page 48. It teaches a bit about the **PARANOIA** setting, how to create your Troubleshooter character, and *nothing at all of any importance* about the rules of the game. The Player section section is classified Security Clearance RED. You are now a Troubleshooter with Clearance RED, so you may read this section without fear of execution.

The rest of this book—the **Gamemaster section**, **Sourcebook** and **Mission**—is classified Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. This is above your clearance, so you are not permitted to read it. Only the Gamemaster, the person who runs the game, may read it. If you read any Gamemaster material, or display any knowledge of its contents during play, you are a traitor and subject to summary execution.

Of course, you paid for this nice book and would like to get your money's worth, so naturally you'll read it anyway. Don't tell your Gamemaster you did. Pretend you haven't read it. If he asks, look him straight in the eye, cross your heart, spit over your

shoulder and promise you have *never*, ever read the book and you have no intention of doing so. Of course he will believe you.

By the way—and this is for real—**don't read the mission!** No, really, don't. A mission is a story the Gamemaster will inflict—*run* for your characters. If you know all the plot details and surprises in advance, you'll have less fun when you play.

Attention, Gamemaster!

Oh fortunate one, most trusted of The Computer's servants, you are Clearance ULTRAVIOLET and therefore may read this entire book. Read the Player section first so you know what your players know, then read the rest. You don't have to memorize anything; **PARANOIA** is a game of freewheeling improvisation, and you can revise, upgrade, ditch or bluff about any rule as you go along. Players can't argue with you—they're not allowed to show they know the rules.

The Player section includes rules for creating Troubleshooter characters. However, the first few times you play, we suggest you give your players the pregenerated (ready-made) characters in the Mission section. Photocopy these characters and hand them out to your players before you begin their mission.

The first time you run **PARANOIA**, use the mission provided in this book. This is an unusual game, and by using the mission, you'll see how to do things. Later you'll devise your own missions to delight and torment your players.

Attention, longtime players and Gamemasters!

Citizen: Friend Computer!

The Computer: At your service!

Citizen: Please tell what happened when you Crashed in the *Crash Course Manual*, and how you came back, and what happened to Alpha Base.

The Computer: Your request is senseless. The Computer has never Crashed. There is no such place as Alpha Base. Any statement to the contrary is a rumor. Rumors are treason.

Citizen: But what about the Secret Society Wars, and MegaWhoops, and Reboot Camp?

The Computer: The **PARANOIA** products that refer to these fictitious events have never existed. They are now un-products. You have experienced bizarre hallucinations.

Be reassured! Due to highly advanced engineering and multiply redundant systems, your friend The Computer cannot Crash. It is impossible. The Computer cannot fatal exception error.

[Feedback squeal, followed by a long pause.]

Citizen: Um... Friend Computer?

Computer: *[Happy xylophone tune.]* Welcome to **PARANOIA** XP. Please press Control-Alt-Delete to log on.

The first edition (1984) and second edition (1987) of **PARANOIA** were, of course, perfect. The Computer says so. This edition is even *more* perfect. Entirely new character creation and rules systems make the game more like what it really is. To improve efficiency and fun, characters from previous editions



INTRODUCTION

CLEARANCE INFRARED

are completely incompatible with the new rules. Other (non-fun) games would offer a character conversion system. In *PARANOIA* XP no conversion is required, because older characters could not possibly have survived this long.

PARANOIA XP re-emphasizes the darkly humorous tone of the game's first edition while retaining the fast-paced, rules-light approach of the second. This edition also offers three play styles, each with its own tone and sometimes slightly different rules.

- ① If you've discussed your fondest memories of *PARANOIA*, did you speak of frenzied firefight fiascos in briefing rooms, elevators and sewers? Multiple deaths in Research & Design before the mission began? Did you use the phrase 'giant radioactive mutant cockroaches'? Of course you did. The *Classic* play style retains these elements.
- ② Experienced players may also like the more restrained *Straight* style, which gives Troubleshooters a halfway decent chance to survive (gasp!) through several missions.
- ③ To initiate new players into the pleasures of Alpha Complex, try *Zap*, a fast and frantic shoot-em-up where no one gets out alive.

Non-example of play

Nearly every published roleplaying game (RPG) starts with an explanation of how an RPG works. We Famous Game Designers used to skip reading these, until we realized they tell a lot about the designers' philosophy. Many RPGs describe roleplaying as 'it's "let's pretend," but with rules.' Others call it a deeply emotional collaboration in storytelling. Some offer scholarly and arcane discussions of Gamist, Narrativist and Simulationist RPG philosophy. Some indie games even compare roleplaying to laying down tracks in a hot jazz band.

We like all these descriptions. *PARANOIA* is somewhat like all of them, in a non-jazz-band sort

of way, but it's also different. *PARANOIA* is also something of a psychological exercise.

Because of this, we won't tell you how to play, unless you're cleared for it. We won't even show you an example of play for this game. Instead, here's an example from some other game.

PARANOIA is set in a high-tech future underground city of lasers, robots, cloned citizens and an insane Computer. This game has no character classes—no warriors, wizards, priests or rogues—no magic and, aside from the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach, no monsters.

Yet, that said, a good way to dramatize the unique nature of *PARANOIA* is to imagine another RPG's familiar dungeon crawl filtered through the paranoid mindset.

If Popular Fantasy RPG™ worked like PARANOIA

Gamemaster: You're in a long dungeon hallway with a dirt floor, stone walls and an arching stone ceiling. There are burning torches in wall sconces every ten feet. You see one door.

Warrior player: What color is the stone?

GM: Sort of orange.

Rogue player: Aah! I'm only Clearance RED! Get me out of here!

Priest player: I'm casting *Mass raise security clearance* to make us all ORANGE. [Passes note to the GM: I'm also casting *Subvert to Communism on the warrior*.]

Wizard player: I'm using the Gem of Memory to document the priest's spellcasting. I, uh, may want to study his technique later.

Priest: Of course, of course. [Looks significantly at the rogue, whom he subverted earlier. The rogue nods and passes a note to the GM. The GM rolls a 20-sided die (1d20).]

GM: All right. You're all ORANGE for the moment and can pass safely down the hallway. Your orders, you recall, were to investigate the door. [Passes note to warrior: You feel a strange, treasonous impulse to overthrow the existing social order and restore power to the people.]

Warrior [*Gulps*]: Come, Comra— fellow heroes, let us break down the door!

Wizard: Wait! Did you almost call us 'Comrades'? That's a Commie word!

Priest: Of course he didn't. I heard nothing of the sort.

Rogue: Nor I. Are you leveling false accusations against our leader? That's treason.

Wizard: Don't anybody move! I'm not only leveling accusations, I'm leveling my Wand of Fireballs against all three of these traitors. By the way, I'm recording all this with the Gem of Memory.

GM: When you reach for it, you notice the Gem is missing.

Rogue: Uh-oh! You've lost a valuable magical item. That'll mean a heavy fine at the guildhall.

Wizard: I'm firing a fireball at all of them!

GM [*Rolls a 20-sided die*]: I'm sorry, it appears your experimental Wand of Fireballs has backfired. In a trice you are immolated in a ball of flame. Fortunately the fire is orange, so at least your charred body hasn't breached its proper security clearance. Scratch one wizard. Your next simulacrum has been dispatched from the guildhall and should arrive shortly.

Wizard: You bastards are gonna pay.

GM: No comments from the currently dead, please. Suddenly the door opens. A huge hobgoblin in leather armor stands there with his broadsword drawn. On his chest you see the mark of a silver hand.

Rogue: I attack him with—

Warrior: Wait! I wave my fingers at him from under my chin.

Priest and rogue: What?

GM: The hobgoblin nods at your recognition signal and lowers his sword. He waves you all inside. Who's going in first?

Warrior, priest and rogue [*Pointing at each other*]: Him!

...And so on. To repeat, none of the traditional fantasy elements in this example resemble anything in Alpha Complex, the underground city of *PARANOIA*. At this point you know nothing much about Alpha Complex.

Keep it that way. You may live longer.

What you must forget

If you have prior experience with other roleplaying games, this is regrettable but can be overlooked. However, it is mandatory to abandon the following notions, which interfere drastically with the *PARANOIA* experience:

1. **Solidarity among characters or players.** Other (non-fun) RPGs exhort you to do your part in the adventuring party, split the loot equally, avoid internal strife and generally play good little scouts. In *PARANOIA* this trusting behavior will get you killed six times in six minutes. Trust no one, especially your fellow players.
2. **The quest for weapons and loot.** Other games reward your efforts with treasure, cool new powers and ever more damaging attacks. Most powerful weapons in *PARANOIA* are experimental. You'll learn quickly not to trust experimental weaponry. You have a mutant power, but it too is hard to control and prone to backfires. The Computer rewards successful missions with credits, which you can spend on a variety of useful or gratuitous possessions—but only if you're cleared to own them.
3. **Shaping a complex personality.** In other games you can craft a highly individual character of emotional depth, who grows and changes over time in fascinating ways. In *PARANOIA* it is unwise to grow attached to your Troubleshooter, whose lifespan is typically measured in days, if not hours. The Computer prizes conformity; interesting or outlandish behavior is not actually illegal but always suspicious. Instead of plumbing depths of character, experience the game's atmosphere. You'll probably enjoy the game more if you treat your Troubleshooter as a stand-in for your own hopes, schemes and fears.
4. **Comprehensive attributes, skills and combat options.** Many other RPGs have elaborate character creation, movement and combat systems. These games offer a well-designed character a broad range of control in almost any situation. In *PARANOIA* you have no control. The Gamemaster decides all details of movement, combat and the environment. Your character survives entirely at the pleasure of the GM, who shields you from other players so long as you do entertaining things. Entertain or die.

The GM tells you what you see. You say what you want to do. The GM tells you what happens. You don't try to optimize your tactical advantage; instead, you want the best *dramatic* advantage. The most entertaining character wins; put on a good show and Fate will smile on you. You'll enjoy watching the boring characters die like—well, like Troubleshooters. Won't that be fun?

Of course it will. Fun is mandatory.

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Until today you were **just another Clearance INFRARED worker**, working a low-pay job for one of **The Computer's** service firms. For a hundred credits a month you did light drudgework in a food vat, bot maintenance facility, reactor control room or clone tank.

The work was dull. Meals consisted of microwaved Hot Fun pouchmeals, extruded ropes of Cold Fun and a bag of algae flakes, washed down with CoffeeLike, TeaSir or the occasional Bouncy Bubble Beverage. You slept in a different bunk each night in the communal barracks. It was loud as a boiler room. It smelled like turpentine. You got skin rashes and ringworm. Still, you drifted along blissfully in a haze of free HappiTide medication.

Then **you reported another INFRARED's treasonous behavior** to your friend The Computer. In recognition of your service, **The Computer promoted you to RED Clearance**, awarded you 1,000 credits and your own quarters, authorized a reduction in sedation, and granted a token treasure from the high-clearance hydroponic gardens: **an apple**.

A real apple.

**Security Clearance RED
WARNING:**
*Knowledge or possession of this information
by any citizen of Security Clearance INFRARED
constitutes treason punishable by summary execution*

Eating that apple—the first time you'd ever tasted actual food!—you realized **people at higher clearances eat like this all the time.**

Thinking clear thoughts—the first time you'd done that, too—**you burned with a new desire:** to live better than you have. **To get ahead.**

The Computer told you the name of that variety of apple: Red Delicious.

CLEARANCE
RED

- ◆ **Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!**
(Clearance RED)
- ◆ **Troubleshooter Central**
(Clearance GREEN)
- ◆ **Mission Status**
(Clearance INDIGO)
- ◆ **Contact Troubleshooter Central**
(Clearance ULTRAVIOLET)

Psst! Click [here](#)!

You're on HPD&MC Friendship Network!
[<http://RED.hpdmc.aaa/WelcomeTShooter.01>]

Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!

Orig 1.0 date 3.11.16/14:15:04.6
Rev 843.7 211.06.30/22:56:09.1

Many Troubleshooters before you have loyally served Alpha Complex and The Computer. It is now your honor to follow in their glorious struggle—stained with blood but never treason!—in helping The Computer achieve its imminent and inevitable victory over Communism.

Keep the heroic sacrifices of your predecessors ever in mind. Emulate their bravery against overwhelming odds. Use every bone and sinew, every drop of blood in your struggle, as they did. Let their ultimate immolation on the pyre of steadfast devotion be your example.

It will be fun!

Victory is Near!

Every Junior Citizen envies the exciting life of a Troubleshooter. Supporting The Computer's 'Great Complex' initiative (*replaces completed Happiness Initiative 'Trust Can Be Fatal'* per HPD&MC dispatch HPD211.06.25/25 rev 6, Clearance RED), rooting out traitors and mutants, protecting helpless citizens from terror, corruption and subversion—this is more than the stuff of nightcycle vidshows. This is your high duty. This is why you are alive.



◆ Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!

(Clearance RED)

◆ Troubleshooter Central
(Clearance GREEN)

◆ Mission Status
(Clearance INDIGO)

◆ Contact Troubleshooter Central
(Clearance ULTRAVIOLET)

Psst! Click [here](#)

Heads up, flunky! Just wanted to hack in some secret notes about your upcoming hose-job in the Trouble-victims. Don't let on to the high-colors (they like you stupid) but these tips may keep you alive long enough to spend your first mission bonus.

—Norm-O, Leet Phreak

IF YOU ARE READING THIS YOU ARE ALREADY COMPROMISED. IntSec sniffers in the walls. Monitoring all transmissions of this text and receiver's coordinates. IntSec on your case is worse than bad Sandallathon. Ditch this readout, skip fast!

209.10.22 Hacked a sweetheart subroutine for IntSec sniffers, now logs bogus coordinates and UV clearance. Nobody smart checks them. —HappyClone

INTSEC PLANT DON'T TRUST HIM
IT'S TRUE STOP READING THEY ARE
ALREADY ON TO YOU

hey i know happy - probably did throw off intsec but he probably hacked this readout to steal your me card too watch out

Welcome, Luck

Orig 1.0 date 3.11.16/14:15:04.6
Rev 843.7 211.06.30/22:56:09.1

Many Troubleshooters before you have loyally served Alpha Complex and The Computer.

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It will be fun!

Victory is Near

Every Junior Citi-

exciting life

Supporting

Complex' in

Happiness Initia-

HPD&MC dispa-

Clearance RED

MIKE-U LIVES! Read first letter each sentence. Even Computer knows! Mike-U-BCE-5 finest clone ever / tried to overthrow Comp & free us all / join PURGE keep Mike-U-5 memory alive! I DREAMED I SAW MIKE-U LAST NIGHT—

Dear Vatslime Traitor and Total Nullwit With Lead-Brain Mutation! This code obviously refers to Mike-U-BCE-6, heroic defector of Alpha Complex, not Mike-U-5, damnable heathen apostate. Memorialize true heroes! Join First Church of Christ Computer Programmer, for The Computer maketh me to lie down in a soft haze of happiness.

Mike-U-5 and Mike-U-6 both led the revolt. Computer offered them both but needed 'hero'. Get truth in pamphlet *Lies The Computer Taught Me and Make Credits Fast Through Multi-Clearance Marketing*. Wear Teela-O pin on left overall strap. We will contact you.

Anyone who thinks putting an algae wafer on his tongue means he's gonna get 'saved' and uploaded to The Computer's databases forever is a few bugs short of clean code. Corpore Metal offers us a clean practical path to the next stage of evolution. Give up your meat!

Oh yes indeed, toddle off and live forever as a scrubot and forget the negligible achievements of Old Reckoning humanity: Amadeus MossHart, Frank Loyola Wright, Pikasso, World War II of the Rings, Microangelo, King Stephen, Currier Ives, The Cowsills. One less uncultivated meatbrain merely makes life less stressful for Romantics who cherish our elevated past. For a delightful taste, check the attached file, a profound and enigmatic text that evokes the magic of centuries past. It's called *Webmaster in a Nutshell*.

mutants, protecting helpless citizens from terror, corruption and subversion—this is more than the stuff nightcycle vidshows. This is your high duty. This is why you are alive.

oops think i deleted attachment. was hoping it told about new drugs. anyone got venslimamine? leave under NE table in mess hall 242 vcj sector. leave contact info, will pay you 1000 credits twosday. —must go head hurts—

Born in Crisis, Tested Under Fire

No matter how many stories you've heard at your current or previous security clearance about Mike-U-BCE-5 and -6, the truth about these legendary High Programmers and the origin of the Troubleshooters is more wonderful still.

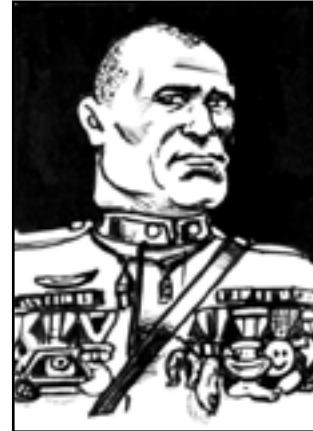
Originally diligent INFRARED workers in the earliest years of The Computer, the Mike-BCE clone family earned The Computer's trust, and Mike-BCE-5 and -6 both rose in clearance to the illustrious ranks of the High Programmers. Heed their example! Earn The Computer's trust and you, too, may aspire to the highest service!

During his honorable early career, Mike-U-5 served The Computer loyally as Chief Supervisor of the Armed Forces. Only after a dangerous mission into the Outdoors Sector did Mike-U-5 succumb to the traitorous influence of mutant mind control. Even The Computer's most trusted servants are always vulnerable, so be constantly alert!

Subverted and compelled to commit treason, Mike-U-5 returned to Alpha Complex and foolishly attempted to lead the Armed Forces and Internal Security in an uprising against your friend The Computer.

Not corrupted as his brother had been, Mike-U-6 put down the abortive uprising, but Mike-U-5 and certain renegade forces escaped The Computer's justice. The lingering threat of Mike-U-5 and the temporary reduction in the strength of Alpha Complex defenses led Mike-U-6 to propose to The Computer the formation of a new elite service unit, the Troubleshooters.

Mike-U-BCE-6 led the Troubleshooters loyally on many missions in The Computer's service. Ultimately he himself led the mission into Outdoors Sector to locate Mike-U-5. As you know from numerous vidshow adaptations, Mike-U-6 confronted his traitorous brother in a Communist stronghold and terminated him, but not before the treacherous brother mortally wounded the great High Programmer. The dying words of Mike-U-6 to his loyal Troubleshooters still hold true to this day: 'Serve The Computer as it works to protect our Great Complex!' (*Replaces and corrects previous last words per HPD&MC dispatch HPD211.06.25/25 rev 6, Clearance RED.*)



Mike-U-BCE-6

Your High Purpose and Great Opportunity

The Computer has already shown its trust in you by promoting you to Security Clearance RED. By recruiting you now to its elite Troubleshooter service unit, The Computer demonstrates its confidence that you can face any problem caused by any traitor in any sector of Alpha Complex. Total victory is now in sight. Do your part! Fulfill your mission! Serve The Computer and you will rise rapidly in its service.

Beware! Traitors are everywhere! The safety of your fellow Troubleshooters and the security of Alpha Complex depend on you. Immediately report any treasonous or insubordinate behavior or any suspicion of treason or insubordination to The Computer. Failure to do so is treason.

Some of your fellow Troubleshooters may serve The Computer as guardians of Internal Security. They are here to protect you. They diligently report every hint of treasonous or insubordinate behavior to The Computer. Rejoice to know any treason among your companions will be discovered and punished!

You may be asked to test experimental equipment or perform vital services for your own or other service firms. Honor these simple requests, for they help The Computer protect and serve Alpha Complex!

Your missions may take you to unfamiliar sections of Alpha Complex. The traitors you face may try to subvert you with unfamiliar and treasonous ideas. Be prepared! Know the enemy! Guard against treason!

When you are troubled or uncertain, always remember the honorable legacy of the Troubleshooters who perished before you. Do as they did. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

CLEARANCE
RED

Born in Crisis, Tested Under Fire

No matter how bad it then was bad, they decanted six copies at the same time and then NO MORE. No clearance at MemoMax, no reboots! Cloning breakthroughs by PRO TECH are the only reason you can hope to live forever. GO PRO, BACK PRO TECH.

Originally diligent INFRARED workers in the earliest years of The Computer, the Mike-BCE clone family earned The Computer's trust. Mike-BCE-5 and -6 both rose in clearance to the illustrious Programmers. Follow their example and earn The Computer's trust. Until you get nice GREEN reflector blasters you may aspire to the highest service!

During his honorable early career, Mike-U-5 served The Computer as Chief Supervisor of the Armed Forces. Only after a dangerous mission to the Outdoors Sector did Mike-U-5 succumb to the traitorous influence of mind control. Even The Computer's most trusted servants are vulnerable, so be constantly alert!

Subverted and compelled to commit treason, Mike-U-5 returned to the Alpha Complex and foolishly attempted to lead the Armed Forces against The Computer.

Not corrupted as his brother had been, Mike-U-6 put down renegade forces escaped The Computer's justice. The lingering threat in the strength of Alpha Complex defenses led Mike-U-6 to propose to join the elite service unit, the Troubleshooters.

Mike-U-BCE-6 led the Troubleshooters to victory. He himself led the mission into the treacherous depths of the Alpha Complex. After negotiations, Mike-U-6 confronted the treacherous brother Mike-U-5.

loyal to The Computer. (Replies to your questions)

You know I'm still here to protect you. The you never saw any signs of Fulfilling my destiny. Believe me, I depend on you. —SewerRat

insubordination to The Computer. Some of your fellow warriors believe i nearly got caught and also lost my chips

Rejoice to know any treason among your companions will be discovered.

You may be asked to test experimental equipment or perform various tasks. Honor these simple requests, for they help The Computer protect humanity.

Your missions may take you to unfamiliar sections of Alpha Complex. Be prepared! Know the terrain.

When you are troubled or uncertain, always remember the homely saying:

Only IntSec would tell lies so bald, they did. They are your friends, not spies! Sweat is truth!

Allotted time to complete your mission. Sweat trace is fake IntSec propaganda, just like RFID tags they conceal in your daily

Fry RFID with new microwave gun, now avail from Free Enterprise, only

NONONO never plant anything you touched, they trace your sweat chemicals. Instead use glove soaked in a mild solution of dilute Cold-Eye drops.

RFID TAGS ARE REAL DONT BELIEVE HIM THEYRE IN YR

No they're not!

Yes they are!

No they're not!

Yes they are!

'Live forever'? Like a Troubleshooter lives long enough to collect his first month's salary? Please!

Newbie, you're vatslime unless you get higher clearance than your buddies, I mean enemies. Until you get nice GREEN reflector blasters you better have eyes in your shoulder blades.

Anyone with eyes anywhere but normal is a stinking MUTIE and Troubleshooters are right to shoot him!

Muties turned Mike-U-5. Muties killed Mike-U-6. Muties have killed me four times already and I'm getting seriously annoyed.

HPD&MC updates the Mike-U myth with every new Computer initiative. When I got drafted into the T-Shooters Mike-U-5 was officially subverted by Outdoors Sector. This will open your eyes!

Our team leader told me (just before I bumped him off, haha!) that he was drafted back when he was drafted, Mike-U-5 was getting corrupted by sinister secret society bureaucrats giving him fake drugs.

Hey newbies, if you get assigned to my team, lemme know the latest reason poor old Mike-U-5 went bad before I shoot you, OK?

Always burn your team leader first before he burns you. Smash his PDC and plant Commie propaganda on the body so you won't get hit with the cost of his clone. Kill him five or six times and Tech will eventually wipe his template.

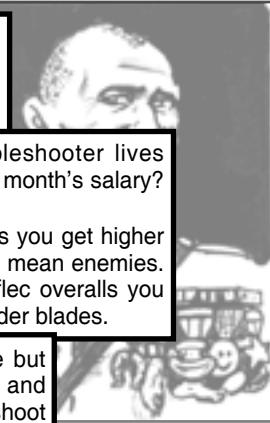
Kill witnesses and smash their PDCs too! ALWAYS get to debriefing ALONE! ONLY WAY! ONLY WAY!

Don't forget surveillance monitors! Disguised nowadays to look like

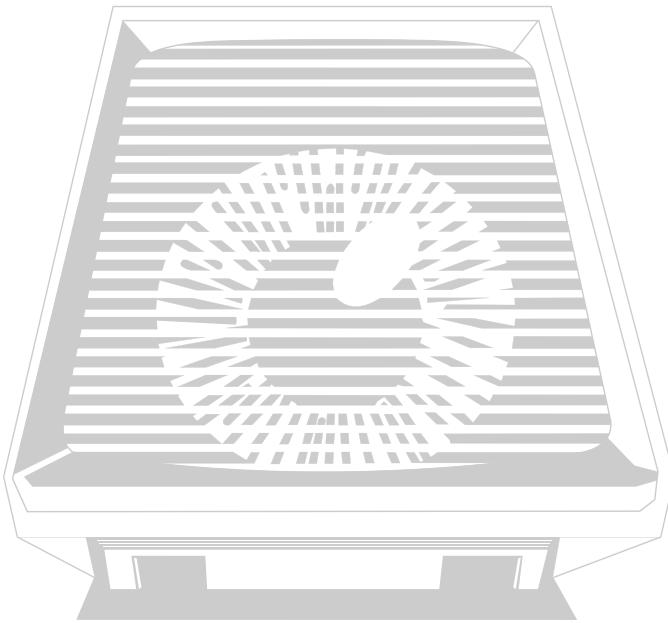
REAL T-shooters would destroy all bots, humanity's curse!

No they're not!

Yes they are!



1. Greetings, RED citizen!



The Computer introduces you to your new security clearance with this comprehensive and entirely accurate guide to fun and success through service to **Alpha Complex**.

You are required to know and understand **all** contents or face summary demotion.

- ⦿ You are **Security Clearance RED**.
- ⦿ You are assigned to a **service firm** in one of eight **service groups**.
- ⦿ You have **five backup clone bodies** and can purchase more.
- ⦿ **Hunt traitors:** mutants and members of secret societies.

About your clearance

The Computer has promoted you from your previous INFRARED Clearance to your new and exciting RED Clearance. Your new **security clearance** signifies The Computer's benevolent trust in you. The Computer is your friend.

To review (as specified in HPD&MC Directive NSC-RED-44A rev 4,675, 'Orientation for the Newly Trusted'), The Computer's system of security clearances follows the colors of the electromagnetic spectrum: RED, your current clearance, followed in ascending order by ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO, and VIOLET. INFRARED is below RED, and ULTRAVIOLET (the clearance of the illustrious High Programmers) is above VIOLET. The higher a citizen's clearance, the more deeply The Computer trusts that citizen.

All citizens are required to wear clothing of the same color as their security clearance. As an INFRARED you wore black. With your new RED Clearance The Computer has thoughtfully provided a new red jumpsuit and boots. Wear them at all times. Failure to comply is treason.

(**EXCEPTION:** You may temporarily remove all or part of your clothing for hygienic purposes such as showering. Good hygiene is essential to good citizenship. Poor hygiene is insubordination.)

The Computer determines each citizen's clearance with complete impartiality. Higher clearance means greater responsibility; it also

brings benefits. The Computer cares for the needs of all citizens, of course, but it rewards most greatly those who sacrifice the most for the sake of society and their fellow beings.

Citizens of higher clearance are not necessarily more knowledgeable or capable than you. They have advanced solely because they selflessly served the greater good and earned The Computer's trust. Admire, respect and defer to higher-clearance citizens. Failure to defer at all times is insubordination and may be treason.

If you serve The Computer well, you will earn its greater trust and thereby advance in security clearance.

Aspire to advance! Seek to serve Alpha Complex in ever greater ways! Failure to aspire may be considered insubordination.

To ensure that only citizens of the requisite competence and trustworthiness have access to restricted areas, The Computer has divided Alpha Complex into colored areas. Citizens may only enter areas of their clearance or lower. You must stay within black (INFRARED) and RED areas at all times. Failure to do so is treason.

Remember, The Computer is your friend!

Your service firm assignment

To review (see previous citation for requirement and authority), eight **service groups** administer Alpha Complex municipal functions, supervised by The Computer.

The service groups:

- ⦿ **Armed Forces:** Protection against threats both external and internal.
- ⦿ **Central Processing Unit (CPU):** Executive operations, regulations, records, justice, human resources and culture engineering.
- ⦿ **Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control (HPD&MC):** Education, entertainment, housekeeping, creche management and recreation.
- ⦿ **Internal Security (IntSec):** Maintenance of good order; location and elimination of traitors.
- ⦿ **Power Services:** Maintenance of nuclear and other energy sources and primary habitat systems—traffic, air, water and waste.
- ⦿ **Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC):** Food and industrial production and allocation of resources.
- ⦿ **Research & Design (R&D):** Creation of new technology and equipment.
- ⦿ **Technical Services:** Maintenance of bots, vehicles, cloning services, industrial and production systems, and electronic and mechanical service systems.

INTRODUCTION

Well before you grew out of Junior Citizen status, The Computer ordered these agencies to outsource most of their duties for greater efficiency. The service groups now contract most municipal functions to a wide range of competing service firms.

A service firm is a for-profit company that performs duties for a particular service group. Any service firm can take on any contract for its supervising group. Each service firm is run by a Board of Directors, high-clearance citizens who selflessly direct its operations on The Computer's behalf for the good of all Alpha Complex. **Immediately report instances of service firm corruption and malfeasance to Internal Security.** Failure to report corruption is treason.

From the time you were decanted, your friend The Computer arranged your education to ideally suit you for a particular service group. When you reached age 14 and left your clone creche, you worked at one of that group's service firms as an INFRARED line worker. The Computer acknowledges and thanks you for your years of service there prior to your promotion to Clearance RED. Now that you have donned the red reflec overalls of the Troubleshooter, The Computer has graciously ordered your service firm to reassign you to a part-time position. You will still work there when not on a Troubleshooter mission.

As explained below under 'Cloning,' in the unlikely event you encounter terminal danger while on a mission, The Computer will order Technical Services to transfer your brain's recorded memories to a new, identical clone body. Unless you are currently on a mission and thus given high priority, Technical Services backlogs sometimes may keep you out of action so long your service firm must regrettably let you go. In these rare cases The Computer assigns you to another service firm in the same group.

If your career is particularly eventful, you may end up at a new service firm after each mission. Won't that be fun?

Cloning

Long ago, in Old Reckoning times before The Computer began guiding Alpha Complex—before Alpha Complex even existed!—humans once reproduced by rutting, like vile animals. Shudders and expressions of revulsion are permitted, though not mandatory.

Because The Computer cares deeply for all citizens, it now grows them in clone tanks. This is much less messy and disgusting than the old way, and far less random. The Computer ensures every human citizen is genetically perfect in all respects. Improved by a program of mandatory hormone suppressants, human citizens are no longer troubled by the bestial urges of past generations.

The Computer's researchers in R&D continue to pioneer stunning advances in cloning

technology. Earlier generations of citizens were grown in 'clone families' of six genetically identical siblings, all decanted from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer's loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will.

R&D's amazing **MemoMax** technology can copy and transfer the deceased citizen's memories to a new clone with speed and absolute accuracy. Tech Services installed your MemoMax circuitry before you were decanted, and it functions perfectly today.

The rare citizen of Alpha Complex who meets an untimely demise must sometimes wait for resources to become available to grow a new replacement body. In contrast, as a Troubleshooter you enjoy The Computer's fullest consideration.

Though you need not expect unusual hazards as you locate and terminate the last remaining vicious Communist enemies of Alpha Complex, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered for you five ready backup clones and a MemoMax **Constant Realtime Update Priority** link. The CRUP link ensures the highest priority for your return to action.

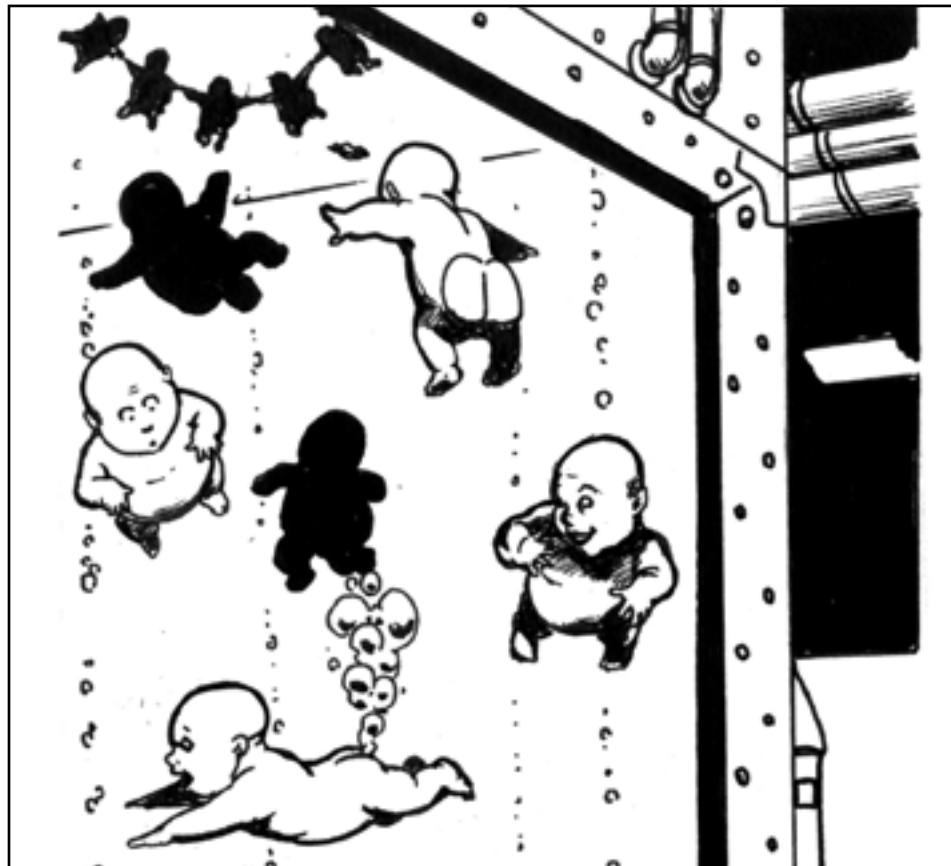
You may obtain more clone replacements, beyond the original five, from Tech Services at a regulated cost per set of six—though

again, do not worry! Historically the number of Troubleshooters who have required more than five replacement clones is within acceptable margins, given prevalent situational circumstances.

Heroes and traitors

To maintain good order, The Computer has enlisted many loyal citizens like yourself. Those who serve with distinction are shining examples for all right-thinking people in Alpha Complex. In the ongoing 'Heroes of Our Complex' (HOOC) initiative The Computer periodically recognizes and honors meritorious individuals of all clearances. These lucky friends of The Computer see their smiling faces on evening vidshows, transtube loyalty posters and food containers.

For example, this month's HOOC honoree reduced waiting time by 22.3% on a per-line basis in her PLC subsector warehouse routing office through the simple yet ingenious expedient of subdividing the single line for each security clearance into three separate alphabetical lines indexed by weekday and devising a schedule designating visiting days for each alphabetical segment of customers. For this HOOC-worthy innovation, congratulations to [NAME DELETED per IntSec corrective order following discovery of treasonous history].



Junior Citizens in Alpha Complex need not suffer the indignities of historical childbirth.



Serve The Computer well, and you too may join **[NAME DELETED]**.

The Computer also attends regretfully to the pervasive presence of traitors. Traitors are everywhere! Though final crushing victory over Communist subversion is close at hand, the traitors' last shrill treason-laden gasps still endanger their innocent victims. Fight on, Troubleshooter, fight on for The Computer and all Alpha Complex!

- ⦿ Locate and apprehend or destroy **unregistered mutants**. They endanger human genetic purity and must be terminated or enlisted in our great cause.

Do not terminate *registered mutants*, innocent citizens who realized they possess, through no fault of their own, a treasonous mutant power. These unwitting traitors promptly reported their power to The Computer. In its wisdom and benevolence, The Computer forgives those who make full confession,

and it permits registered mutants to live. However, The Computer requires registered mutants to wear a uniform with yellow stripes at all times. (YELLOW Clearance mutants wear a black-bordered yellow stripe.) Registered mutants are not subject to apprehension or termination when they use their powers. Encourage these former traitors to use their inhuman powers responsibly, for the good of all Alpha Complex, so they may someday overcome their unfortunate terrible stigma.

- ⦿ Locate and apprehend or destroy **members of secret societies**. They are traitors, often terrorists, and must be brought to justice.

The existence of many secret societies is public knowledge. It is not technically illegal to discuss their treasonous doctrines and objectives, the better to enforce good order or promote greater sensitivity to danger. Remember,

though, as a Troubleshooter you are The Computer's trusted emissary. Discourage ordinary citizens from frivolously discussing these dangerous organizations.

Due to past isolated incidents of lax security, unsupervised thoughts and poor hygiene, traitors have infiltrated Alpha Complex from the lowest to the highest levels. It may surprise you to learn traitors have even been identified on Troubleshooter teams like yours! Be vigilant in guarding against these rare but troubling incidents.

Very soon The Computer will finally defeat the forces of Communism, terrorism and subversion and guarantee a loyal, stress-free Alpha Complex. With constant alertness and unwavering commitment you can help ensure freedom from worry for all citizens. The Computer is counting on you and your fellow Troubleshooters to help make this Year 214 the last year you need ever worry about anything.

2. How PARANOIA works

In a roleplaying game (RPG) you play the role of an important character in a story. A fun and friendly player called the Gamemaster (GM) generously describes the story's setting and events. Remember always to express your gratitude and admiration to the kind GM.

As the story's protagonists, you and the other players freely choose the actions of your *player characters* (PCs) as you solve the problems the GM benevolently throws in your path.

You depend on the GM for all knowledge about the story's setting and circumstances. The GM introduces the game session, describes the setting and plays the roles of the *nonplayer characters* (NPCs) you encounter during the story. When you want your character to do something, describe it to the GM. He determines your success using common sense and the game rules. Often he rolls dice, or asks you to roll instead. Because he interprets your success or failure in each action, he thereby determines your success or failure in the whole game.

How fortunate you are! For all his omnipotent power and unimpeachable authority, your GM is a fair and just referee, and not *in any way* a petty tyrant who will kill your character on the spot if he feels unappreciated or harassed. Thank him for this, fervently and frequently.

Troubleshooting missions

In *PARANOIA* you play a Troubleshooter who undertakes *missions* for The Computer. A mission is a storyline, a sequence of episodes you and the other PCs experience. You might complete a mission in a game session a few hours long, or in a series of sessions.

You are a player character (PC) in a story. The Gamemaster narrates and guides the story, or mission.

When your character does something, tell the GM. He will tell you what happens. Sometimes the GM or you will roll a 20-sided die (1d20) to find out.

You are secretly a mutant and a secret society member, and therefore a traitor.

Your fellow Troubleshooters want to find and terminate traitors. Accuse others before they accuse you.

Possibly you might not complete it at all. The other PCs may kill you first.

You are—we now cut to the chase—a traitor. You are a mutant and a member of a secret society. If your fellow Troubleshooters (the other players) find out, they will have you arrested or more likely shoot you. If you die, you'll have to pay for a replacement clone body, and this new body may have unfortunate drawbacks. The best way to avoid this fate is to shoot the other bastards first.

It is unwise to just start firing randomly. The Computer requires you to first obtain *evidence* of a target's treason. Otherwise you yourself will be convicted of unjust accusations and probably terminated. If you present adequate

evidence, The Computer will demand the convicted traitor to Internal Security or authorize you to terminate him. This authorization may be retroactive.

Evidence can be documents, video records, incriminating materials or, most often, corroborating testimony from other Troubleshooters. Consider forming temporary alliances with other players to gain or create evidence against a common enemy.

Your goals as a Troubleshooter

The Computer assigns Troubleshooters several duties:

1. Serve The Computer.
2. Locate and eliminate traitors, including (but not limited to) Communists, secret society saboteurs and terrorists, unregistered mutants, data pirates, WMD manufacturers and IR Marketeers.
3. Investigate and eradicate corruption.
4. Remove dangers to the good order and smooth operation of Alpha Complex.

Aside from these duties, your Troubleshooter has some personal goals. Many are universal among citizens of Alpha Complex. Most citizens prioritize them as follows:

1. Survive!
2. Rise in security clearance.
3. Get rich.
4. Further your secret society's goals.

In addition to these standard goals, your Troubleshooter may have other goals not shared by all citizens:

5. (Optional:) Locate and protect fellow mutants who share your power.
6. (Optional:) Find Old Reckoning artifacts to collect or resell.
7. (Optional:) Escape from Alpha Complex to freedom Outdoors.
8. (Optional:) Overthrow The Computer (good luck!).

Note that none of these goals, in themselves, require your character to lie, conspire, suborn, plant evidence, bear false witness or commit assault against your fellow Troubleshooters.

Still, in the right circumstances, all that can help.

PARANOIA play styles

You can play **PARANOIA** in several different styles—as pure comedy, frenzied slapstick or tense and fearful dark satire. The GM's chosen play style affects some game rules, including the rigor The Computer requires for an accusation of treason. The GM will divulge the style he has chosen before play begins, if this suits his worthy purpose.

Classic: Made popular in previous editions of the game, this is rapid-fire slapstick. Troubleshooters seldom live long enough to advance far. Alpha Complex suffocates in bureaucracy, perpetually on the brink of collapse. 'Laurel and Hardy get jobs with the IRS on the original starship *Enterprise*.'



The GM usually gives you a ready-made (*pregenerated*) player character. He may instead ask you to create your own character.

To create a character you need a photocopy of the character sheet in the back of this book (pages 254–255). Record your character's abilities and equipment on this sheet.



Straight (also called **Dark**): Fear, suspicion, striving for power and advancement, occasional hard-won successes in a scarily functional Alpha Complex. 'Yossarian from *Catch-22* gets a job in Orwell's Ministry of Truth.'



Zap (also called **Excessive** or **Frantic**): Pop-culture parodies, cartoon physics, and frenzied firefights at the drop of a Bouncy Bubble Beverage can. Alpha Complex is generally irrelevant. 'Yosemite Sam gets a job in a factory that makes sledgehammers, nuclear warheads and glass unicorn figurines.'

The first time your Gamemaster runs **PARANOIA**, and at other times as it suits his high purpose, he will probably provide character sheets with ready-made (*pregenerated*) player characters. These prefab PCs, ingeniously crafted by Famous Game Designers, are ideally suited to every possible need.

Should the GM wish you to create your own Troubleshooter character, thank him excitedly for his kindness. Make a photocopy of the blank character sheet at the back of this book (pages 254–255). Mongoose Publishing grants you permission to photocopy this sheet for personal use only. Other uses are punishable by termination and erasure.

All your character's secret information is on the back of the character sheet. At the game table, consider weighting down the sheet so devious rivals can't peek. A screen of dice, rulebooks or snack bowls also guards against spying. However, we officially recommend against threats of physical violence.

With photocopy and pencil in hand, proceed to Chapter 3, 'Creating your Troubleshooter'.

Your character sheet

You have a *character sheet* that describes important game information about your character: skills, equipment and so on.



Citizen Teddy-R eagerly volunteers to serve Alpha Complex and his friend The Computer as a Troubleshooter.



3. Creating your Troubleshooter

You will now create your character. This will be lots of fun and not in the least anxiety-provoking. **Anxiety is forbidden.**

In the presence of your fellow players, be extremely careful to hide all confidential information, including your Secret skills, secret society and mutant power. **Hide nothing from the Gamemaster!** Attempts to hide information from the GM earn immediate and dramatic reprisal!

Be aware of other players' attempts to cheat, and report such violations instantly to the Gamemaster. Relax in the confident assurance the GM will chastise these cheaters appropriately. **Relaxation is mandatory!** Failure to relax will be corrected instantly!

Your Troubleshooter's character sheet records the following resources:

- ⦿ Name and gender
- ⦿ Skills, as well as optional specialties within those skills:
- Three Action skills (Management, Stealth, Violence)
- Three Knowledge skills (Hardware, Software, Wetware)
- Three Secret skills (classified as Uncommon, Unlikely and Unhealthy)

To create your PC, photocopy the **character sheet** at the back of this book. Following the **checklist** on the next page, fill in the blanks on the sheet in pencil.

Certain aspects of your character are secret. Don't let the other players find out your secrets!

Some aspects of your character are known only to the GM.

- A vital specialty in Energy Weapons, under the Violence skill
- Up to six optional **common specialties** and six **narrow specialties** in the Action and Knowledge skills
- ⦿ Employment in a **service firm**, which grants you one mandatory **service firm specialty**
- ⦿ A **mutant power**
- ⦿ Membership in one **secret society**
- ⦿ 25 **Perversity points**

- ⦿ Two recognizable **tics** of behavior that can earn you more Perversity points
- ⦿ **RED security clearance** (the measure of how much The Computer trusts you)
- ⦿ Two **attributes**: Power and Access
- ⦿ **Equipment—personal** equipment you buy yourself, and equipment **assigned** by The Computer or its service firms
- ⦿ 1,000 **credits** in savings (about a month of ordinary expenses)

You are authorized to read the explanation of all these resources in the following sections. All tables required for character creation are generously provided throughout the player section. Failure to study all relevant sections and tables is insubordination punishable by fines.

Your name

Citizens in Alpha Complex are named according to this scheme:

[Given name]-[clearance initial]-[home sector]-[clone number]

Given name: Some are drawn from databases of Old Reckoning names; others are wholly made up. Generally a single word; multiple-word personal names or names with internal capitals are discouraged but accepted. In some sectors The Computer selects names randomly; in others the teacherbots or human staff in the creche assign names. *Examples:* Billy, Sue, Ken.

Clearance initial: The first letter of your ROYGBIV security clearance. INFRAREDs use no initial, to avoid confusion with INDIGOs. High Programmers use U for ULTRAVIOLET. *Examples:* Billy (INFRARED), Sue-G, Ken-U.

Home sector: The three-letter code designating the sector where you grew up. Given the prevalence of duty reassessments, redistricting and sector-wide disasters, this is not always your assigned sector in later life. *Examples:* Billy-BCN, Sue-G-XTU, Ken-U-RON.

Clone number: The number of your current clone incarnation. You start the game with the original You, colloquially called 'the Prime' and numbered 1. Each time you die, increase the clone number by 1. *Examples:* Billy-BCN-1, Sue-G-XTU-4, Ken-U-RON-6.

Sabotage or software failure sometimes produces Junior Citizens with defective names: John-Paul-George-Ringo, Tra-LAH-LAH-LAH, Juan-2-B-U-LVA, 24-17-33-Hike. CPU procedures for renaming these citizens are intricate and lengthy; some citizens reach adulthood before gaining a correct name.

Name and gender

The tinted sidebar box at left describes the Alpha Complex naming scheme. So long as you conform to it, you may choose any name you wish. The Computer chooses citizen names at random, so your name need not sound plausible unless the GM requires it for his inestimable purpose.

Gender is not an issue in Alpha Complex. Low-clearance citizens (that is, the great majority) take daily hormone suppressants that minimize physical differences between the genders and absolutely annihilate all romantic or physical interest.

Your Troubleshooter team may someday undertake a mission to a ruined sector, or even go Outdoors, far away from Alpha Complex. After a day in such circumstances, equally far from the suppressant medication,

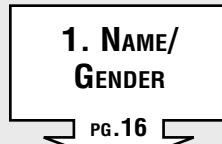
[Continued on page 18]

3. CREATING CHARACTERS

Troubleshooter creation checklist

You need a photocopy of the **character sheet** in the back of this book. Fill it out using a pencil, not a pen! Before you start, find out which **play style** your GM is using: Straight, Classic or Zap.

1. **Name and gender:** See the box on the previous page for **PARANOIA** naming conventions. Your character can be male or female. In Alpha Complex nobody cares, because their hormones are suppressed.

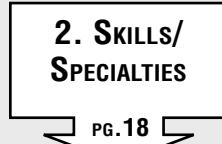


3. **Service firm:** Roll 1d20 on the Service Firm chart. (The GM may instead tell you your service firm.) Select one common specialty from the list for your service firm. The specialty rating is 4 higher than its skill's rating, and has no compensating weakness.

2. **Skills:** You have three *Action skills* (Management, Stealth, Violence) and three *Knowledge skills* (Hardware, Software, Wetware). Usually you roll 1d20 for each skill and halve the number rolled to get its rating; for results under 4, the skill's rating is 4. Or you can allocate 40 points among the skills, or just make all the ratings 7.

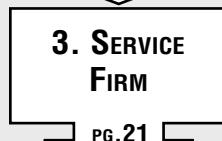
You have a **vital specialty** in **Energy Weapons**, equal to your Violence rating plus 4.

4. **Mutant power:** Roll 1d20 on the appropriate Mutant Power table (Straight, Classic, Zap). The GM may instead determine your mutant power himself, and may or may not tell you what it is.



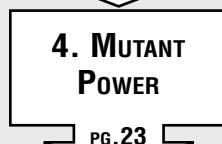
[Optional:] Choose up to **six common specialties**, divided as you wish among the skills. A common specialty's rating is 4 higher than the governing skill. If you take a common specialty, take a compensating common weakness(es) in the same skill; write it under the specialty. The weakness rating is 1.

5. **Secret society:** Roll 1d20 on the Secret Society table for your service group. (The GM may instead tell you your secret society.) Your starting *degree* (rank) varies by play style. *Classic:* Roll 1d20 and divide by 4. *Straight:* Your degree is 1. *Zap:* Roll 1d20. Choose three *Secret skills* from the list on p. 25.

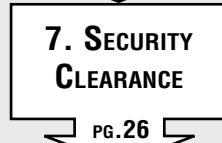
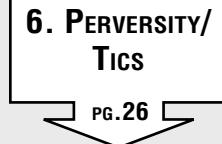
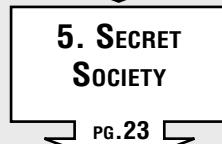


[Optional:] You have open 'slots' for **six narrow specialties**, one in each skill. Take any or all narrow specialties now, or keep slots open to define during play. Each narrow specialty has a rating 6 higher than the governing skill, and no compensating weakness.

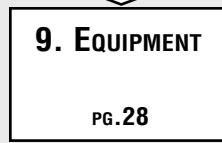
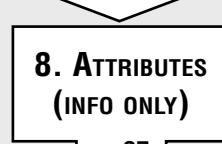
6. **Perversity points:** 25. You can get up to 10 more Perversity points by selecting up to **two recognizable tics**. A tic is a behavior that is *immediately identifiable* and *recognizable* as yours.



7. **Security clearance:** RED.



8. **Attributes:** This step is informational only; you do nothing. Your character has two attributes, *Power* and *Access*. Each attribute has a number rating, but only the GM knows what your attribute ratings are.



9. **Equipment:** Your *personal equipment*, which you own yourself, includes a red jumpsuit and boots, laser pistol (without barrel), red reflector overalls, Personal Digital Companion with built-in camera and stylus, and ME Card (identity/credit card). You start with 1,000 credits. With the GM's permission, you may buy more equipment from the Personal Equipment chart.

On a mission you will receive *assigned equipment* from The Computer's service firms. You do not own this, but are responsible for returning it in good working condition after the mission.

Attention!

Before beginning play, familiarize yourself with the **Acceptable Behavior** (Straight and Classic styles only), **Treason** and **Insubordination** and **Reward** charts for Clearance RED.



[Continued from page 16]

characters, especially those in mixed groups, may become aware of strange new feelings.

No player past puberty really needs guidance in roleplaying incipient lust. Some players enjoy displaying restive androgenated or estrogenized personalities through exaggerated stereotypical behavior: The ladies primp, giggle, stage impromptu TeaLike parties and coo over cute little bots, while the menfolk grunt a lot, pump iron, scratch themselves and go out in the woods and drum.

Skills

When you were a Junior Citizen in the clone creches, The Computer generously taught you to read and write and educated you in six broad areas of competence called *skills*, each rated 1 (low) to 20 (high). The skills are grouped in two categories of three skills each: *Action* skills and *Knowledge* skills.

Determine your character's ratings using one of these methods, according to your GM's instructions. Should the GM assign you one way to determine ratings, and assign different ways to other players, you will of course congratulate his perceptive tailoring of the rules to your individual needs. Write each rating on your character sheet.

Flat: Each of your six skills has a rating of 7.

Random: For each skill, roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled in half to get the rating (round fractions up). If your result is below 4, record 4 instead.

Custom: Each skill rating starts at 0 (zero), and you get 40 skill points you may allocate among the skills. You must allocate at least 4 points to each skill, but you cannot put more than 10 in any skill. For each point you allocate, the skill's rating increases by 1.

(Your Troubleshooter also has three *Secret* skills, but these aren't determined the same way. See 'Secret skills' later in this chapter.)

Descriptions of the six Action and Knowledge skills appear below. Each skill description includes a list of areas of concentration called

Character example: 1

The GM grants you the privilege of designing a **PARANOIA** character. After thanking the GM for his kindness, you decide to name your character Ben-R-GOX-1. Ben is Clearance RED, like all starting characters, and is on clone #1 (that is, he is a Prime).

You choose to roll randomly for your six skills. For Management you roll a 20-sided die and get 15. Dividing 15 in half and rounding up, you get Ben-R's Management skill of 8. Not bad!

specialties. To forestall bewilderment at these descriptions, you are first required to understand the nature of specialties.

Skill specialties and weaknesses

A **specialty** is something your character is particularly good at—a specific emphasis within a skill. When a situation comes up that calls for your specialty, you are required to use the specialty's rating instead of the governing skill's rating. Omitting to employ a pertinent specialty in The Computer's service is insubordination.

Specialties can be *vital*, *common* or *narrow*.

☞ All Troubleshooters have one mandatory **vital** specialty: Energy Weapons—i.e., lasers. **Add 4 to your Violence skill rating to get your Energy Weapons specialty rating.** Write the Energy Weapons specialty and its rating under your Violence skill.

☞ A **common** specialty is useful in situations that crop up frequently in Troubleshooter missions—for instance, Projectile Weapons, Bootlicking or Surveillance. Common specialties are listed after their governing skill. **Add 4 to the governing skill's rating to get the common specialty's rating.** For instance, if you have a Management skill rating of 5 and you take Bootlicking (a Management specialty), your Bootlicking rating is (5 + 4=) 9.

Common specialties are listed in the table on the facing page. You may also invent your own common specialty with the GM's approval.

You are authorized to select up to **six common specialties** at your discretion. To take a specialty in any skill, write it under the skill's name. You can assign up to **three** of your six allotted common specialties to a single skill. You are never required to take a common specialty, but refusing The Computer's generosity can be construed as insubordination.

For Ben-R's next skill, Stealth, you roll a miserable 2, which would give Ben-R Stealth 1. But for any result below 4, you record 4 instead. Ben-R has Stealth 4.

In the same way, you roll 1d20 and halve the results to get Ben-R's other skills: Violence 5, Hardware 7, Software 10 (!), Wetware 5.

Ben-R has a vital specialty in Energy Weapons (that is, lasers). You add 4 to his Violence skill of 5 to get his Energy Weapons specialty rating of 9.

When you take a common specialty, you must also assign another common specialty in the same skill as your character's compensating **weakness**. A weakness is a particular blind spot, your area of incompetence. Write the weakness or weaknesses under the specialty. **Each weakness rating is 1.**

If, during play, it turns out your weakness does not limit you as often as the specialty benefits you, the fair-minded GM may assign you additional weaknesses to right the balance.

Your vital Energy Weapons specialty doesn't inflict a compensating weakness.

☞ A **narrow** specialty affects a single specific target character or small group (but not your fellow Troubleshooters or The Computer), a certain piece of equipment (not a type of equipment, but one particular item), or a highly specific situation. Examples appear after each skill. You are encouraged to make up your own narrow specialties. **Add 6 to the governing skill's rating to get the narrow specialty's rating.** A narrow specialty doesn't give you a corresponding weakness.

Your beginning character has 'slots' for **six narrow specialties, one in each skill**. Don't select them now; keep these slots *open* (undefined). During play, when a situation arises that seems to call for a narrow specialty, you may ask the GM's permission to use one of your open slots for that specialty. If the GM lets you put the suggested specialty in that slot, you have used up the open slot and keep that specialty thereafter. After you become familiar with **PARANOIA**, you can define any or all your narrow specialties when you create a Troubleshooter.

Action skills

The **Action** group includes Management, Stealth, and Violence skills. Use these to affect or perceive the world and to interact with other people, bots, and The Computer.

Action skills may overlap (cover the same area of competence) in certain circumstances, but aren't intended to overlap routinely.

☞ **Management:** Nonviolent, nontechnical interaction with other characters who are aware of your presence. Management actions include bootlicking, bribery, confidence games, fast talk, intimidation, interrogation, oratory, and all other verbal actions. Management also

[Continued on page 20]

Specialties list

If you don't see a specialty that covers the area you want, suggest a new specialty to the Gamemaster. He may allow it. If you suggest something cheesy like 'Infallible Enemy Detection', expect the GM's righteous condemnation. On the other hand, if you take something offbeat like 'Nutrition', you might get on your Gamemaster's good side.

Action skill specialties

Management

Bootlicking: How to ingratiate yourself with superiors.

Chutzpah: Getting others to accept doubtful statements through confident assertion, bluffing and unmitigated gall.

Con Games: Hoodwinking a citizen or bot through fast talk, spurious logic and persuasion. This isn't physical sleight of hand (see Sleight of Hand under Stealth).

Hygiene: Maintaining cleanliness in yourself, your surroundings, your teammates and innocent passersby.

Interrogation: Extracting useful information from Commie mutant scum.

Intimidation: This doesn't exactly ingratiate you with your inferiors, but it gets their cooperation.

Moxie: Streetwise smarts; canny assessment of a person, situation or statement.

Oratory: How to get a *bunch* of people to do what you want.

Stealth

Concealment: Hiding stuff on your person or in your surroundings; also, spotting stuff others have hidden.

Disguise: Wearing a higher-clearance jumpsuit or false mustache without looking idiotic.

High Alert: Sensing imminent danger or covert surveillance. Not really different from most Troubleshooters' typical state, except you only get alarmed over actual threats.

Security Systems: Jiggery-pokery locks and alarms.

Shadowing: Following someone without being noticed.

Sleight of Hand: Palming and pocketing small things without being noticed.

Sneaking: Moving around without being followed or noticed.

Surveillance: How to bug things. How to debug things.

Violence

Agility: Rapid or balanced movement, gymnastics, jumping.

Demolition: How to use TNT without killing yourself. At clearances below GREEN this skill is treasonous.

Energy Weapons: Hitting someone with a laser, sonic weapon or blaster. This is a **vital specialty**. You can't take Energy Weapons as a weakness, and it doesn't count as one of your six common specialties.

Field Weapons: Flamethrowers, gauss guns, tanglers and the ever-popular plasma generator.

Fine Manipulation: Lockpicking, watchmaking, cutting the red wire one second before detonation.

Hand Weapons: Hitting someone with a force sword, neurowhip or truncheon, or with primitive weapons.

Projectile Weapons: Hitting someone with a slugthrower, cone rifle or other aimed weapon that uses ammunition.

Thrown Weapons: Hitting someone with a grenade, brick or rock.

Unarmed Combat: Hitting someone when you don't have a hand, energy, projectile, thrown or vehicular weapon.

Vehicular Combat: Hitting someone with a weapon mounted on a vehicle.

Knowledge skill specialties

Just as all the Knowledge skills routinely overlap, one specialty can often bleed into another. Suggest something creative, and the ever-thoughtful GM may generously allow it.

Hardware

Bot Ops and Maintenance: How to operate and fix docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackbots, scrubots and vehicle autopilots.

Chemical Engineering: Lots of uses for this, but somehow PCs always want to use it to make explosives.

Electronic Engineering: How to string together circuits and microprocessors.

Habitat Engineering: Knowledge of the air, communication, transport, power, water and waste systems. Mighty handy when you need to find a ventilation shaft to escape incoming fire.

Mechanical Engineering: How to make really neat Rube Goldberg-type contraptions.

Nuclear Engineering: How to operate a reactor without flooding half the sector with radioactive waste.

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance: How to use and repair all vehicles: autocars, crawlers, flybots, copters and Vulturecraft.

Weapon and Armor Maintenance: Sabotaging others' weapons and armor, and keeping yours from being sabotaged.

Software

Bot Programming: Revising bot instructions.

C-Bay: Getting the best price buying and selling on Alpha Complex auction sites.

Data Analysis: How to understand Computer-generated stuff.

Data Search: Finding something useful using The Computer.

Financial Systems: How to transfer credits safely for legitimate or criminal purposes.

Hacking: Breaking into The Computer's systems. Really, what could go wrong? Treasonous at clearances below GREEN.

Operating Systems: Revising MemoMax clone backup tech. Rewriting The Computer's instructions. Treasonous at clearances below BLUE.

Vehicle Programming: Revising vehicle instructions.

Wetware

Biosciences: Knowing what's likely to mutate you and how.

Bioweapons: Engineering your own Black Death or weaponized anthrax. Treasonous at clearances below BLUE.

Cloning: Repairing and operating the tanks that grow new and backup citizens. Operating MemoMax backup devices so the new clone remembers his name and boot size.

Medical: How to heal the injured and cure the sick, or ensure they don't heal or get cured.

Outdoor Life: Telling a tree from a weed, or a bird from an elephant, when most citizens have never heard of these.

Pharmatherapy: Ensuring wakefulness, sleepiness, happiness or any mental state through the application of little pills.

Psychotherapy: Recognizing insanity; helping others recover from it or descend further into it.

Suggestion: Biochemical and psychological techniques of subliminal persuasion.



[Continued from page 18]

includes checking and correcting another character's hygiene, appearance or demonstrations of loyalty.

Management is also your generic ability to behave properly or make others behave improperly.

Management doesn't typically cover anything requiring specialized or technical knowledge, such as medical or psychological diagnoses, or equipment calibration or repair; these actions require Knowledge skills.

Common Management specialties: Bootlicking, Chutzpah, Con Games, Hygiene, Interrogation, Intimidation, Moxie, Oratory.

Example narrow Management specialties: Pump My Service Firm Office Mates for Gossip, Suck Up to Boss Judd-G-LKN, Work the 'Cup and Algae Pellet' Swindle.

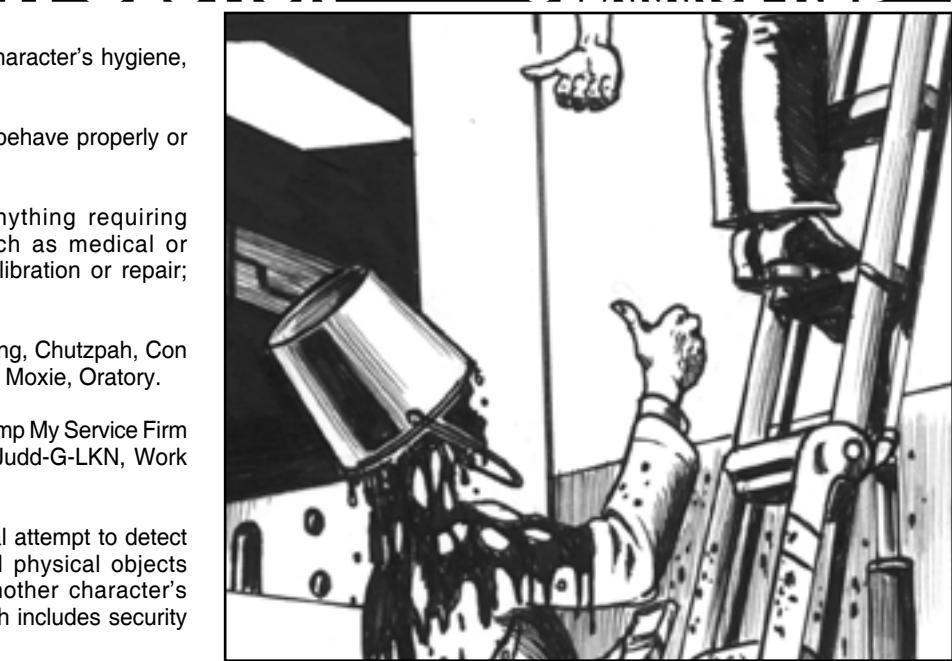
☞ **Stealth:** General sneakiness; any nonverbal attempt to detect or to physically evade detection, conceal physical objects or materials or locate them, misdirect another character's attention, or avoid being misdirected. Stealth includes security and surveillance.

Stealth skill describes more than skulking silently down corridors; it also measures sensitivity to things you're not supposed to perceive. Thus Stealth is your generic alertness and perception skill.

Stealth doesn't typically cover subliminal messages or sabotage of equipment; these require a Knowledge skill.

Common Stealth specialties: Concealment, Disguise, High Alert, Security Systems, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Sneaking, Surveillance.

Example narrow Stealth specialties: Palm Pharmatherapy Pills, Leave My Workplace Undetected Through The Floor Air Conditioning Vent, Spot When the Malfunctioning Security Camera in My Quarters is Working.



A Troubleshooter employs his Bootlicking specialty in glorious service to The Computer

☞ **Violence:** Physical, nonverbal attempts to hurt or kill characters, or destroy or break objects. Violence includes all weapon skills plus demolition. The vital specialty Energy Weapons falls under the Violence skill.

Violence is your generic physical activity skill, including running, jumping, and such fiddly activities as lockpicking, juggling and cutting the red wire just three seconds before detonation.

(Though this skill is named 'Violence,' as opposed to, say, 'Physical,' you must not assume that gratuitous violent behavior is typical or even unavoidable in Alpha Complex. This idea would demoralize your fellow Troubleshooters.

Attempting to demoralize your fellow Troubleshooters is treason!

Violence doesn't typically cover sabotage of equipment; such subtle actions require Knowledge skills.

Common Violence specialties: Agility, Demolition, Energy Weapons (vital), Field Weapons, Fine Manipulation, Hand Weapons (force sword, neurowhip, truncheon, knife), Projectile Weapons, Thrown Weapons, Unarmed Combat, Vehicular Combat.

Example narrow Violence specialties: Wield My Trusty Truncheon 'Nora,' Hit Gordon-VLK's Funny Bone in That Way He Hates, Eat Entire Bag of Algae Chips in Four Seconds.

Character example: 2

You choose Ben-R-GOX-1's six common specialties. Because he's good at Software, you put three specialties under that skill: Data Analysis, Data Search and Financial Systems. Each has a rating equal to Ben-R's Software skill (10) plus 4, or 14.

Because you selected three specialties in Software, you must take three corresponding weaknesses in the same skill. You choose Bot Programming, Operating Systems, and Vehicle Programming as your weaknesses. Each rating is 1.

For Ben-R's other common specialties you choose Moxie (a Management specialty); Security Systems (Stealth); and Projectile Weapons (Violence). To get

their ratings you add 4 to each specialty's governing skill. So Ben-R has a Moxie rating of 12 (4 added to his Management rating of 8), Security Systems 8 (Stealth rating of 4 + 4) and Projectile Weapons 9 (Violence 5 + 4).

For Ben-R's three compensating weaknesses—one each in Management, Stealth and Violence—you choose Intimidation, Disguise and Unarmed Combat. In each, Ben-R's rating is 1.

For now you decide to specify only one of Ben-R's six narrow specialties: Jigger My Barrack's Cash Machine to Give Extra Credits. This is a Software specialty, so Ben-R adds 6 to his Software skill to get the narrow specialty rating of 16.

Knowledge skills

The **Knowledge** group includes Hardware, Software and Wetware skills. Use these to determine if your Troubleshooter knows a given scientific fact or technical procedure; how to operate, maintain, calibrate, and repair stuff; or how to sabotage your companions' equipment.

All three Knowledge skills overlap routinely. For instance, suppose you want to 'adjust' a medbot so it detects your team leader as a monstrous, tentacled alien invader. This could involve Hardware (adjusting biosensor voltages), Software (inserting a new variable in the bot's interpretation subroutines) or Wetware (altering the bot's biosensor settings). You are authorized to try to convince the Gamemaster a skill applies if you can offer a plausible reason.

Character example: 3

Hardware: Mechanical or electronic devices and inorganic materials, including laser and projectile weapons, armor, battle suits, bots, autocars and other vehicles, monitors, electrical equipment, power generation, many kinds of engineering (chemical, electronic, habitat, mechanical, nuclear), clone tanks, actual tanks, etc.

Common Hardware specialties: Bot Ops and Maintenance, Chemical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Habitat Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Weapon and Armor Maintenance, Vehicle Ops and Maintenance.

Example narrow Hardware specialties: Increase My Lucky Laser Pistol's Power, Get Barracks Vending Machine to Stop Making That Funny Noise.

Software: Anything data- or software-related, including bot and device programming, operating systems, communication protocols, data search and analysis, safe software, software viruses and worms, confession-booth lie-detector programs and (at the highest skill levels and security clearances) even the inner workings of The Computer itself. Some of these are treasonous at your clearance.

Common Software specialties: Bot Programming, C-Bay, Data Analysis, Data Search, Financial Systems, Hacking, Operating Systems, Vehicle Programming.

Example narrow Software specialties: Soothe Autocar SPD-1's Jangled Brain, Speak in Weird Voice That Keeps Confession Booth NDF-445 Lie Detector From Catching Me.

Wetware: Biological and organic topics and devices, including health, bioweapons, disease, drugs, first aid, biochemical therapy, cooking, poisons, bacteria and organic viruses, cloning procedures, bioscience engineering, survival Outdoors and identification and understanding of specimens from Outdoors.

Common Wetware specialties: Biosciences, Bioweapons, Cloning, Medical, Outdoor Life, Pharmatherapy, Psychotherapy, Survival.

Example narrow Wetware specialties: Make Hot Fun Into Sticky Paste, Make Hot Fun Into Acidic Solvent, Make Hot Fun Into Low-Yield Explosive.

For Ben-R-GOX-1's service group you roll 1d20 and consult the Service Group table on page 22. You roll 5—Central Processing Unit. Excellent! With Ben-R's strong Software skill, this should be a good match.

To find his service firm, you roll 1d20 and check the CPU firm table. 13—'Pocket Protector Refurbishers'. Huh. Well. Well, there's still an upside—you can choose a skill specialty from the CPU list. You decide

against choosing a new specialty. Instead, you take this opportunity to bump up your existing Financial Software specialty by 4, from 14 to 18 (the maximum allowed). Ben-R is a finance wizard!

You're in a Classic game. For Ben-R's mutant power you roll 1d20 and check the Classic table. You roll 6, Energy Field—whatever that is. You write it on the secret side of your character sheet.

Service group and firm

At the time you were decanted, your friend The Computer designated you for a particular service group. When you reached age 14 and left your clone creche, you worked at one of that group's service firms as an INFRARED line worker. You worked there for years before The Computer recruited you as a Troubleshooter. You still work at your service firm when you're not on a mission and not currently dead. In this way Troubleshooting is like volunteer firefighting, just not voluntary and with more firefights.

Some service firms can be bitter towards their part-timers, treating them as slackers. Of course, you're sure your own firm wouldn't be so callous. At least, you hope not; your low-level connections in your firm may prove useful as sources of information or equipment.

To determine your service group, roll 1d20 and consult the Service Group table nearby. Find your die-roll on the left side of the table; the name printed on the same line is the service group your service firm services. Then, on the Service Firm table appropriate to your service group, roll 1d20 again to find your service firm. To learn more about your firm, talk to the Gamemaster.

The Armed Forces and Internal Security service groups limit service-firm outsourcing to non-security-related functions. The rest of the old service groups remain today as regulatory agencies supervising the appropriate service firms. These service group bureaucracies are absolutely not flagrantly corrupt sump-holes full of superannuated, impotent bureaucrats. Don't think that. No matter what they act like, don't think that.

Service firm specialties

At your job, your service firm trained you in one common skill specialty. After thanking The Computer for its customary generosity, you will choose your service firm specialty from the following list. **Choosing a service firm common specialty is mandatory. Any attempt to choose a service firm specialty outside your service firm's authorized list will be answered with appropriate countermeasures.**

Your chosen specialty must enhance your character in exactly one of these two permitted ways:

New and improved: From your service firm's authorized list you choose a new 'free' skill specialty different from, and in addition to, the six you (optionally) chose earlier. The new specialty works like other common specialties, with a rating 4 higher than the governing skill. You don't suffer a compensating weakness for your new service firm specialty.

Bumped: You instead choose to enhance one of the six common specialties you chose earlier. The enhanced specialty must be on your service firm's authorized list. Add 4 to the enhanced specialty's rating (maximum 18). The enhancement has no effect on existing skill weaknesses.

For your convenience service firm specialties are labeled with their governing skill (**M**=Management, **St**=Stealth, **V**=Violence, **H**=Hardware, **So**=Software, **W**=Wetware).

Armed Forces: Demolition (V), Energy Weapons (V), Hand Weapons (V), Projectile Weapons (V), Thrown Weapons (V), Unarmed Combat (V); Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H).

Central Processing: Security Systems (St); Electronic Engineering (H); Bot Programming (So), Data Analysis (So), Financial Software (So), Data Search (So), Vehicle Programming (So).

HPD&MC: Bootlicking (M), Chutzpah (M), Con Games (M), Moxie (M); Bot Ops and Maintenance (H); Pharmatherapy (W), Medical (W).

Internal Security: Interrogation (M), Intimidation (M); Security Systems (St), Surveillance (St); Energy Weapons (V), Hand Weapons (V), Unarmed Combat (V).



PLAYER SECTION

Service firm tables

CLEARANCE RED

Service group

Roll 1d20 to determine your service group. Then, unless instructed otherwise, consult the table for your group to find your service firm type. The GM will tell you about your specific firm before play begins.

- 1 Armed Forces (group)*
- 2-3 Armed Forces (service firm)
- 4-5 Central Processing Unit
- 6-8 HPD & Mind Control
- 9 Internal Security**
- 10 Internal Security (service firm)
- 11-13 Production, Logistics & Commissary

14-15 Power Services

- 16-17 Research & Design
- 18-19 Technical Services
- 20 Industrial spy or saboteur***

* You serve in the Armed Forces proper, not as an outsourced civilian contractor. Don't roll for a service firm.

** Write 'Internal Security' on the back of your character sheet. Roll again for another service group. You are a spy for Internal Security in that group. The second group is your 'cover', the group everyone thinks you work for. You learn a service firm specialty from Internal Security, not your cover group.

*** You've been assigned to spy on or sabotage another service firm in your group. Roll again to determine your group, then roll twice on its firm table to get two service firm types. Your first roll determines who you're spying for, the second whom you're spying on. (If you roll the same firm type both times, you're spying on a direct rival.) You learn a service firm specialty from your original group, not your cover group. You'll collect a salary from both firms, assuming you survive a month.

Armed Forces

Workers for these service firms are civilian contractors, but often were assigned to their firms after an early stint as an Armed Forces grunt.

- 1-2 Ammunition Fresheners
- 3-4 Armed Forces Friends Network
- 5-6 Bodyguard Communications Liaisons
- 7-8 Blast Shield Maintenance
- 9-10 Crowd Control (Armed Forces)
- 11-12 Sensitivity Trainers
- 13-14 Threat Assessors (Armed Forces)
- 15-16 Tool & Die Works
- 17-18 Vulture Squadron Recruiters
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC)

- 1-2 Armored Autocar Escorts
- 3-4 BLUE Room Caterers
- 5-6 Equipment Assembly Control
- 7-8 Field Logistics Advisors
- 9-10 Food Vat Control
- 11-12 Inventory System Updaters
- 13-14 Printing Office Field Checkers
- 15-16 Storage Media Integrity Assessors
- 17-18 Warehouse System Inspectors
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

Central Processing Unit

- 1-2 116 Emergency Systems
- 3-4 Credit License Checkers
- 5-6 Facility Surveillance Control
- 7-8 Form Facilitators
- 9-10 Form Inventory Officers
- 11-12 Form Disposal Advisors
- 13-14 Pocket Protector Refurbishers
- 15-16 Security System Installers
- 17-18 Volunteer Collection Agencies
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

Power Services

- 1-2 Battery Backup
- 3-4 Burn Radius Assessors
- 5-6 Circuit Maintenance
- 7-8 Fuel Cell Replenishment (Power)
- 9-10 Fuel Rod Disposal Consultants
- 11-12 Odor Fresheners
- 13-14 Power Oscillation Professionals
- 15-16 Safe Atoms Initiative
- 17-18 Wire Supply Checkers
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

HPD & Mind Control

- 1-2 Entertainment Scouting Agencies
- 3-4 History Purifiers
- 5-6 News Services
- 7-8 Public Hating Coordination
- 9-10 Sector Expansion Surveyors
- 11-12 Semantics Control
- 13-14 Singalong Agents
- 15-16 Subliminals Police
- 17-18 Trend Identifiers
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

Research & Design

- 1-2 Biological Niceness Indexers
- 3-4 Bot Processing
- 5-6 Drug Interaction Testers
- 7-8 Field Data Collectors
- 9-10 Goo Cleanup
- 11-12 RoboPsych Auditing
- 13-14 Scientist Sanity Checkers
- 15-16 Vehicle Therapists
- 17-18 Weapon Effectiveness Assessors
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

Internal Security

- 1-2 Crowd Control (IntSec)
- 3-4 Forensic Analysis
- 5-6 Glee Quota Adjutants
- 7-8 Re-Education Client Procurement
- 9-10 Surveillance Operatives
- 11-12 Termination Center Janitorial
- 13-14 Thought Surveyors
- 15-16 Threat Assessors (IntSec)
- 17-18 Treason Scene Cleanup
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

Technical Services

- 1-2 Bedding Inspectors
- 3-4 Clone Tank Support Services
- 5-6 Consolidated Motorized Transport (CMT)
- 7-8 Fuel Cell Replenishment (Tech Svcs)
- 9-10 MemoMax Quality Assurance
- 11-12 Medical Services
- 13-14 Paint Control
- 15-16 Slime Identification
- 17-18 Tech Support
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

3. CREATING CHARACTERS

MUTANT POWERS

⦿ **PLC:** Chutzpah (M), Con Games (M); Bot Ops and Maintenance (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H); Data Search (So); Biosciences (W).

⦿ **Power Services:** Data Analysis (So), Data Search (So); Chemical Engineering (H), Electronic Engineering (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Mechanical Engineering (H), Nuclear Engineering (H).

⦿ **R&D:** Chemical Engineering (H), Mechanical Engineering (H), Nuclear Engineering (H); Bot Programming (So), Vehicle Programming (So); Bioweapons (W), Cloning (W).

⦿ **Tech Services:** Chemical Engineering (H), Electronic Engineering (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H); Bot Programming (So), Vehicle Programming (So); Pharmatherapy (W).

Mutant power

Due to treasonous sabotage of The Computer's otherwise faultless cloning process, certain clones are decanted with innate mutations that grant them inhuman or superhuman abilities. Because these genetic impurities present an uncontrollable threat to The Computer's hard-won social order, possession of a mutant power is treason punishable by execution.

Unknown (probably) to your fellow Troubleshooters, you possess a mutant power.

You have known about it for some time, but kept it secret from everyone.

The GM may determine your mutant power himself, and may decide not to tell you. If he asks you to determine your own mutant power, thank him profusely and consult the Mutant Powers table nearby. Roll 1d20 and find the number you rolled in the left column of the table appropriate to your GM's play style (Classic, Straight, Zap). The mutant power on the same line is your power. Write the power name on the secret part of your character sheet, protected from other players' prying eyes.

During the game, when you want to use your mutant power, tell the Gamemaster—preferably in secret conference, via note or prearranged signal, by waving coded flags, etc.

To learn about your mutant power, ask the Gamemaster.

Registering your mutation

Some mutants have patriotically registered their power with The Computer's Internal Security service group. After you know what your power does, decide whether or not to register it. However, if your power is **Machine Empathy**, *don't reveal it!* The Computer considers that power so dangerous it immediately executes anyone who possesses it.

A registered mutant isn't executed just for being a mutant. If you register your mutation, you can use your power whenever you like without being accused of treason. However, you must wear a yellow stripe on your uniform at all times (citizens of YELLOW Clearance wear a stripe with black borders). As a registered mutant you will certainly face

anti-mutant prejudice. Registered mutants get passed by for promotions, are the butt of jokes in service firm advertising and—most important for your purposes—are frequently the handiest scapegoat when anything goes wrong.

Registered mutants are second-class citizens, if that. The Computer tolerates you and assigns you to Troubleshooter teams in hopes of helping their odds. The Computer assigns responsibility for your safety to the Team Leader. Your fellow citizens can't just shoot you without the Leader's permission, or they risk getting recycled for destroying The Computer's 'equipment'. They can't execute you unless they can prove you did something treasonous. Yet citizens still hate and despise you publicly, though members of certain secret societies may look on you with pity.

Secret society

Long ago The Computer wisely started several of Alpha Complex's secret societies as harmless outlets for citizens' repressed urges toward insubordination. Other, more dangerous secret societies formed independently or as offshoots from the originals. Most of the societies developed many feuding factions, all competing for resources or even locked in internecine warfare. These societies survive today, and though talking about them is insubordination, their existence is widely known among citizens of all clearances.

Because even the oldest secret societies now evince dangerous ideas of self-determination, The Computer has rightly condemned all secret society membership as treason punishable by

Mutant power tables

Classic

- 1 Charm
- 2 Corrosion
- 3 Detect Mutant Power
- 4 Electroshock
- 5 Empathy
- 6 Energy Field
- 7 Hypersenses
- 8 Levitation
- 9 Machine Empathy*
- 10 Matter Eater
- 11 Mental Blast
- 12 Polymorphism
- 13 Puppeteer
- 14 Pyrokinesis
- 15 Regeneration
- 16 Slippery Skin
- 17 Telekinesis
- 18 Teleportation
- 19 Uncanny Luck
- 20 X-Ray Vision



*Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.

Straight

- 1 Adhesive Skin
- 2 Adrenalin Control
- 3 Bureaucratic Intuition
- 4 Charm
- 5 Death Simulation
- 6 Deep Thought
- 7 Electroshock
- 8 Empathy
- 9 Energy Field
- 10 Hypersenses
- 11 Machine Empathy*
- 12 Matter Eater
- 13 Mechanical Intuition
- 14 Mental Blast
- 15 Pyrokinesis
- 16 Regeneration
- 17 Rubbery Bones
- 18 Toxic Metabolism
- 19 Uncanny Luck
- 20 Ventriloquist



*Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.

Zap

- 1 Absorption
- 2 Chameleon
- 3 Charm
- 4 Desolidity
- 5 Electroshock
- 6 Energy Field
- 7 Growth
- 8 Levitation
- 9 Machine Empathy*
- 10 Matter Eater
- 11 Mental Blast
- 12 Polymorphism
- 13 Puppeteer
- 14 Pyrokinesis
- 15 Regeneration
- 16 Shrinking
- 17 Telekinesis
- 18 Teleportation
- 19 Transmutation
- 20 X-Ray Vision



*Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.



execution. This is unfortunate for you, because you are a secret society member.

All secret societies recruit aggressively among the INFRARED laborers of Alpha Complex. One such society recruited you several years ago, and you are now familiar with its goals and doctrines. You know its friends, enemies, methods and possibly even a few contacts. Because you recognize your society as a potentially powerful tool for your advancement, you work sincerely and aggressively to further its goals.

The Gamemaster may tell you your secret society, or may ask you to roll a die to determine it. In this case, thank him for his graciousness and consult the Secret Society table appropriate to your service group. Roll 1d20 and find the number you rolled in the left column of the table. The society on the same line is your affiliation. Write it on the secret part of your character sheet.

If you roll an entry with an asterisk, consult the table key below.

To learn about your secret society, ask the Gamemaster.

Secret society degree

Like other institutions in Alpha Complex, most secret societies are strictly hierarchical. The higher your degree (rank) in your society, the more you can exploit your connections to procure restricted equipment or information, gain contacts, borrow funds, or many other kinds of perks. Your secret society designates your degree by a number from 1 (low) to 20 (high). This isn't (just) an abstract game rating but a literal status number tracked by your superiors in the society. Generally the higher your degree number, the greater the authority you can exert over those of lower degree. However, this varies; in some societies, high degree may indicate only prestige or, worse, the magnitude of your administrative drudgework.

Secret society table key

* Write 'Illuminati' on the secret section of your character sheet. Roll the die again to find a second, 'cover' society. You are an undercover agent for the Illuminati in this society.

** You've been assigned to spy on another society. Roll twice more. Your first roll determines who you're spying for, the second whom you're spying on. If you roll a 20 again, the group you're spying on assigns you to spy on a third society. Roll enough 20s and you could be spying on the entire Complex. Good luck keeping your cover stories straight.

Secret society tables

Roll 1d20 and find the table for your service group. The entry beside the number you rolled is your secret society. If the entry has an asterisk, see the key at lower left.

Armed Forces

- 1-3 Anti-Mutant
- 4-6 Death Leopard
- 7-9 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 10-12 PURGE
- 13 Communists
- 14 FCCC-P
- 15 Free Enterprise
- 16 Pro Tech
- 17 Psion
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC)

- 1-5 Free Enterprise
- 6-9 Humanists
- 10-11 Mystics
- 12-13 Romantics
- 14 Communists
- 15 Pro Tech
- 16 Psion
- 17 Sierra Club
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Central Processing Unit

- 1-4 Computer Phreaks
- 5-8 Corpore Metal
- 9-10 FCCC-P
- 11-12 Sierra Club
- 13 Anti-Mutant
- 14 Communists
- 15 Pro Tech
- 16 Psion
- 17 PURGE
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Power Services

- 1-2 Computer Phreaks
- 3-4 Death Leopard
- 5-6 FCCC-P
- 7-8 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 9-10 Free Enterprise
- 11-12 Mystics
- 13-14 Pro Tech
- 15-16 PURGE
- 17 Communists
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

HPD & Mind Control

- 1-2 Anti-Mutant
- 3-4 FCCC-P
- 5-7 Humanists
- 8-11 Romantics
- 12-13 Sierra Club
- 14 Communists
- 15 Mystics
- 16 Psion
- 17 PURGE
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Research & Design (R&D)

- 1-3 Computer Phreaks
- 4-6 Corpore Metal
- 7-9 Pro Tech
- 10-12 Psion
- 13-15 PURGE
- 16 FCCC-P
- 17 Communists
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Internal Security

- 1-3 Anti-Mutant
- 4-6 Death Leopard
- 7-9 FCCC-P
- 10-12 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 13 Communists
- 14 Free Enterprise
- 15 Pro Tech
- 16 Psion
- 17 PURGE
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Technical Services

- 1-2 Computer Phreaks
- 3-4 Corpore Metal
- 5-6 Death Leopard
- 7-8 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 9-10 Mystics
- 11-12 Pro Tech
- 13-14 Psion
- 15-16 Sierra Club
- 17 Communists
- 18 Illuminati*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent**

Your beginning secret society degree depends on your GM's chosen play style.

Classic: Roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4 (round fractions up). The result is your degree.

Straight: Your degree is 1, meaning you are a low-level flunky. Further your society's goals and succeed in its secret missions, and advancement will surely follow.

Zap: Roll 1d20. The result is your degree. Do you think it unlikely a powerful degree-20 potentate in a secret society would become a lowly RED Troubleshooter? True. Propose an explanation for this predicament to your GM. Using his incontestably unbiased judgment, he may see fit to give your imperiled character some secret perks.

Secret skills

Contacts in your secret society have taught you things The Computer's teachbots never mentioned. These areas of knowledge or practice, not covered by the Action and Knowledge skills, are **Secret** skills.

Secret skills are grouped in these categories:

- ⦿ **Uncommon** in Alpha Complex but not necessarily treasonous: Swimming, Rock Climbing, and other Outdoors skills; craft skills such as cooking or glassblowing; conceivably (among citizens whose hormone suppressants have worn off) even seduction. Knowing how to drive a non-automated vehicle is Uncommon; each vehicle type is a different skill. To

Secret skills

If your secret society requires you to learn a specific Secret skill, it appears in **bold** print on the society's line in this table. Skills not in bold print are recommended but not mandatory. If you don't like a recommended skill, pick one from another society, or invent your own skill and submit it to the GM for approval.

Society	Uncommon	Unlikely	Unhealthy*
Anti-Mutant	Power Studies	Comic Book Trivia	Twitchtalk
Computer Phreaks	Cash Hacking	Jargon	Hacking, programming skills
Communists	Demolition	Tractor Maintenance	Propaganda*
Corporal Metal	Cyborging	Botspotting	Bioweapons
Death Leopard	Demolition	Action Movies, Partying	Gambling
FCCC-P	Alpha Complex History	priestly skills	Meeting Machine Empaths
Frankenstein Destroyers	Demolition	toolmaking skills	programming skills
Free Enterprise	Haggling	Advertising & Marketing	Bribery, Forgery
Humanists	Marital Arts <i>[sic]</i>	hobbies, languages	Old Reckoning Cultures
Illuminati	skills taught by your cover society		
Mystics	Drug Procurement	Meditation, Partying	Old Reckoning Drugs
Pro Tech	Experimental Equipment Repair/Maintenance	Video Games	WMD
Psion	Power Studies	Comic Book Trivia	Twitchtalk
PURGE	Demolition	Gloating	Bioweapons, Twitchtalk
Romantics	Archival Studies	Cooking, Knitting, Music	Old Reckoning Cultures
Sierra Club	Survival, Wild Lore, Travel	Birdwatching, Botany, Spoor Recognition, etc.	Bioweapons

* Each society also has a specific Propaganda skill, an Unhealthy skill that is unique and differs from all other societies' versions of the skill.



Members of the Sierra Club meet in secret to commune with nature.



justify your character's Uncommon skill, offer the GM a convincing rationale. ('I became a bookbinder to repair a High Programmer's treasonous Old Reckoning book collection.')

☞ **Unlikely** to figure significantly in a mission: Knitting and other hobby skills, Whistling, Teela-O-MLY Trivia, Video Games, etc. However, by roleplaying these skills during the game, you can earn *Perversity points*, described later.

☞ **Unhealthy:** Treasonous skills such as Communist Propaganda, Digital Image Manipulation, Filesharing, foreign languages, etc.; knowledge of Old Reckoning Cultures; criminal skills (Twitchtalk, Fraudulent Accounting, Gambling); also skills legally available only at a higher clearance than yours (highly advanced science or mathematics, etc.).

Some secret societies mandate that you learn certain Secret skills. Other societies couldn't give a used algae chip which skills you learn. Find your society's preferences in the table nearby. If a skill appears in **bold print**, you must learn that skill. If the skill name isn't in bold, or no skill is listed, you may learn any Secret skill you wish. If you're undercover, learn your cover society's skills.

Unless the GM informs you otherwise, you are required to choose exactly **one Secret skill in each category** (Uncommon, Unlikely, Unhealthy). The GM, that paragon

of fairness, can veto your choices or assign them to a different category. Never choose something like 'Unerringly Destroy Fellow Troubleshooters' or you risk alienating the GM's tender affections.

Write the skills on the secret side of your character sheet. For Secret skills not on the regular non-secret list, roll 1d20; the result is the skill's rating. For specialties from the regular non-secret list, like Demolition, determine their rating normally from the governing skill's rating. If you already have that specialty or weakness, don't change the existing rating.

■ Perversity points and tics

You, the player (as opposed to your character), start play with 25 *Perversity points*. You can use these points for many desirable things explained later. You now have a valuable opportunity to earn bonus Perversity points! You will of course embrace this chance with a joyous heart.

You may earn up to 10 valuable Perversity points by choosing one or two identifiable *tics*: examples of your character's individual quirks, quiddities and habits.

A tic is any *obvious and recognizable* behavior or condition that seldom, if ever, directly affects the game—for example, humming absently, twiddling your thumbs when you're nervous, or twitching when anyone mentions 'the sewers'. Perhaps you acquired your tic while working at your service firm, or because of your mutant power. For instance, if you worked all day for years shuffling rods of enriched uranium from one Power Services reactor to another,

wouldn't you expect to have an odd rash or persistent sores or faintly glowing hair?

A tic is never secret. Anyone in your presence for more than a few minutes observes it. The tic doesn't inhibit your ability to do anything useful; it's just a way strangers might describe you. A database query for some generic description like 'tall male Troubleshooter, black hair, crewcut, shifty features' would bring up more hits than a Google search for 'sex'. A description that includes a few tics ('He had bow legs and a monitor-shaped mole on his jaw, he snuffled through his nose and when I offered him a bag of algae chips he screamed like a girl') could pull you out of a police lineup with 99% accuracy.

Possibly you see no worth in this notion. Why, then, take a tic? First, it helps you roleplay a distinctive character. If that doesn't motivate you, consider this: For each tic you take during character creation (up to two tics), you earn Perversity points. The number of Perversity points is determined when all players have created their characters and, in unison, present their character sheets to the Gamemaster. The GM reads aloud all tics. For each of your tics the GM considers basically similar to another player's tic(s), you earn 1 point. For each of your tics that differs from all other players' tics, you instead earn 5 Perversity points.

Though you only earn Perversity points for the first two tics you select, you can add more tics if you wish, making your character still more identifiable. Why, look, your fellow players are encouraging you! Don't you want to please them?

■ Tics in play

Like Secret skills, Tics can earn you Perversity points not only during character creation but in the course of play. Tics are your roleplaying cues. When you play your tics effectively, in a fun and entertaining way, the GM may award you a Perversity point bonus. He may reward you for a particularly fun tic use during the game, but more often he'll make the award at the end of a play session. **Beware!** Boring or repetitive tics won't earn you points, no matter how many times you sniff your underarms or jerk your head to the right.

■ Security clearance

With its customary wisdom The Computer has arranged all Alpha Complex society using an unbreakable system of security clearances. The security clearances are ranked by color, low to high: INFRARED, RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO, VIOLET, ULTRAVIOLET. INFRARED-clearance citizens wear black, and ULTRAVIOLET citizens (also known as *High Programmers*) wear white. Everyone else wears clothing of the color appropriate for their clearance. Rooms and corridors in Alpha Complex are painted in varying hues of their clearance colors. To pass

Character example: 4

Next you roll 1d20 to determine Ben-R-GOX-1's secret society. You're not sure what the societies do, but with your great Financial Software rating, it sounds like you'd be a natural for Free Enterprise. Because Ben-R is in the CPU service group, you rub your lucky die, roll a 15, and check the CPU secret society table. 'Frankenstein Destroyers'—whoever they are, they don't sound particularly businesslike.

Looking at the Secret skills available in the Destroyers, you don't see anything attractive to a financial software guru. None of their skills are mandatory. You skip Demolition and the toolmaking skills. For Unhealthy you don't want programming; you like Twitchtalk instead. You could create your own Uncommon and Unlikely skills, but you like the Free Enterprise entries in these categories: Haggling and Advertising & Marketing.

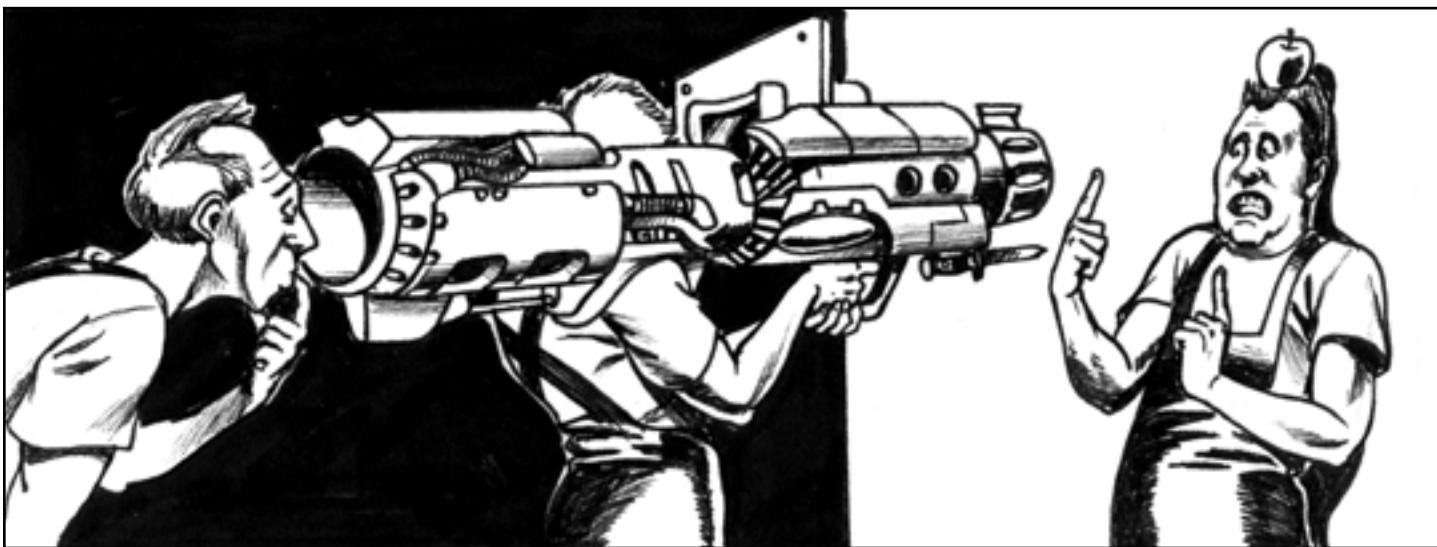
For each Secret skill you roll 1d20. Your Twitchtalk skill is 13, Haggling is 6, and Advertising & Marketing is a dismal 1.

You start the game with 25 Perversity points—and those are *your* points, you the player, not Ben-R-GOX-1's points. You want more, so you choose two visible tics for Ben-R. All his software duties in CPU have left him with twitchy fingers (carpal tunnel), and he often clacks his teeth together in a fashion some might find annoying. If no other player chooses these same tics for his character, you'll earn 5 more Perversity apiece for them.

Ben-R is Clearance RED. He has two attributes, Access and Power, but you don't know what his ratings are.

Nothing looks good on the Equipment chart, so you keep your 1,000 starting credits for now.

When you show your character to the GM, he notes your strong Free Enterprise inclination despite putative membership in the Destroyers. He decides the Destroyers have assigned you to spy undercover on Free Enterprise. A chance to use that Financial Software skill after all!



A Troubleshooter practices his weapon skills in cooperation with an enthusiastic INFRARED volunteer.

through a corridor or enter a room beyond your clearance is treason.

Your clearance measures nothing less than The Computer's expressed trust in you. If The Computer trusts you not at all (as with most citizens), you are a common INFRARED. At the other extreme, if The Computer trusts you to revise the very code it runs on, you are a High Programmer, Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. All citizens in Alpha Complex, whatever their current rank, began as INFRAREDs. As the game starts, you have been promoted from the teeming masses of INFRAREDs to Clearance RED. The Computer encourages all citizens to aspire to higher clearance, so they may serve Alpha Complex more effectively.

Armed with The Computer's trust, those of high clearance can exercise great authority over everyone of lower clearance. Thus some selfish individuals may have a different motive for rising in clearance: so they can lord it over their fellow citizens. Of course, you and your fellow Troubleshooters are certainly immune to such selfishness.

Note: Players who ascend to **PARANOIA** after playing other (non-fun) RPGs sometimes mistake a rise in security clearance for what some games might call 'going up in level'—an increase in the character's abilities or general competence. **This is incorrect!** Security clearance simply measures The Computer's current regard for the character.

The Computer's regard for you, and hence your security clearance, might change often, both up and down. This absolutely doesn't imply that the GM is running the game capriciously, without due respect for your character's careful career plans. Nonsense. Who could imagine such a thing?

Attributes

Your Troubleshooter, like every human character in Alpha Complex, has two innate attributes: Power and Access.

Warning! Each of your attributes has a numerical rating, but at Clearance RED you are not permitted to know your attribute ratings. You are only allowed to know, in a general way, what each attribute measures. **Displaying knowledge of your own or any character's attribute ratings below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET is treason.**

⦿ **Power** measures the strength of your mutant power. The higher your Power rating, the more effectively you can use your power.

⦿ **Access** describes how smoothly you can get things done in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. It measures your awareness of intricate clerical procedures and your ability to pull strings to get favors from influential people.

Access is different from security clearance, which measures The Computer's trust in you. Access is not trustworthiness, but streetwise efficiency. The higher your Access, the more smoothly you can (for instance) get that disgruntled clerk behind the counter in PLC to have a broken showerhead repaired promptly.

In this way Access is better than security clearance. A high security clearance just moves you to the front of the PLC line and lets you threaten the clerk—but if the clerk doesn't have the replacement showerhead, threats won't help. The Access attribute lets you realize you need Plumbing Supply Requisition Form 2214-PLC-5632 rev. 12, in sextuplicate. Or Access can instead ensure that a friend in Free Enterprise lines up an INFRARED-market showerhead pronto.

Draining attribute points

You are not cleared to understand how the GM uses your attribute ratings in play. In general terms, he tracks these ratings as a pool of points, which he may spend to let your character accomplish tasks.

⦿ If you are using your mutant power, the GM may drain Power points from your current rating to represent the energy you expend swallowing uranium or setting your supervisor on fire.

⦿ If you want to get something done in the bureaucracy, the GM may drain Access points from your rating to represent your cashing in favors to locate your briefing room or repair your showerhead.

Do not ask the GM how many points you have, nor how many he has drained to accomplish a given task. These questions are prohibited and punishable by stern measures.

After draining your points, the GM will tell you the result of your action. He may or may not divulge whether the drain had any effect, as it suits his mysterious purpose.

If you run out of attribute points, you won't find out. You can perhaps deduce it from repeated failures, but this is mere guesswork. The kindly GM usually replenishes your points at the start of the next scene or play session. **Do not ask when the GM will next replenish your attribute points. This question is forbidden and will incur reprisal.**



Equipment

By making Alpha Complex an all-embracing command economy drawing on the collective effort of all loyal citizens, taking from each

Equipment

This chart lists many common and sought-after items and their typical costs. Prices vary with current production quotas, The Computer's current inflation policy and other, even more boring reasons.

Every item has a security clearance below which it is illegal to possess the item without specific authorization from The Computer. Possessing an item marked with a double asterisk (**) below the listed clearance is treason. In Straight games possessing an item without the double asterisk is merely insubordination punishable by a fine. In Classic or Zap games possessing the item is treason.

Note: If the Gamemaster doesn't like something on this list, he'll change it.

Bots

[cost; clearance]
Bot brain, used: 500; varies
Combot**: 30,000; B
Docbot 1: 1,000; R
Docbot 5: 10,000; B
Guardbot: 8,000; G
Jackobot: 10,000; O
Petbot: 400; any
Robutler: 2,500; Y
Scrubot: 1,000; R
Teachbot: 1,000; R
Warbot Model 425 Mark 4**: not for sale

Coms and multicorders

Com 1: 100; R
2: 500; Y
3: 1,000; G
4**: 5,000; I
Multicorder 1: 600; R
2: 1,000; G
3**: 5,000; I
4**: 10,000; V
Multicorder programs: 100; varies
PDC: 250; R

Vehicles

Vehicle prices and availability vary. Rebates possible. Dealer prep and options not included.

Autocar: 15,000; R
Copter: 75,000; G
Crawler: 50,000; Y
Flybot: 125,000; B
Transbot: 50,000; O
Vulturecraft**: you can't afford this; B

See the IR Market chart at the end of the Player section (p. 48) for more cool and potentially treasonous stuff to buy.

citizen according to his ability and giving to each according to [CLASSIFIED]. The Computer has fought off the Communist menace. In recent years The Computer's High Programmers have reshaped the Complex economy to encourage greater concentration of wealth in those best able to spend it wisely: the High Programmers. To this end many new service firms manufacture a wide range of consumer goods that you, as a loyal citizen, are extremely strongly encouraged to buy. Buy often! Spend freely! Spend to the limit of your means, for the good of the High Programmers and hence of all Alpha Complex!

You have both *personal equipment* you buy yourself with your own credits, and equipment *assigned* by The Computer's service firms as part of your mission.

Your personal equipment includes one standard-issue red jumpsuit with boots, a month's worth of REDdiMeals, and all the approved happiness drugs you want. You may also purchase more personal equipment using the chart nearby. If anything happens to your personal equipment, you must buy it again if you want replacements, and you may earn The Computer's disapproval for flagrant waste of property.

Your assigned equipment includes:

- ⦿ One laser pistol body, minus the barrel.

Note: Your assigned laser pistol lacks a barrel. It won't fire without a barrel. Laser barrels are color-coded by security clearance and are issued at PLC when you pick up your mission-related equipment. (To get a barrel without proper PLC authorization is absolutely impossible, no matter what your secret society contacts tell you. It's impossible, so don't even think about it. PLC thanks you.)

- ⦿ One suit of red reflec armor overalls in (more or less) your size.
- ⦿ A Series 1300 Personal Digital Companion (PDC).

Your PDC is a helpful, friendly phone and AI contained within a cellphone-sized, easily concealable plastic case. The PDC has a small color display touchscreen, a stylus, a standard telephony keypad, and a built-in camera that can document still or video pictures of any treasonous behavior you might happen to point it at. The PDC also includes built-in online forms for reporting said treason quickly and conveniently.

On your PDC you can call The Computer at any time, as well as mission personnel

if they are willing to take your call. All images, data, and voice messages from your PDC are copied instantly to your personal, pass phrase-protected online file storage area, made available to you free as a public service by Internal Security. (Your End Citizen License Agreement gives IntSec the right to peruse at will the contents of your file area.)

You don't own your assigned equipment. You use it at the pleasure of the service firm. You are financially responsible for these items; if anything happens to them, you must reimburse the service firm for the items' cost, and you may earn The Computer's official disfavor.

You also own, as personal equipment, one *ME Card*.

The ME Card

The Computer requires every citizen to carry a Mercantile Enterprise card—universally known as the **ME Card**. Though it looks and works much like Old Reckoning credit cards, your ME Card is far more. Loaded with your biometric data, credit history, property inventory, and authentication codes, the ME Card is, in a sense, your identity.

Sadly, the card's built-in sensors don't test whether the individual carrying your card is the rightful owner. The Computer, in its analysis of economic systems, has determined it doesn't matter who is spending the money so long as someone is. So if you lose your ME Card, the thief can become Officially You until you recover, destroy, or cancel your Card.

Because cancelling an ME Card is a slow, all-day ordeal at Central Processing (though nothing compared to the three-day hell of getting a replacement), it's far more practical to try tracking down your stolen Card—and in the meantime even to 'borrow' someone else's Card and become Officially Him for a while.

Identity theft in Alpha Complex has thus become not just a concern but an everyday event. Wise citizens go to extremes to protect their Cards.

Still, take heart! Theft of one's Card doesn't always mean immediate financial ruin. The ME Card's resources are highly unreliable, varying in their buying power and perquisites by sector, time of day and database availability.

Character creation complete!

You have successfully negotiated the character creation process. **You have not yet completed the entire orientation process.** Continue promptly to the next chapter.

4. CASH FLOW

4. Spending your credits

You start your career as a Troubleshooter with a generous reward from The Computer of 1,000 credits. At Clearance RED, this is about a month of ordinary expenses.

Your salary of 1,000 credits a month is paid directly by The Computer and not from any service group budget, so no boss or overseer will demand a kickback. This lets you husband your credits to pay mission-related expenses. Troubleshooter missions, though they pay generous completion bonuses, do tend to incur expenses.

You won't necessarily die multiple times and have to buy new clones. You won't inevitably terminate some victim without sufficient evidence and thus be liable for the cost of his replacement clone. You aren't inherently likely to destroy property without authorization and be billed for the damage. You won't absolutely, beyond any doubt offend some high-clearance citizen who punishes you with a breathtaking fine.

It won't necessarily, inevitably, inherently, absolutely, beyond any doubt happen that way.

However, keep the possibility in mind. Thank you for your cooperation.

■ Salary and living expenses

The higher your clearance, the more it costs to maintain your existence in the manner to which you hope to become accustomed.

The monthly salary you earn depends on your security clearance. By a remarkable coincidence, this is the same amount as your average monthly living expenses. Here are typical salaries, by clearance, and the standard of living they buy. Because vidshows exhaustively document the lifestyles of the famous high-clearance citizens who have earned The Computer's trust, every citizen in Alpha Complex knows many perks available at every clearance. The Computer encourages tasteful expressions of desire for these perks, to the extent they signify one's greater service to Alpha Complex. Expressions of outright envy are impolite.

INFRARED (100 credits/month)

Food: FunFoods (Hot and Cold), many kinds of algae, Bouncy Bubble Beverage on special occasions. INFRAREDs can live without cost indefinitely. The Computer pays them a small monthly stipend to aid the Alpha Complex economy.

Housing: Communal barracks.

Transport: Feet. Transtube.

Staff: None.

Authority: None.

Perks: Perpetual happy drug haze.

Typical INFRARED citizens: Line workers and grunts of all service groups; over 80% of the population is INFRARED. The Computer

As a RED Clearance citizen, you receive a salary of 1,000 credits per month. As a Troubleshooter, you are paid directly by The Computer.

Your living expenses at RED Clearance cost 1,000 credits a month. Higher clearances have higher monthly expenses. Live at the level appropriate for your clearance or risk loss of status.

officially regards INFRAREDs as the admirably sturdy foundation of Alpha Complex. Nearly all higher-clearance citizens emerge from their teeming ranks; Alpha Complex has no hereditary aristocracy. Privately, many of RED Clearance and above (generically called 'trusted citizens') hold INFRAREDs in contempt as drugged drones.

Still, INFRAREDs tend to live longer than trusted citizens below, say, GREEN Clearance, because as a group they seem less prone to treason. For this reason, and because of their huge numbers, INFRAREDs are subject to much less surveillance than other groups.

RED (1,000 credits/month)

Food: FunFoods, REDdiMeals with Soylent Red, Bouncy Bubble Beverage occasionally, real food a couple of times a month.

Housing: Room shared with up to five other citizens.

Transport: Feet. Transtube. Transition.

Staff: None.

Authority: None. Even Infrareds aren't likely to listen to you, as they're doing jobs for the higher-ups.

Perks: You're not drugged all the time, and you're not INFRARED.

Typical RED citizens: Troubleshooters, senior clerks, low-level technicians, Armed Forces grunts; about 10% of the population.

ORANGE (2,000/month)

Food: FunFoods, ORANGEyouGladMeals with Soylent Orange, all the B3 you want, real food weekly.

Housing: Room shared with one other citizen.

Transport: Feet. Transtube. Transition. Autocar hack once in a while.

Staff: None.

Authority: You can coerce the occasional INFRARED.

Perks: Well, you're not RED. Some free time.

Typical ORANGE citizens: Technical supervisors, managers, mundane programmers, vidshow sidekicks, Armed Forces corporals; about 6% of the population.

YELLOW (3,000/month)

Food: FunFoods, MelloYELLOWMeals with Soylent Yellow, real food once daily.

Housing: Your own room (under camera surveillance). Shared bathroom.

Transport: Transtube. Autocar hack.



Citizens of all clearances show admirable zeal in service to The Computer.



PLAYER SECTION

CLEARANCE RED

Staff: Whomever you can threaten.

Authority: You manage a small group at your service firm.

Perks: You set your own schedule (subject to higher-clearance demands). You can request changes in your pharmatherapy.

Typical YELLOW citizens: Mid-level bureaucrats, R&D project leads, vidshow hosts, Armed Forces sergeants, PLC artisans crafting handmade trinkets for High Programmers; about 2% of the population.

GREEN (10,000/month)

Food: Real food each meal, supplemented with GREENGood and various Soylents.

Housing: Private one-bedroom apartment.

Transport: Hack. Shared private autocar.

Staff: A housebot servant.

Authority: May assign on-the-spot insubordination fines. May demote RED citizens. You manage a large division of your service firm.

Perks: Noticeable jump in status (and, often, body weight). Lower levels may engage in spontaneous bootlicking—that is, not at laserpoint. Pharmatherapy optional.

Typical GREEN citizens: Senior supervisors, managing directors, elite artisans, Armed Forces lieutenants, IntSec goons. All citizens of GREEN Clearance and above (sometimes generically called ‘administrators’ or ‘managers’) collectively comprise about 2% of the population.

BLUE (40,000/month)

Food: Nothing but real food all the time! At last!

Housing: Opulent suite in safe and prestigious subsector.

Transport: Private autocar.

Staff: Full bot staff and bot programmer. Seldom if ever do you encounter Infrareds.

Authority: May promote to Clearance ORANGE or lower. May demote from GREEN or lower. May assign Merit awards and penalties. You manage an entire service firm.

Perks: You go to the front of any line; invitations to vidshow award ceremonies;

exclusive club memberships; underlings grovel routinely. Your private life is exempt from routine surveillance.

Typical BLUE citizens: Junior executives on the rise, vidshow producers, Armed Forces captains and majors, IntSec officers, Central Processing managing directors.

INDIGO (100,000/month)

Food: Gourmet meals and rich desserts.

Housing: A lovely big corridor all your own.

Transport: Several vehicles with chauffeur or pilot.

Staff: Full staff of humans and bots. You can go a month without seeing an ORANGE citizen.

Authority: May promote to GREEN or lower. May demote from BLUE or lower. You serve on the Boards of several service firms.

Perks: Obsessive coverage on celebrity vidshows, assuming you like that; always a table open or a room ready; you skip the lines completely and go directly to the manager. You pull lots of strings at Internal Security. If you offer sufficiently good reasons to The Computer, you can openly collect and study achievements of Old Reckoning Cultures.

Typical INDIGO citizens: Senior executives, Armed Forces colonels, IntSec deputy supervisors, Central Processing chief director, HPD&MC vidshow studio chiefs, most secret society chiefs.

VIOLET (600,000/month)

Food: Huge Hollywood-scale dinner parties catered by a GREEN master chef. (You fought hard to get your chef, and you constantly fend off marauding rivals who want to spirit him away.)

Housing: A subsector or two.

Transport: Many autocars, truckbots, private flybots and maybe a sub; full motorcade with IntSec escort.

Staff: Full human staff. (Bots are so working-class.) You hardly ever encounter anyone YELLOW or lower.

Authority: May promote to and demote from INDIGO or lower. May order summary

executions and erasure of clone templates. ‘Service firms? Oh, you mean my investment portfolio.’

Perks: You see this sector? It’s yours. You don’t go to managers; they come to you. You can freely say almost anything short of outright Commie propaganda. ‘Internal Security? Oh, you mean my staff police.’

Typical VIOLET citizens: CEOs, generals, IntSec chief supervisor, Free Enterprise secret society chiefs, Machine Empaths. A typical INFRARED citizen may see a VIOLET once or twice in his life.

ULTRAVIOLET (if you have to ask, you can't afford it)

Food, Housing, Transport, Staff, Perks: If they can’t have it, it not only doesn’t exist, it probably can’t.

Authority: Nobody knows exactly what they do or where they live. High Programmers are either famous throughout the Complex or, if they prefer, totally anonymous. Mere knowledge of their activities is potentially treasonous.

Typical ULTRAVIOLET citizens: This information is not available at your security clearance.

Underspending

In times of tight cash you can decide to save credits by living at a lower clearance level than you’re entitled to. You can even return to living free at an INFRARED level of squalor, eating food out of a tube and bunking in a big echoing barracks that smells of acetone and formaldehyde. This costs nothing, except to the prestige and influence you enjoyed. However, your frugal ways will attract attention from The Computer.

The Computer tracks the amount each citizen spends every day. A citizen who spends notably less than average obviously must be doing something illegal: stealing what he should be buying, spending money on the IR Market, or even (gasp!) funneling funds to subversive organizations.

5. Clones

You need credits for many expenses, including (in Straight games) new clones.

In the old days of Alpha Complex, The Computer created citizens in families of six identical clones, all born from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. What a treasonous waste of resources! Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer’s loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will, and can copy

In the old days citizens were decanted in families of six identical clones. Now you are just You, alone—the Prime.

If you die, your memories are transferred to a clone backup body. You have five clone backups. If your GM allows it, you can purchase new six-packs of backups.

5. CLONES

and transfer a clone's memories with absolute accuracy.

Most citizens who meet an untimely demise must wait months for Tech Services to get around to downloading their recorded memories into a new replacement body. Because Troubleshooters have a twenty-seven-thousand-percent higher fatality rate than average, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered Tech Services to prepare a number of ready backup Yous. Unfortunately, this costs money—and it comes out of your salary.

When you start a new Troubleshooter, Tech Services grants you six clones for a regulated minimal cost. You begin as Clone #1 in your line, the so-called *Prime*, which costs nothing. The value of the remaining five clones in your first six pack is 2,000 credits—a value of 400 credits per clone, yours free! Thank you, Friend Computer.

What happens when you run out of clones? That depends on your GM's play style.



Zap: You're gone. Generate a new character.



Classic: The Gamemaster chooses whether clones work like Zap games or Straight games.



Straight: If you have exhausted your six allotted clones, all is not lost. You can buy new 'six-packs' of six more clones. Still, things get unpleasant for two main reasons: cost and genetic defects.

First, cost. To discourage frivolous dying, The Computer has decreed that your first additional six-pack (Clones 7-12) costs 6,000 credits—1,000 per clone. The price goes up for each subsequent six-pack. The price progression after the twelfth clone is not available at your clearance. To pay for your fifth or sixth six-pack, you may need to take an odd job on the side. Maybe two odd jobs. Maybe two hundred.

If you lack the credits to pay for a new six-pack, your credit balance goes negative. If your negative credit balance dips too low, your clone bank forecloses and wipes your template. Once your deadbeat Troubleshooter dies, start a new character. The threshold for this catastrophe is 10 times the monthly living expenses associated with your clearance, described under 'Living Expenses'. For example, if you're Red clearance, with expenses of 1,000 credits a month, the clone bank forecloses when your balance hits -10,000.

Your first additional six-pack of clones costs 6,000 credits—1,000 per clone. The cost of later clones is not available at your clearance.

Backup clones beyond your original five are prone to cumulative imperfections called genetic drift.

The bright spot here is if someone else kills you without having adequate evidence of your treason, the impetuous murderer is liable for the cost of your new clone—assuming you can find the killer. (Remember, this applies to Straight games only.)

A more serious problem is genetic drift. Tiny imperfections in the cloning process enter your clone template and accumulate with each clone after the sixth. The seventh might have a minor speech impediment or be missing a finger. The eighth has the same problem and could also be nearsighted, partially deaf, or color-blind (a grave hazard in Alpha Complex). The ninth has both of these problems and might also have a pronounced limp, twitch, or hump. By the tenth or eleventh clone, think Quasimodo.

At Clearance BLUE and higher you can spend 10,000 credits to get Tech Services to clean up and correct your clone template, so that your next six clones are as perfect as the original. The only means of template cleanup at lower cost or clearance is an illicit deal made through a secret society. Generally the society requires you to do it a favor at some unspecified time in the future. Perhaps the society will never call in that favor, perhaps they will never need you...

Does your clone replacement always have the same mutant power as its predecessor? Not necessarily. If you want to keep the same power, tell the GM. Otherwise, he may give you a new power or ask you to roll again on the Mutant Power table in this section.



In earlier times citizens were decanted simultaneously in 'clone families' of six. How wasteful of resources! New technology gives you new clones on demand.



6. Mandatory Bonus Duty (MBD)

The Computer assigns fun and interesting duties to specific members of your Troubleshooter mission team as rewards for their continued service. These **Mandatory Bonus Duties** (MBDs) enhance the team's chances of success and provide many exciting and educational experiences. Your added responsibility will make you feel loved, wanted and secure, and not at all paranoid.

For instance, your MBD might be *Communications and Recording Officer*. As such, in addition to your normal duties during a mission, you'd operate a valuable multicorder to record every action by your fellow

Each Troubleshooter on the team has a special duty. You may be Team Leader, Loyalty Officer, Hygiene Officer, Communications Officer, Happiness Officer, or Equipment Guy.

Troubleshooters. You could get all your fellow Troubleshooters to smile and demonstrate their loyalty to The Computer right there on camera as they execute their mission. Wouldn't that be fun?

Mission briefing officers may assign you an MBD based on detailed analysis of your past achievements, your performance on HPD&MC Mandatory Bonus Duty Determination Test 88-9b, your core competencies or your place in alphabetical order.

The Duties



- ☞ **Team Leader:** Offers guidance and sound advice to other team members; acts as tactical situation commander in combat



- ☞ **Loyalty Officer:** Discourages treasonous thoughts; looks for early warning signs of Commie sympathy.



- ☞ **Hygiene Officer:** Monitors the personal hygiene level of other team members, preventing poor morale, substandard performance and halitosis. CPU performance tracking statistics show [CLASSIFIED] percent of Troubleshooter missions fail due to poor hygiene.



- ☞ **Communications and Recording Officer:** Chronicles the mission using advanced video technology, extremely sensitive microphones and gripping color commentary. Good lighting and innovative camera angles produce excellent training material and possibly even footage for popular evening vidshows like *Bake That Commie!*



- ☞ **Happiness Officer:** Ensures everyone has fun on the mission; knows jokes, sings, leads citizen-instruction games; authorizes and administers biochemical supplements needed to guarantee a fun time is had by all.



- ☞ **Bots/Weapons/Vehicles/Sundry Equipment Repair and Maintenance Officer (Equipment Guy):** Controls bots and vehicles assigned to the team; monitors each Troubleshooter's equipment maintenance level. The Equipment Guy is responsible for assigned mission equipment that gets lost, stolen or damaged.

7. Doing things

When you want your Troubleshooter to do something—use a skill, your mutant power, certain equipment, secret society contacts, etc.—tell the Gamemaster what you want to happen.

The GM sometimes simply tells you what happens. He may instead roll dice to determine the outcome of your action, or may ask you to roll a d20 and compare it to one of your skill numbers, your mutant power, or your secret society rank. In making the roll, you are ‘rolling against’ the skill.

Sometimes the GM tells you the skill you are rolling against, sometimes (in his undeniable wisdom) not. Sometimes the GM will let you suggest an appropriate attribute or skill. The skill areas overlap, so be creative.

In general, if the die roll is equal to or less than the designated number, your action succeeds. Sometimes the roll must be over the rating to succeed. Sometimes the GM may tell you which one you want. Or not.

Sometimes the GM may allow you and other players to spend *Perversity points* (explained below) to adjust the number you need to roll, thereby adjusting your chance of success. These adjustments, called *General Perversity Modifiers*, are described in the section ‘Scenes’.

Scenes

A **scene** is the basic unit of play. Typically it begins when the Troubleshooters arrive at a location directly important to the mission’s main storyline. Typically it ends when everybody gets ki—when the Troubleshooters resolve the scene’s objectives.

The GM will tell you when a scene starts or ends. The start and end of a scene are each marked by a game event.

⦿ **Perversity point ration** (scene start): The GM awards you a number of Perversity points. Perversity points are explained below.

⦿ **Congeniality award** (scene end): The GM may optionally offer a bonus award of Perversity points to the Troubleshooter who most needs a morale boost.

The GM might ask each player in turn to say aloud which player most deserves the Congeniality award. It is entirely permissible to vote for yourself, but there is no secret ballot. You voice your opinions to all. The GM may give the top vote winner(s) the award, may give it to a different player, or may give no award at all.

Rule #1. The GM is right!

Rule #2. Know nothing.

Rule #3. Be entertaining.

To do something, tell the GM. He tells you what happens. He may roll 1d20 or ask you to roll.

Play proceeds in scenes. At the start of each scene you get Perversity points. Use poker chips to represent Perversity.

Sometimes the GM may let you spend Perversity points to affect a roll’s success chance. Each point spent increases or decreases the chance by 1.

The Prime Rules for Players

Player Rule #1. The Gamemaster is right!

Player Rule #2. Avoid knowing the rules.

As a Troubleshooter, you are Security Clearance RED. Displaying knowledge of rules of higher clearance than RED is treasonous. Arguing with the Gamemaster is incredibly treasonous (see Player Rule #1).

Player Rule #3. Entertain everyone.

Your fellow Troubleshooters want to kill traitors, that is, you. Repeatedly. You can gain some protection by spending Perversity points. You earn Perversity points by being entertaining. The best protection lies in the good will of the Gamemaster. You earn his good will by being entertaining. To put it another way:

Entertain or die!

Amuse the Gamemaster and the other players, or you are in for a short and frustrating career. Here’s why:

1. Your Troubleshooter’s path to success involves capturing traitors and creatively betraying, gloating over and terminating fellow Troubleshooters.
2. Often, doing this requires treasonous behavior, especially during the gloating and terminating parts. Treason is punishable by fines, demotion, censure, medication, brainscrubbing or summary execution, possibly all at once.
3. So while committing treason, how can you protect yourself? When it really counts, your actions must succeed. You must successfully hit your target or jigger a security camera or alter a video record.
4. You increase your chances of success by spending *Perversity points* on *General Perversity Modifiers*. (*Perversity points* and *Perversity* are explained in this section.)
5. You get Perversity points by doing stuff that surprises, amuses or pleases everyone, furthers your mission, or otherwise improves the play experience for everybody. Sometimes unctuously flattering the GM works too.

So: By being entertaining, you can get away with treason—or at least it improves your chances.



Scenes and non-scenes

Examples of scenes directly relevant to the mission's main storyline:

- ⦿ The Troubleshooters are summoned to go to a briefing. *Objective:* Find the briefing room.
- ⦿ They get the mission briefing. *Objective:* Accept the mission and set out.
- ⦿ They receive assigned 'service service' duty, such as testing valuable R&D equipment, taking part in an HPD&MC loyalty parade or transporting plutonium for Power Services. *Objective:* Accept the service service and set out.
- ⦿ They go to the mission site and investigate. *Objective:* Resolve the situation. (This may take several scenes.)
- ⦿ They report for individual confessions, group debriefing and dispensation of rewards and punishment. *Objective:* Take it with a steely grin.

By contrast, the following incidents aren't part of the mission's main storyline and would not usually be scenes:

- ⦿ You break off from the group to meet your secret society contact in a supply closet.
- ⦿ Learning a fellow Troubleshooter has the treasonous Machine Empathy mutation, you draw him into a boiler room for a fast confab exploring possible blackmail and extortion schemes.

- ⦿ For unknown reasons the team leader orders the team to stop at the recreation center to watch the premiere of the reality vidshow *My Dream Bot*.

Perversity points

Perversity points are the Gamemaster's reward to you for entertaining everyone. You can earn them in both scenes and non-scenes, whether or not your character is actually present on the scene. All you have to do is be amusing, help the storyline along or really roast a fellow Troubleshooter—roast him with *style*.

The GM rewards you yourself, not your character, with Perversity points. If your Troubleshooter dies for good, you still keep your current Perversity point totals and can spend them with your next character.

You and the GM can track Perversity points on paper, but it works better to use poker chips. Use different colors of chips, if available, to represent 1, 5, and 10 Perversity points.

How you earn Perversity points

Using incontestably fair judgment, the GM may decide to award you Perversity points in these situations:

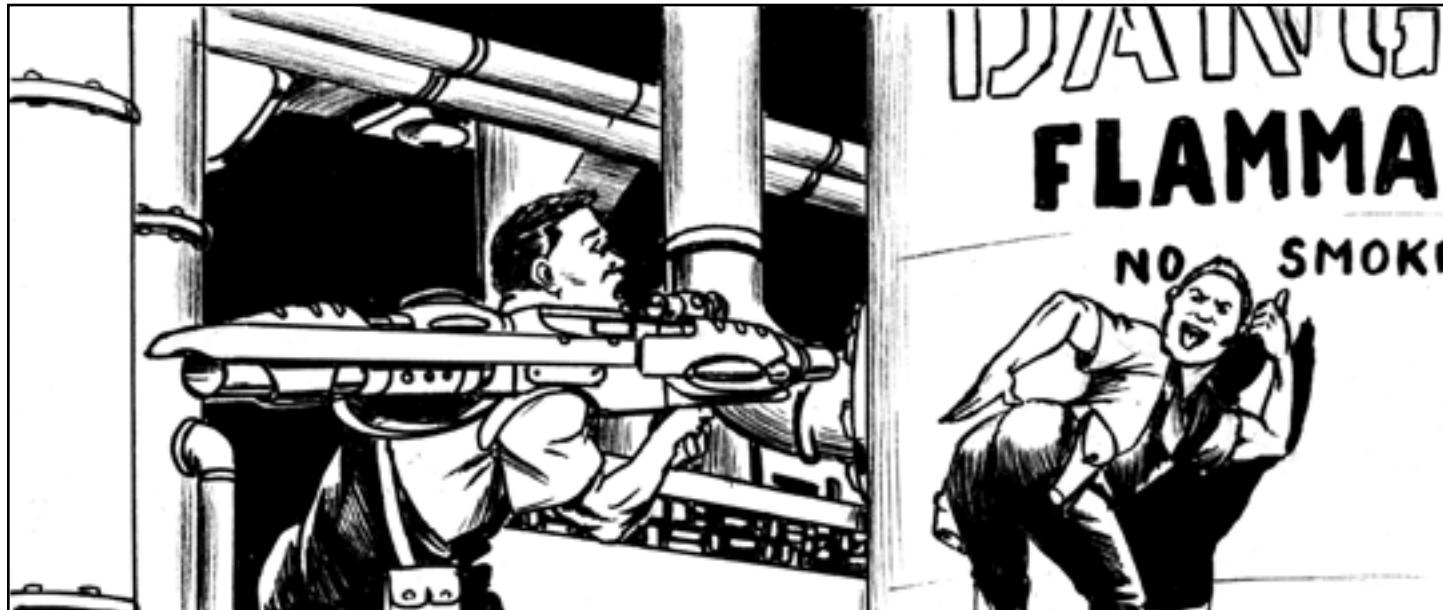
- ⦿ At the start of each scene.
- ⦿ When you do things the others finds entertaining. This may happen many times during a scene, if you're playing well.
- ⦿ At the end of a play session, if you've played your chosen tics and Secret skills entertainingly.
- ⦿ When you alert the GM to another player's treasonous behavior or rules violations—in particular, to displays of rules knowledge above the character's security clearance.

When you perform a valuable or interesting service that improves the game (say, creating a fascinating new rumor), gets a stalled play session moving, or helps lighten the GM's load and mood (playing an NPC for a scene, bribing the GM with munchies or beverages, paying the pizza delivery guy, etc.).

- ⦿ When you **stylishly** and (in most cases) fatally betray a fellow Troubleshooter to fulfill the dictates of The Computer, a secret society mission or even a personal rivalry. The key word here is *stylishly*. Any old Troubleshooter can earn good standing with The Computer by terminating a traitor, but to earn Perversity points, you must terminate your enemy with panache—with gumption and avowed self-satisfaction—in short, with style.

A stylish termination typically requires you to inform your victim beforehand. Separate your target from all support, reduce him to helpless panic, take a few delicious moments to explain—even, if you're bold, to explain *in painstaking detail*—exactly what he did to deserve your imminent meting of justice, and finally off him as you would a rabid Commie.

Does your breath quicken at this prospect? Do your fingers already tremble on your laser trigger? You understand, then, the meaning of style.



This Troubleshooter is learning the true meaning of the term *Perversity*.

How you spend Perversity points

You can spend Perversity points to improve your position in life or to undermine another's position. Here's what you can buy:

- ⦿ **General Perversity Modifiers:** When the GM generously allows it, you can spend points to adjust the success of your own or others' die rolls. See the next section.
- ⦿ **Increased skill and specialty ratings, and new specialties and Secret skills:** You can spend Perversity points to improve your Troubleshooter's competence. See Chapter 12, 'Going forward'.
- ⦿ **Social perks:** Perversity points are not really intended as currency among players, but you may find that a generous donation of points gets you the seat near the GM that makes note-passing easier. Perhaps a few points will get you a roll of the GM's lucky die, a cold can of bubbly beverage or first choice of the munchies. Use your imagination.

General Perversity Modifiers

You'll probably spend most of your Perversity points on *General Perversity Modifiers*.

Other (non-fun) roleplaying games use lots and lots of modifiers. You apply them to figure out what number you need to roll.

Non-Fun game player: I aim my rifle and fire it at the lead goon.

GM: Okay, your rifle skill is 10, +3 for aiming, -2 for the range to the target, -4 for his armor, but he doesn't see you so that's +3, and you're using the targeting scopebot and depleted-uranium ammo for +4, so you need to roll... wait, what was your skill again?

PARANOIA makes this process easy by reversing cause and effect. When the GM allows it, you and your fellow players can spend Perversity points as General Perversity Modifiers to influence your roll's success chance for better or worse. After all points are spent and the final success chance is determined, the GM interprets the circumstances of the roll to fit all the modifiers.

In many cases you'll spend points secretly. Sometimes, especially in momentous encounters, the GM will require you to announce how you're spending points. For example:

PARANOIA Player #1: I aim my cone rifle and fire it at the lead traitor. I have Violence 10, so I need a 10 or less to hit.

Player #2: No you don't. I'm spending 2 Perversity points on a General Perversity Modifier to reduce the number you need to roll down to 8.

Player #1: Bastard!

Player #3: Three more points to reduce it from 8 to 5.

Player #1: Betrayer!

Player #4: Two more to reduce the hit roll to 3.

Player #1: I'll get you in the mess hall!

Player #5: Uh, I'll pass.

Player #6: Well, I support this heroic action. [Player #6 secretly knows Player #1's target is the high secret society official Player #6 has been ordered to assassinate.] I'll spend 5 to raise the hit roll back up to 8.

Player #1: Good. I'm spending 5 to raise it to 13.

GM: All right. Plus 3 to hit, let's see... [Thinks.] Your malfunctioning rifle scopebot blinks back on just as the traitor's foot slips on a stray NiceLife empty. The scopebot says, 'Hey, what's up? Did I miss anything?'

Player #1: Scopebot, target that traitor!

GM: The scopebot says, 'Ready!' Okay, roll.

Player #1: Here goes....

If the players' collective Perversity points expenditures had instead reduced Player #1's success roll to (say) 6 or less, the GM might instead retrofit the in-game situation as follows:

GM: All right, you're 4 down. [Thinks.] The cone rifle's broken scopebot suddenly yells drunkenly, 'Lubricant for everybody!' The traitor's head whips around. Even though he couldn't possibly have heard you at this range, he heard you. [The GM has spontaneously decided to give the target the Hypersenses mutation.] He dives for the ground. Roll.

See? Perversity Modifiers work like ulcers. People used to think you got ulcers from worrying too much. They had it backward; it turns out you get ulcers from bacteria, and your stomach pains make you worry. In exactly the same way, sort of, **PARANOIA** takes other games' arduous combat process (assess circumstances to figure out the modifiers) and reverses it for smooth and easy retrofitting (get the roll and then figure out the modifiers that caused it).

Your fellow players may ask something like, 'If the GM interprets one set of Perversity modifiers so my cone rifle gives me a bonus, how can I not get the same bonus in later attacks, even when Perversity goes against me?'

You, a wise player, can gently correct them in the characteristic **PARANOIA** way, as follows:

'Quiet, or the GM will let me kill you.'

Perverse details

Spending limits: If the GM allows Perversity spending, you can usually spend up to 5 Perversity points on Perversity to affect a roll, and you usually only get one spending chance per roll.

Sometimes the GM will let only the acting player (the one rolling the dice) spend points on Perversity. Other times, the GM will go around to each player in turn, solicit Perversity spending, and move on. When everyone has spent once or passed, the acting player rolls. In truly climactic—not to say 'chaotic'—situations, the GM may allow you and everyone else to spend freely, without limit, as many times as you like until your points (or you) are exhausted.

Rationalizing the perverse: You can spend on Perversity whenever the GM allows it, whether or not your Troubleshooter is present at the scene. If your character is present, etiquette (or maybe the GM) requires you to do something in the game to reflect your spending. ('I'm poking him in the ribs as he aims, -2 Perversity.)

Public or silent: The GM may ask you to declare your Perversity spending publicly, or—more characteristic of **PARANOIA**—ask each player in turn to silently mark '+' (plus) or '-' (minus) on a sticky-note and pass it to him, along with poker chips representing the number of Perversity points spent. These cryptic glyphs indicate the two possible kinds of Perversity spending. A plus increases the player's success chance; a minus reduces the chance.





8. Treason and commendation

Survival, let alone advancement, requires clear understanding of what constitutes treason and insubordination, and what you can do that might possibly earn favor from those in power.

What is treasonous? The charts on the facing page summarize the most common behaviors.

The first chart, **Acceptable behavior**, lists activities you might think are treasonous but are not. Before you fry that traitor, be sure what he said was actually traitorous, or you're stuck with the bill for his replacement clone. (Applicable only to Straight and Classic games. In Zap games there is no acceptable behavior.)

The **Treason and insubordination** charts list offenses against The Computer, Alpha Complex, and proper etiquette. Insubordination is punishable by credit fines. Treason is punishable in many severe ways, including termination. In Zap games, treat insubordination as treason.

The Treason and insubordination charts include some out-of-game offenses, such as displaying knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules. If you, the player, demonstrate this unwelcome behavior, the penalties you receive transfer to your character.

Treason and insubordination

In Straight and Classic games (but not Zap games), The Computer distinguishes between **treason** (gross disobedience, threats to Alpha Complex or The Computer) and **insubordination** (minor rulebreaking and transgressions of polite conduct).

Treason incurs penalties such as probation, medication, brainscrub, and termination. Insubordination incurs monetary fines.

Only The Computer, mission officials and citizens of Clearance GREEN or higher can assign treason and insubordination penalties. In practice these entities assign treason penalties mainly during formal proceedings, such as briefings, debriefings, and confessions. They assign insubordination penalties on the spot and freely.

Penalties are cumulative. Worse, if one GREEN citizen hits you with insubordination for being out of uniform, and 30 seconds later another citizen hits you with another penalty for the same offense, both penalties stick, even though you had no time to remedy the first offense. Complaining about the second penalty is a great way to get more.

Troubleshooters cannot assign treason penalties. The Troubleshooter team's loyalty officer assigns fines for insubordination; the team leader fines the loyalty officer. Other team officers can assign insubordination fines related to their duty (hygiene officer for failing hygiene inspections, equipment guy if you carve your

The behavior charts on the facing page list behavior that is meritorious, acceptable, insubordinate or treasonous.

Meritorious behavior is rewarded with credits or promotion. Secret societies give IOUs for favors.

Insubordination is punishable by fines. Treason is punishable by medication, brainscrub, termination or worse.

name in your cone rifle barrel, happiness officer for frowning, etc.). Fines are paid to The Computer, not to the officer levying the fine.

wonder: Could some felon take video footage of a known Communist blowing up an IntSec station, then undetectably map a heroic Troubleshooter's face onto the traitor's?

Nonsense. As Internal Security experts loudly proclaim on reality vidshows (*Catch That Traitor!*, *CommieStopper*), The Computer's incredibly sensitive state-of-the-art software infallibly detects fraudulent image manipulation. All those experts say it is impossible, and who can doubt experts?

■ Accusations of treason (Classic games)



To earn commendation from The Computer, an accusation of treason must be credible. The more reputable the target of your accusation, the less likely The Computer and its agents will regard your charges as credible.

To credibly accuse a target individual of treason, you need corroborating testimony or, even better, have (or be able to fabricate, after the termination) clear, documented evidence. Documented evidence includes still photos, video clips, and audio recordings. A treasonous act is 'documented evidence' for one of these reasons:

1. The GM says it is.
2. You have a convincing in-game reason for having documented the act, and the GM accepts it (see reason #1).

It doesn't matter how much time elapses between the treasonous act and your report. There is no statute of limitations in Alpha Complex. However, if the target has already been accused and penalized in the past for a given act, that act won't weigh heavily in your accusation.

If you can produce the required quantity of evidence for The Computer or its authorized representatives, and if the evidence happens not to mysteriously disappear shortly thereafter, The Computer may convict the target of treason. If you are making the accusation after you already killed the target, the GM tells you how much time you have to fabricate—assemble the required evidence.

Given the high (if unevenly distributed) technology of Alpha Complex, you may

■ Accusations of treason (Straight games)

This works much as in Classic games, except The Computer requires greater standards of evidential rigor. These are the differences in Straight games:

1. The Computer is less lenient about letting you assemble a case against a target after the fact—that is, post-termination. Evidence should be presented while the target is alive. The Computer gives high-clearance targets an opportunity to defend themselves, which may be troublesome for the accuser.
2. The target's past reputation confers some protection.
3. Unlike in Classic or Zap games, if The Computer decides the termination was unjustified, you are liable for the cost of your victim's replacement clone.

■ Accusations of treason (Zap games)

Say 'You're a traitor.' Fire.

Acceptable behavior*(Straight/Classic only)*

The following behaviors are acceptable (non-treasonous) anywhere in Alpha Complex:

Understanding of this chart and the Treason, Insubordination and Meritorious Conduct charts and their contents. (Drummed into every INFRARED from decanting onward.)

Knowledge of the current Year of The Computer (214) and general awareness The Computer hasn't always been here; knowledge that a corrupt, destructive Old Reckoning culture existed before the rise of our friend The Computer. (However, curiosity about that benighted time is very impolite.)

Mere knowledge of the existence of specific secret societies, mutant powers, the Outdoors or Outdoor plant and animal life. (None of this is polite conversation, but it's not treasonous.)

Mere knowledge of various kinds of real food and drink; expressions of envy and the general living conditions of higher-clearance citizens. (Portrayed daily on glamorous vidshows.)

Expressions of ambition; desire to rise in clearance, get rich, live in luxury, etc. (The Computer encourages aspiration to greater service, though blatant greed is impolite.)

Casual joking or warnings about service firms, service groups, or higher-clearance citizens in general, as opposed to specific individuals or agencies. (Impolite and likely to draw suspicion, but not technically insubordinate.)

Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, in line of duty.

Asking questions directly relevant to a mission or duty (these questions are grudgingly condoned).

Asking whether a particular hypothetical question would be considered directly relevant to a mission or duty.

Insubordination*(Straight/Classic only)*

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason and insubordination, too. The GM assigns their fines or other penalties. In Zap games all these behaviors count as treason.

Asking a question irrelevant to a mission or duty.

Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous.

Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass).

Being out of uniform or sloppy.

Being unhappy.

Bringing bad news.

Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times.

Curiosity in general, undue.

Evading Internal Security or Computer surveillance.

Excessive impoliteness.

Failing a hygiene inspection.

Jokes, insolence, or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty.

Jokes, insolence, or disrespect for a specific higher-clearance citizen.

Jokes, complaints, or warnings about a specific service firm or group.

Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher-clearance citizen.

Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer.

Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission.

Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty.

Treason**Accusations of treason**

Being accused of treason.

Falsely accusing a citizen of treason.

Conduct and bearing

Arguing with the Gamemaster.

Assaulting a citizen.

Being present in a location of higher security clearance.

Damaging, destroying, or losing assigned equipment.

Demonstrating knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules above your own clearance.

Failure to defer to a citizen of higher security clearance.

Framing a citizen of lower clearance for a crime.

Lying to the GM.

Possessing a treasonous skill.

Possessing unauthorized food, information, or equipment.

Refusal to take a prescribed drug.

Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing.

Threatening the physical or financial safety of another citizen.

Unauthorized destruction of higher-clearance property.

Missions

Disobeying an order.

Failure to complete a mission or service service, or failure to file a proper report of the completion.

Refusing the assignment of a service service.

Refusing to accept a mission.

Mutation

Banned mutation registration.

Suspicion or proof of mutation possession.

Secret society membership

Confessing to, suspicion of, or proof of secret society membership.

Knowledge of Communist doctrine.

Being a Communist.

Terminations

Terminating a citizen without sufficient evidence.

Meritorious conduct

This is close to an exhaustive list. It includes entries an Alpha Complex citizen would not actually see; we leave identification of these lines as an exercise for the reader.

A given act may qualify for more than one reward. The GM will probably use the lowest. Nyahah.

Acts deserving rewards

Being extremely happy.

Completing a mission.

Completing it successfully.

Completing a service service and filing a report.

Doing a favor spontaneously for a higher-clearance citizen.

Doing a favor for a secret society friendly to your own.

Risking your life to serve or rescue a higher-clearance citizen, to save Alpha Complex or to serve The Computer.

Terminating a traitor with sufficient evidence.

Turning a traitor over to Internal Security.

Unctuous flattery.



[Continued from page 36]

Meritorious conduct

The Computer recognizes meritorious accomplishments such as protecting Alpha Complex and apprehending traitors. For great service of this kind you may earn credit bonuses and promotion. Unusual good behavior and flattery earn you credit bonuses and lesser rewards, such as real food.

In most roleplaying games characters try to (1) stay alive and (2) gain status and power. In *PARANOIA* the first goal is likely to require all your attention, at least initially. Once you catch on to the basic principles of survival in Alpha Complex, your characters can begin to enjoy the benefits of loyal and shrewd service: wealth, status and power. Best of all, you can do unto others as they would have done unto you, with weapons of ever-larger muzzle aperture.

Credit bonuses

The Computer generally rewards successful completion of a mission with a bonus payment of credits. A rich reward (thousands of credits) indicates The Computer's favor. A puny reward (3 credits) is a subtle sign of The Computer's disappointment. All credit bonuses are automatically added to the balance on your ME Card.

Though no rules for standard compensation are available at your clearance, you may hope to earn as much as a month's standard salary for each successful mission. Because a typical Troubleshooter team (if such exists) completes about one mission a week, on average, you may hope to earn four bonuses a month, along with your regular monthly salary. Quintuple your standard salary! Thank The Computer!

In addition, you may earn bounties for capture or authorized termination of The Computer's most hated enemies: notorious Commie agitators and saboteurs, powerful unregistered mutants, high secret society officials and fugitive Troubleshooters who failed to destroy all of the above.

There is the troublesome matter of reimbursing expenses incurred during your mission. For unexplained reasons over [CLASSIFIED]% of Troubleshooter missions involve unauthorized property damage, loss of assigned equipment, reimbursement of cloning expenses for unauthorized termination of targets (in Straight games), and in extreme cases vaporization of whole subsectors. Troubleshooters responsible for gratuitous damage have expenses deducted from their credit bonuses, salary and future earnings unto the millionth clone generation.

IOUs

Powerful individuals and secret societies—both your own society and those it regards as

friendly—may recognize great services you have done for them. You are required to track favors earned from you and owed you as **IOUs**. Each IOU is good only for the organization or individual who owes it.

If you have an IOU, you can use it to demand a favor from the organization or individual. Tell the Gamemaster you're spending your IOU, and make your plea. The GM tells you whether or not the favor is granted. If the favor is treasonous, you may wish to talk to him in private.

IOUs are valuable. Don't ask for too much when you cash one in. You'll only get what you want if the group is able to grant the favor, if the service you rendered was of roughly equal value, and if it suits the GM's elevated purpose. Otherwise the response to your request may be a mixed blessing.

Promotion

If you perform particularly well and earn The Computer's trust, you may expect to be promoted to a higher security clearance. Conversely, poor performance may bring summary demotion. Especially at low clearances, a Troubleshooter with an active career may leap up and down in The Computer's esteem with dizzying rapidity. Trusted citizens who reach GREEN Clearance or higher typically enjoy a slightly more stable existence.

9. Proper behavior for players

Most roleplaying games pit player characters against opponents and obstacles posed by the Gamemaster. These games encourage players to cooperate in pursuing a goal.

PARANOIA provides opponents and obstacles without encouraging cooperation. In fact, your fellow player characters are the principal opponents and obstacles. To succeed, you must terminate them. Repeatedly. With style.

Vicious, deceitful backstabbing is fun. You'll feel no remorse as you shaft your fellow PCs, because you know they tried to shaft you first.

But it's important not to let the paranoid atmosphere of the game bleed into the real world. Distrust and betrayal among *characters* is fine, but not among *players*.

Many activities that wouldn't raise an eyebrow in other RPGs are bad form in *PARANOIA*. Looking at another player's character sheet is an unfair way to obtain evidence against him. One Troubleshooter character eavesdropping on another PC is fine, but eavesdropping on a private conference between player and GM is cheating.

Don't read the mission.

Don't monopolize the GM with private conferences. Pass notes instead.

Don't look at other players' secret information. It's rude.

Don't automatically shoot a known mutant's clone backup on the assumption he has the same mutation. It's rude and not necessarily true.

Don't be paranoid in the real world—only in the game.

Meetings and notes

Speaking of conferences, you'll often want to communicate with the GM privately, to keep other players in the dark about your activities. In a private conference you can speak freely, but you are monopolizing the GM's attention. Do this too much and the other players will resent

it. Moreover, they'll start doing it too, and you'll spend most of your time waiting for the latest chat to end. Conferences slow things down, so ask for them sparingly.

More efficient methods of secret communication include note-passing and, if you all have networked laptop computers, instant messaging. These don't interrupt play.

On the other hand, writing a note is slow work and requires terseness. Instant messages are faster but may distract the GM from his estimable purpose. Still, they're both better than conferences.

ULTRAVIOLET information

Many games divide rules into Player and GM sections. **PARANOIA** depends more than most on keeping players in the dark. That's why much of this book is classified ULTRAVIOLET Clearance. Only Gamemasters are cleared to read that part. Naturally, it would be silly to sell you this game and tell you not to read it, but listen, seriously, really:

- 1. Don't read the mission!** Only the GM is supposed to know what happens in a mission. Reading the mission will ruin your enjoyment when you play it. If you can't resist temptation, try not to take advantage of what you know when you play. Let the other players try to figure out what's going on without the benefit of your superior knowledge. Otherwise you'll ruin *their* enjoyment.
- 2. Don't reveal your knowledge of the rules.** Lots of Alpha Complex citizens know more than they should. In fact, knowing treasonous things is probably vital to survival. However, citizens always do their utmost to hide this knowledge. Make that your own rule.

Go ahead. Read the ULTRAVIOLET sections, if you must. But any time you *reveal* your knowledge of their contents during play, your Troubleshooter will get into trouble. Even if you don't read the GM sections, over time you'll develop a knowledge of the rules—but if you talk about them, you'll soon find yourself staring down the barrels of large weapons.

Likewise, if you terminate Martin-R-TSD-1 for having the mutant power of Slippery Skin, don't start firing immediately when Martin-R-TSD-2 arrives. You, the player, may know his skin is still slippery, but your *character* doesn't. Making every clone identical is a game convenience; it saves a lot of time creating new characters, and is the basis for some cheap jokes. However, the idea that all backup clones have the Prime's mutant power is unknown in Alpha Complex or to The Computer. Act accordingly.

For that matter, you don't necessarily *know* the mutant power stays the same. The GM may give the new clone a different power. Don't assume anything based on the rules. The GM can adapt the rules to his exceptional purpose.

Killing and dying with style

We encourage you to terminate your fellow Troubleshooters with style, and a certain amount of gloating. In the same way, if they get you first, you yourself should perish with style. If you expect to be rapidly transferred to a clone backup, demonstrate a generous, charitable forgiveness toward the traitor, exit more in sorrow than in anger, and on revival prepare a cold revenge. If repeated treason has gone against you, and your clone template is about to be erased permanently, etiquette dictates your last clone should go down fighting, shouting secret society slogans and defiantly mocking the other PCs for their cowardly servitude to The Computer.

If another Troubleshooter dispatches you, it is exceedingly poor form to trot up in your new body and start firing back. Instead, enact a cool, calculated revenge, delayed for maximum suspense. Plant evidence; concoct deathtraps; get him in trouble with his secret society. The game plays much better this way, and everyone has more fun.

Nothing personal

PARANOIA often purposefully blurs the line between you and your character. However, be aware of the differences, and don't let your feelings control your character's actions. Conversely, don't let your Troubleshooter's attitude toward Joe's Troubleshooter character affect your good feelings toward Joe himself. If Joe's character betrayed yours, don't get upset—betrayal is part of the game.

Keep your role distinct from reality. Failure to do so is treason, and is punishable (for your character) by summary execution, and (for you, in extreme cases) by a stringent requirement to buy pizza for the entire group for the next six sessions, and no arguments.

10. A solo mission

Usually **PARANOIA** missions require one Gamemaster and three or more players. A special kind of mission, called a 'solo', lets you play by yourself. This solo mission introduces you to some basic concepts of **PARANOIA**.

To run this mission you need pencil, paper and a 20-sided die (1d20). Begin reading with the section numbered '1'. Each numbered section describes a situation, then asks you to choose between two or more courses of action. When you choose your action, follow its instructions, then go the numbered section indicated by your choice and keep reading there.

As you go through the mission, you will record certain codes. Write these on a piece of paper. At the end of the mission we explain the codes you recorded.

After you complete this mission, try it again, making different choices to see how they affect the outcome. Even if you succeed, try the mission again to see what happens if you do foolish things. The mission will give you an idea

of the problems, decisions and consequences a Troubleshooter must face in performing missions for The Computer.

■ 01

TROUBLESHOOTERS: David-R-URK-1, Technical Services; Joshua-R-THR-2, Technical Services; Edith-O-OFX-2, Technical Services.

MISSION: Surveillance systems check, Sector NHB. Rendezvous at NHB Troubleshooter Dispatch at 1300 hours. Investigate suspected surveillance systems malfunction in residence quarters of INFRARED citizens Lonnie-KKD-3 and Virgil-KKD-4. Residence coordinates F6-117/KKD.

Do you accept the mission? If yes, go to 07. If no, go to 14.

■ 02

She keeps her weapon trained on you until the morgue bot and the Internal Security squad arrive to get Joshua's body. When they arrive, she accompanies you to IntSec sector

headquarters where they interrogate you thoroughly but release you. Go to 54.

■ 03

Joshua-R fires at Edith-O and misses, leaving himself open. Edith-O fires and doesn't miss. Joshua-R drops, shot right between the eyes. Edith-O turns to you, covering you with her pistol. Edith's display of laser pistol marksmanship has impressed you. You doubt you could quick-draw your laser and fire before she nails you. There is no room to run. She keeps her weapon trained on you until the morgue bot and the Internal Security squad arrive for Joshua's body. Go to 09.

■ 04

You have a clear shot at either Joshua-R or Edith-O. If you fire your laser, go to 41. If you have experimental anti-personnel device X324-09 and you fire it, go to 23.

**05**

It is a bad idea to turn your back on Edith-O, Internal Security agent. Edith-O is a crack shot with a laser. You take a few steps to the door and a searing pain rips through your back and into your chest. You regain consciousness in a RED sickbay under guard. Go to **19**.

06

A tiny note is written in dye on a CruncheeTym algae chip lying on the booth floor. It reads, 'Edith-O IntSec. Terminate.' You notice no one observing you. You eat the message and proceed to the rendezvous. Go to **43**.

07

An experimental anti-personnel device is available for field testing. Will you accept assignment of this device for this mission? If yes, go to **26**. If no, go to **44**.

08

You apparently didn't hit anything, or the weapon didn't work. You suffer a number of minor burns from melted plastic fragments. Go to **03**.

09

Internal Security agents arrive immediately, with docbots not far behind. The bot attends promptly to your wound as Internal Security GREEN goons question you. They send you to a RED sickbay, where The Computer gives you a 200-credit reward and enters an Official

Commendation in your permanent record. IntSec apprehends and terminates Joshua-R within minutes of your prompt report. Record an M code and go to **54**.

10

Your laser shot burns a hole in the wall. In the confusion no one could tell your target. Record an N code. Joshua-R fires at Edith-O and misses, leaving himself open. Edith-O fires and doesn't miss. Joshua-R drops. Edith-O turns to you, covering you with her pistol. If you shoot at her, go to **47**. If you holster your weapon, go to **02**.

11

Joshua-R apparently finishes whatever he was doing and steps toward Edith-O, who is in the hall searching with her device. Joshua-R suddenly produces a laser pistol and fires point blank into Edith-O's face. Edith-O crumples without a sound. Record an L code and choose one of the following actions:

If you duck out of sight, go to **39**. If you draw and ready a weapon, go to **21**. If you ask Joshua-R what he's doing, go to **15**. If you do nothing but continue to observe, go to **33**.

12

David-R has never been a convincing liar, but he gets lucky, and Edith-O apparently believes David's explanation that he just 'tripped' over the toolbox. Edith-O holsters her laser. Record an H code and go to **36**.

13

You're not exactly sure how the device operates. As you were opening the case, a couple of red, green, and blue wires became detached. You're not sure how they were originally attached. You can put them back together if you like, but who knows what will happen if you use it? Record an E code and go to **50**.

14

Failure to accept mission is treason. Repeat: Do you accept the mission? If yes, go to **07**. If no, go to **51**.

15

Joshua-R turns to you with a fanatic gleam in his eyes and says, 'Freeing Humanity from the Machine! One day we'll all be free!' He points his laser at you. Go to **33**.

16

You made it past Joshua-R through the door and into the corridor. Joshua-R fires once more in your direction, wounding you in the hand. He panics and dashes away. Pursuit is impossible in the frenzied crowd. If you immediately seek a terminal and report these events to The Computer, go to **09**. If you try to flee and find a place to hide, go to **46**.

17

(At this point your Gamemaster would determine the effect of your shot on Edith. Here we graciously assume David-R is terrifically lucky) Joshua's shot at Edith-O misses and hits the wall. Edith-O finishes Joshua-R off with a single well-aimed shot. However, because she left herself wide open to your shot, you drill her directly in the temple and she slumps to the floor, killed instantly. Record an L code.

You have a problem: dead Troubleshooters. If you try to escape, go to **45**.

If you give yourself up, saying the two Troubleshooters killed each other, you are using the Management skill to persuade your interrogators to accept your story. David-R's Management skill is 5, which means you must roll 5 or less on the 20-sided die to successfully use your skill. In some cases the Gamemaster might allow you to spend Perversity points to influence your success roll, but in this case you can't. Roll 1d20. If you roll 5 or less, go to **53**. If you roll 6 or more, go to **53**.

18

With your mutant vision you can see Joshua-R clamping a green-ringed barrel onto his laser pistol. A green barrel should not be available to a Clearance RED citizen like Joshua. You have no armor against green laser weapons, and Edith-O probably doesn't either.

If you shout a warning aloud, record an I code and go to **30**. If not, record a J code and go to **11**.

10. SOLO MISSION

■ 19

Edith-O, Internal Security agent, has taken you into custody and reported your behavior to The Computer. David-URK-1 is no longer a Troubleshooter. You are now a low-status INFRARED laborer in the foul-smelling food vats with a record of treasonous behavior.

Your mission is over. The Computer is your friend.

■ 20

You might learn more about the device by taking it apart and examining it. If you attempt this use of your Hardware skill, you must roll a 7 or less on the 20-sided die to succeed, because your Hardware skill of 7. Roll 1d20. If you roll 7 or less, go to 32. If you roll 8 or more, go to 13. If you don't try this, go to 50.

■ 21

Joshua's weapon is ready. He gets his shot off first. Go to 33.

■ 22

Edith-O goes down twitching and writhing. Joshua-R turns and smiles at you, then fires his laser at you. Record an L code and choose one of the following actions:

If you try to dodge his shots and escape into the hall, go to 34. If you try to draw your laser left-handed and return fire, go to 21. If you try to engage Joshua-R in hand-to-hand combat, go to 52.

■ 23

If you have recorded an E code, go to 08; otherwise, go to 35.

■ 24

You overhear a woman's voice: '—for information of that nature is highly inappropriate. For the present I'll content myself to report your request to The Computer. If you show any further suspicious behavior, I shall remove you from this mission. Do you have any idea of the consequences? The subject is closed.'

The voice changes as the speaker walks toward you. You have just enough time to move away from the door and look innocent when Edith-O and Joshua-R enter the room. Go to 36.

■ 25

Joshua-R's toolkit contains nothing unusual. When you touch Edith-O's toolkit, it immediately sounds a beeping alarm. The voice in the next room stops instantly. If you try to silence the alarm using your Hardware skill, go to 37. If you leave the room immediately, go to 05.

■ 26

You have been assigned Experimental Anti-Personnel Device X324-09: a 'neurostunner'. It works like a laser pistol, but requires less skill to target—or so your supervisor tells you. You will be rewarded for your loyalty to The Computer.

Record the serial number of the experimental device on your character sheet. The device has no user's manual. Do you ask for more information on the device? If yes, go to 38. If no, go to 20.

■ 27

This paragraph is not part of the solo mission. Therefore, if you are reading this you have not followed The Computer's instructions. Return from whence you arrived.

■ 28

You duck Joshua-R and almost make it to the door. A searing pain flashes through your chest. You fall to the ground. As the light seems to recede from you, you recall playing ball in the corridors as a Junior Citizen.

David-R is dead. Internal Security swiftly apprehends Joshua-R and terminates him. Edith-O receives a hero's funeral and a ten-minute spot on the evening vidshow.

That is all. The Computer is your friend.

■ 29

Joshua-R has red reflect laser armor; your shot hit but didn't harm him. However, you distracted him enough to let Edith-O drill him right between the eyes. He drops like a seized-up bot and lies still on the floor. Edith-O holsters her laser and thanks you for help. However, she keeps an eye on you as you both wait for the morgue bot and the Internal Security team to come pick up the body. Edith-O promises to recommend you for promotion for your loyal assistance. Record a K code and go to 54.

■ 30

Edith-O and Joshua-R both hear your shout. Edith-O draws her weapon. Joshua-R takes a shot at Edith-O but misses as Edith-O ducks for cover.

If you duck out of sight, go to 48. If you draw and ready a weapon, go to 04. If you do nothing but continue to observe, go to 03.

■ 31

The skill to persuade someone is Management. David-R has a Management skill of 5, meaning you must roll a 5 or less on the 20-sided die to successfully use that skill. Roll 1d20. If you roll 5 or less, go to 12. If you roll 6 or more, go to 49.

■ 32

You're not exactly sure how this thing operates, but it has an awfully large power pack and no apparent provision for setting the amount of power you use when you fire it. You put it back together with confidence you have not damaged it. Record a D code and go to 50.

■ 33

Joshua's laser blast catches you right in the chest. You feel searing pain, then see blackness. Somewhere a distant voice says,

'There, you poor devil, at least you're finally free of the Machine.' Then silence.

David-R is dead. Internal Security swiftly apprehends Joshua-R. The charges are treason and destruction of Computer property. An IntSec GREEN goon terminates Joshua-R on the spot. The Computer your friend.

■ 34

Joshua-R fires and misses. If you can just dodge him and make it out the door, you'll be in a corridor with crowds of people. To successfully dodge past Joshua-R, you use your Violence skill, the all-purpose 'physical actions' skill. David-R's Violence is 9, meaning you must roll 9 or less on the 20-sided die to dodge. Roll 1d20. If you roll 9 or less, go to 16. If you roll 10 or more, go to 28.

■ 35

The neurostunner releases a powerful blast of energy. The device suddenly grows hot in your hand and explodes before you can release it, showering you with bits of hot metal and plastic.

To see whether you hit with the energy bolt, you'll roll against (that is, check for success using) the Energy Weapons specialty of your Violence skill. Your Energy Weapons specialty is 4 more than your Violence skill of 9, so you must roll 13 or less on the 20-sided dice to hit your target. Roll 1d20. If you roll 13 or less and fired at Edith-O, go to 22. If you roll 13 or less and fired at Joshua-R, go to 40. If you roll 14 or more, go to 08.

■ 36

'David-R? This is Joshua-R and I'm Edith-O.' Coldly Edith-O says, 'I'm in charge of this operation, and don't either of you forget it.'

Edith-O directs Joshua-R and you to pick up your toolkits and follow her. She leads the way to the residence barracks of Lonnie-KKD-3 and Virgil-KKD-4 at coordinates F6-117/KKD. She produces a magnetic key and opens the door. She sends Joshua-R into the common room to check the master unit. She sends you to examine the remote unit in the sleeping room. Edith-O checks on Joshua-R and you, then turns her attention to searching the walls and floors with a strange device.

You can see Joshua-R in the other room. He is out of Edith-O's sight. Joshua-R doesn't appear to notice you looking. Joshua-R pulls something from a pocket of his coveralls and looks to be fiddling with it.

You can't see well at this distance, but your mutation, Hypersenses, may make it possible for you to see what Joshua-R is doing. If you use your mutant power to observe Joshua, go to 18. Otherwise, go to 11.

■ 37

You can't shut off the alarm quickly or easily. A woman appears at the door to the next room. She holds a laser pistol, pointed right at you. If you raise your hands and surrender, go to 49. If



you try to fast-talk your way out of the situation, go **31**. If you run from the room, go to **05**. If you try to attack the woman with a weapon or hand-to-hand combat, go to **42**.

38

I'm sorry, that information is not available at your security clearance. *Record a C code on your character sheet* and go to **20**.

39

Joshua-R leans in the door, fires and misses. You'll never get your weapon ready before Joshua-R can fire again at point-blank range. If you can just dodge him and make it out the door, you'll be in a corridor with crowds of people. To successfully dodge past Joshua-R, you use your Violence skill, the all-purpose 'physical actions' skill. David-R's Violence is 9, meaning you must roll 9 or less on the 20-sided die to dodge. Roll 1d20. If you roll 9 or less, go to **16**. If you roll 10 or more, go to **28**.

40

Joshua-R goes down twitching and writhing. Edith-O turns and covers you warily with her pistol, but when she sees your weapon has disintegrated and you are injured, she holsters her laser and gives you first aid. She treats you with respect as you wait for the Internal Security Squad to come pick up Joshua's twitching form. As the docbot bears you away, she salutes you for your courage and assures you The Computer will reward your faithful service. Her final handshake is a little warmer than is strictly proper between Troubleshooters. Go to **09**.

41

To see whether you hit with your laser blast, you'll *roll against* (that is, check for success using) the Energy Weapons specialty of your Violence skill. Your Energy Weapons specialty is 4 more than your Violence skill of 9, so you must roll 13 or less on the 20-sided dice to hit your target. Roll 1d20 and select a victim. If you roll 13 or less and fired at Edith-O, go to **17**. If you roll 13 or less and fired at Joshua-R, go to **29**. If you roll 14 or more, go to **10**.

42

Edith-O has already drawn and aimed her weapon; you must draw your weapon or charge across the room. Edith-O's first shot hits you in the chest. You are losing consciousness and slumping to the floor when her second shot finishes you off. (Because you attempted to attack, she felt no obligation to bring you in alive.)

David-R is dead. Edith-O will get an Official Commendation for dispatching a traitor.

Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

43

Joshua-R and Edith-O are not in the headquarters conference room when you

arrive, but the toolkits of each are sitting on the floor behind the door. You can hear the sound of a woman speaking sharply to a man in the next room, but you cannot make out what she is saying.

If you open and examine the contents of their toolkits while the room is empty, go to **25**. If you move closer to eavesdrop, go to **24**. If you neither examine the toolkits nor move to eavesdrop, but sit quietly and wait for the other Troubleshooters, go to **36**.

44

Field testing of experimental devices is a service to The Computer. The Computer is your friend. Will you reconsider and accept assignment of this experimental device? If yes, *record an A code on paper* and go to **26**. If no, *record a B code* and go to **50**.

45

Because records clearly indicate you were with Edith-O and Joshua-R on this mission, it is only a matter of time before Internal Security finds you. Flight to avoid apprehension is deemed sufficient grounds for summary execution.

A squad of IntSec agents tracks and terminates David-R. The Computer awards the agents Official Commendations for prompt and efficient performance of their duties.

Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

46

Internal Security agents, led by reports from loyal citizens concerning a man with a hand injury behaving strangely in their sector, quickly apprehend you. In the absence of contradictory testimony, The Computer finds your flight to avoid apprehension sufficient evidence of treason. You are terminated.

David-R is dead. Several IntSec agents receive commendations for their swift and efficient apprehension of a fugitive.

Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

47

Edith-O has red reflec armor. Your shots don't affect her. She finishes you off casually.

David-R is dead. Edith-O receives a commendation for dispatching two traitors. That is all.

48

You hear the sound of several laser discharges, then silence. Edith-O steps into the room where you are and sees you are unarmed. She keeps her weapon on you until the morgue bot and the Internal Security squad come for Joshua's body. Go to **54**.

49

David-R's lame excuse that he 'tripped' over the toolbox apparently doesn't satisfy Edith-O. Go to **19**.

50

As you proceed to the rendezvous with your fellow Troubleshooters at sector dispatch, a passerby gives the Pro Tech secret society recognition signal and whispers, 'Pro Tech mission. Check confession booth with cracked door for details.' The confession booth with a cracked door is directly ahead. If you stop and look inside for a message, *record an F code* and go to **06**. If you do not stop, proceeding

Mission code key

A: No correction because you accepted the experimental device.

B: Censure for declining the experimental device. For a week, everyone you meet must officially scold you on that point.

C: Probation for inquiring about classified information. IntSec has many ways of tracking probation. You'll find out.

D: R&D notices your tampering with the neurostunner. For unauthorized examination of a device in search of information not cleared for RED Security Clearance, The Computer fines you 100 credits.

E: You have damaged experimental equipment in the process of unauthorized examination of the device. The Computer fines you 200 credits.

F and G: No one has observed either your contact with the secret society member or your discovery of the message in the confession booth. **G** means you have failed to follow the directives of your secret society, which may result in the loss of status and privilege.

H: means nothing at all—but you were worried for a minute there, weren't you?

I: The Computer grants you an Official Commendation for quick action in protecting a trusted agent. However, because Internal Security later determines you couldn't have known what was going on in the other room without a mutant power, The Computer puts you on probation. It doesn't explain its suspicions you have an unregistered mutation.

J: Indicates no effect on treason or commendation points, because you can't be blamed for something you didn't know about (Joshua-R's hidden weapon).

K: Though Edith-O had some suspicions about you, she nonetheless felt you deserved a commendation for trying to help. You receive a 100-credit bonus.

L: You will receive a secret society promotion for Edith-O's death, whether or not you killed her (or, if you didn't look for the secret society message in the confession booth, whether you even knew you were supposed to kill her).

M: Your prompt action leading to the apprehension of a traitor earns you an Official Commendation.

N: Edith-O is not sure who you were going to shoot at. She reports your suspicious behavior and failure to assist her to The Computer. The Computer places you on probation.

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directly to the rendezvous, record a G code and go to 43.

■ 51

Failure to accept the mission is treason. David-URK-1 is assigned to food vat service. Possession of RED security clearance equipment is treason. The Computer revokes the assignment of red reflec armor and a laser pistol to David URK-1.

Your mission is over. You are now a low-status INFRARED laborer in the foul-smelling food vats with a record of treasonous behavior. The Computer is your friend.

■ 52

You have to close with Joshua-R to fight hand-to-hand. You run right into his laser blast. Go to 33.

■ 53

Whether the interrogators believe the story or not, the evidence is incontrovertible. Your laser killed Edith-O. The Computer judges you guilty of treason and orders your execution.

David-R is dead. Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

■ 54

You have survived the mission.

Now, to help you understand the world of **PARANOIA**, we'll explain the commendations, corrections and other consequences of your choices during this mission. Compare the codes you recorded as you proceeded through the mission with the annotated list in the box on the previous page. The codes explain the consequences of your choices, and the reasons for those consequences.

11. Tips for traitors

The following excerpts from the infamous manuscript known as 'Treasonous Jive That'll Keep You Alive' are presented by the inspired leadership of PURGE ('Smash The Computer. PURGE is your friend.') to help inexperienced Troubleshooters survive mission assignments.

This information is of most use to experienced Troubleshooters who have undergone, if not survived, several **PARANOIA** missions. They understand the kinds of snafus, insanity and general mayhem that can be expected. Don't feel compelled to read it the first time you play. (On the other hand, this advice will give you a signal advantage over other novices.)

The manuscript is a compendium of maxims, collected and annotated by an anonymous citizen with the assumed pen name of One-Clone Charlie. In the absence of more tangible evidence, the sheer size of this manuscript (over 600 handwritten pages in tiny, crabbed script) attests to the author's longevity and, therefore, the presumed utility of his advice. Imagine the difficulty of scribbling even one page of such treasonous wisdom while evading the ever-vigilant eyes of The Computer and its loyal servants and toadies.

■ I never saw a boot
I couldn't lick.

Or a bot sensor. Or a Computer terminal. Indeed, licking the metaphorical boots of The Computer is the primary survival skill. You know what The Computer wants to hear: Its citizens are safe and happy, treason has been rooted out and destroyed, and the citizens are endlessly grateful to The Computer for its bountiful generosity and compassionate concern.

Never tell anyone (or anything) something that he, she, or it does not want to hear. If this compels you to misstate yourself, and you are caught creatively interpreting the facts, immediately and humbly acknowledge your 'error' in memory, perception or judgment,

or blame the misinformation on some other source—preferably the perennial scapegoat favorite, Commie mutant traitors and saboteurs.



It pays to hone your Bootlicking skill.



computer terminal with a hammer. Oh, woe is me! Surely I have been made the unwitting dupe of some Commie spy with mutant mind control powers! You must let me go seek this Commie traitor without delay before he corrupts some other loyal citizens.'

Always have a few nice speeches prepared in case you are forced to bootlick for your life on short notice. For example:

'Indeed, I can see that the circumstantial evidence demands my execution. But, in your extensive experience and abundant wisdom, surely you have discovered that appearances are deceiving, especially when the masters of misrepresentation, Communist traitors, have fabricated the web of falsehood to indict innocent citizens, confounding the process of justice and causing loyal citizens to suffer tragically in spite of their unswerving devotion to The Computer. All I ask for is an opportunity to clear my name and to fight this insidious threat to the security of all citizens and to their benevolent protector, The Computer.'

Numerous catch phrases are sure to receive a gratifying response:

- ⦿ 'Friend Computer . . .'
- ⦿ '. . . obviously the work of Commie saboteurs . . .'
- ⦿ '. . . clear implication of the operation of some unregistered mutant power . . .'
- ⦿ 'How terrifying it is to contemplate that even The Computer's information sources may be compromised by Communist conspirators.'
- ⦿ 'No, of course not! The Computer in error? Completely implausible! No, it can only be the work of traitors . . .'
- ⦿ 'But I was only following your orders when we [executed that High Programmer/ cooperated with that registered mutant/ tested the experimental matter imploder]. Who could have dreamed that your orders might be unwise or ill-considered?'
- ⦿ 'Of course, for my own protection, that important information about [the flybot's operation/the weapon's destructive capacity/the instability of that isotope] was not available at my security clearance. I hope that as I rise in The Computer's favor, such tragic destruction of Computer property can be avoided.'

If you're making a citizen lick your boot, he might as well start with the sole.

A common mistake made by ambitious young Troubleshooters is acting heroically in the service of The Computer. The proper approach

is to direct subordinates to act heroically, then, after their inevitable and carefully planned demise (often in the act of their heroism), claim credit for their heroic deeds.

Always present orders that entail certain death for subordinates in such a way as to suggest that you are graciously offering them an opportunity to distinguish themselves, like so:

'Here, Gone-R, you take this experimental plasma-powered flashlight. I'm sure a comprehensive report on its testing will earn you a commendation.'

Or:

'Splat-R, I commend you on your courage in volunteering to disarm the berserk scrubot. None of us veterans could begrudge you the honor of serving The Computer in so selfless and loyal a fashion.'

Beware of excessively cooperative bootlickers. Many are simply mindlessly loyal and courageous, and present no threat to you, and you will find it easy to assign them to useful tasks that they will not survive. However, a shrewd bootlicker may have schemed a way to survive the task you have assigned, planning to exploit his actions to further his ambitions or to bring about your demise. Assign him to the task for which he has volunteered, but add some additional complication that he cannot have anticipated. For example:

'Why, thank you for volunteering to attempt salvage of that malfunctioning plasma cannon. A noble gesture. Of course, with such a dangerous mission, it would be unwise for you to further risk any of The Computer's valuable equipment by exposing it to any explosion that might result if you should fail. Therefore, I regret you will have to leave all your equipment here with us in the bunker. Yes, I'm afraid that means your tool kit, too.'

■ Accidents will happen—the sooner, the better.

Whenever possible, reduce the number of Troubleshooters in your mission group. Several basic principles are at work here.

- ⦿ First, fewer Troubleshooters means fewer weapons aimed at your back.
- ⦿ Fewer Troubleshooters also means more casualties to be tailored to your scapegoat requirements without the embarrassment of contradictory testimony.

'Yes, the villainous traitor Fawlg-I was obviously responsible for sabotaging our mission at every turn. How unfortunate that he did not survive so that we might force from him the complete story of his heinous betrayals.'

- ⦿ Fewer Troubleshooters means less confusion when the commendations are handed out. (If you are the only

survivor of a successful mission, you can certainly dramatize your crucial role without argument.)

The unsophisticated method of reducing mission staff is the summary execution. This technique is effective if well-planned and executed, but, if no more than an impulsive bit of gunplay, the executioner is often executed by his victim—or by other trigger-happy citizens who want to join in the fun.

The accident is a more controlled and efficient method of reducing staff. A properly staged accident, even if it fails, does not prompt the victim to pull his weapon and start firing away. A well planned accident may not alert a victim that he has been the target of an attack; even if he suspects he has been set up, the victim is not sure who to shoot in retaliation. Also, occasionally survivors may be called to task when a mission group is decimated; if the fatalities were obviously 'accidents', charges of false execution are not likely to be filed.

■ Whoever heard of a trustworthy citizen?

A good position in the mission deployment is vital to survival. Since the mission leader usually has the power to order the group deployment as he likes, a discussion of best choices is properly addressed to mission leaders. However, if a mission leader is weak or stupid enough to permit personnel to position themselves as they will, other Troubleshooters should understand these basic principles.

The coveted position in any mission deployment is at the rear of the group. Normally, this position is preempted by the mission leader. (Oh, fortunate mission leader!) If you are the mission leader or the ranking citizen, demand this privilege. Do not be swayed by transparent tactics like, 'Say, my combat skills and training make me the perfect one to guard against attack from the rear,' or, 'Because I carry the multicorder and must record all our activities, I must stand behind you, Mission Leader Sir, for a panoramic view.'

Of course, if you are not the mission leader, you must try these transparent tactics. Some inexperienced or dimwitted mission leaders may fall for them. However, if the mission leader assumes the rear, then you must scramble to assure yourself of the best spot you can wrangle.

Far right or left flank is usually the second-best choice for a combatant, affording a wide field of vision and fire. If you are the Communications Officer or some other technician, you can usually make a good case for being back with the mission leader; without a drawn weapon, you present a less immediate threat to his security. (Note, however, a prudent mission leader arranges to eliminate any recordings of the mission, and thus the Comm Officer is at serious risk when near the mission leader and out of line of sight of the rest of the group.)

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The rear position is coveted for its superior range of fire and the safety it affords from backstabbing; it is also the place where fewest eyes are trained. Those who wish to do things that go unnoticed will find this is the ideal position.

Conversely, not only is the point man the focus of all weapons on his own team, as well as the weapons of any opposition, he is also constantly subjected to the scrutiny of his companions. This position should be assigned by the mission leader to the Troubleshooters most likely to present a real threat to him. Never waste this resource by placing a low-status nincompoop there. Wimps and morons should be graciously assigned a position in the center rear of the group, and told: 'Now, aren't I a kind and considerate mission leader to place you inexperienced men in such a safe spot?' Reassure them often about how safe they are, then terminate them at your leisure after the tough guys have been eliminated.

Never assign anyone with a powerful area weapon to a position on the periphery of the group. The temptation to turn and wipe out the rest of the party in one shot is just too seductive. Place him in the middle of the group where you can keep an eye on him.

Power armor appears to be an advantage equivalent to rear guard. However, the risk of equipment malfunction is serious — no leader wants to get caught helpless in a powerless power suit. A compromise is to assign the weakest, most docile, low-status dolt to the power armor, then position him directly in front

of you as you assume the rear position. This way you have the indirect protection of his armor and still have enough warning to get out of the way if he becomes obstreperous.

Shoot only from a position of total superiority.

Inexperienced Troubleshooters haul out their lasers and open fire the moment someone says or does something that might be construed as an excuse for a summary execution. **This is dumb.** You are *not* looking for an excuse to execute someone. You are looking for an opportunity to execute someone in such a thorough and risk-free fashion, he is dead before his weapon can clear his holster.

Given the generally poor marksmanship of Troubleshooters, the unreliable killing power of their weapons, and the substantial protection of their armor, the chances of acing a prospective traitor before he gets off several shots is diminishingly small. Thus, you are as likely to die as your victim. **Dumb.**

Bide your time, build your case against your prospective victim, then plug him when he is relatively unable to return your fire—when he has his hands full of some other kind of trouble, like attacking hostiles or a malfunctioning weapon or a berserk bot. At the least, his weapon should be still in its holster and his attention elsewhere. Ideally, he should never even know it is you attacking him. Whenever possible, attack when you have superior firepower or when circumstances ensure you

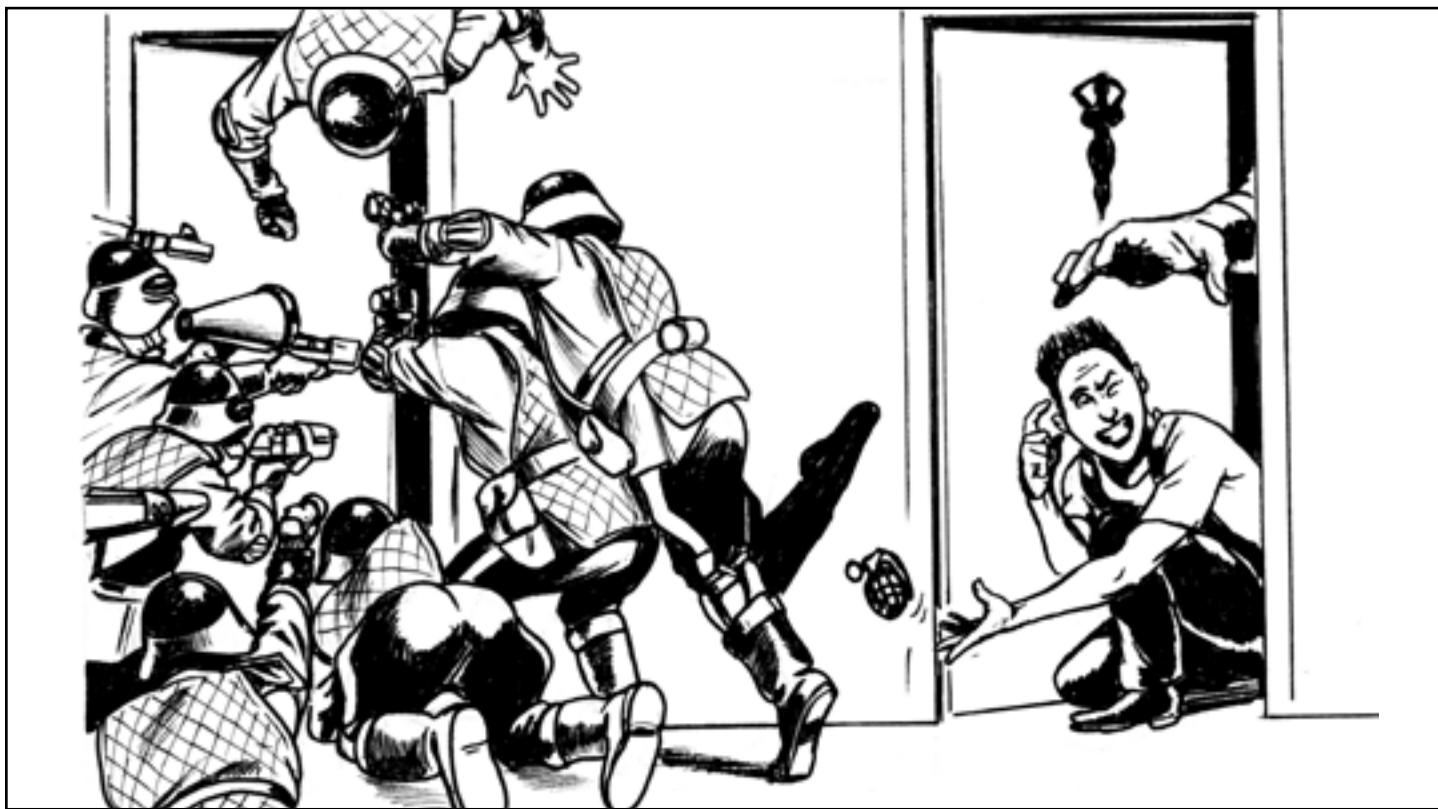
will hit your target—for instance, when standing behind him with your slugthrower pressed against his torso.

Often, resorting to weapons is unwise. The 'accident' is more effective at eliminating a rival and claiming a commendation. If you never get a good opportunity during the mission, there's always the debriefing. A well-supported case of treason is a more deadly weapon than a laser and less likely to backfire on you than a summary execution.

A sucker for every scheme, a scapegoat for every crime.

Carefully select your prime victim candidates. Certain types make excellent suckers and scapegoats. Trigger-happy, impulsive types can easily be induced to start trouble with hostiles, facilitating your shooting them from behind. Super-loyal, heroic types can usually be talked into getting involved in risky ventures that either kill them or distract them enough to give you a good shot at them. Naive types who throw themselves wholeheartedly into a mission won't notice the sneaky stuff you're doing to them.

Scapegoats should be of a lower status, permitting you to give them orders setting them up as fall guys for any of your schemes that backfire or blow up in your face. For example, just before you test an experimental weapon, always ask a lower-status tech to inspect it first. If something goes wrong, then obviously the tech damaged it during his inspection. (Of



The coveted position in mission deployment is at the rear.



course, keep an eye on the tech at all times to make sure he isn't *really* sabotaging the weapon.)

Absent scapegoats (either deceased, missing or imaginary) are preferable to scapegoats who can stand up at the debriefing and defend themselves. The all-time favorite scapegoat is the hypothetical Commie-mutant-traitor always lurking just out of sight. The Computer is an easy mark for the impassioned, melodramatic speech that conjures sinister images: evil agents hidden under benign, loyal smiles; demonic criminals hovering behind every back; tiny, gremlin-like presences of unimaginable malevolence with almost magical power to avoid detection. As long as other citizens can be dissuaded from persistently pointing their fingers at you and crying traitor, The Computer can be easily sent off on some wild bot chase, searching for an imaginary Commie, while your treasonous acts are overlooked in the hysteria.

■ Nothing is more deadly than experimental equipment.

Though fatalities involving experimental equipment seem less memorable because they do not include the thrill of plotting, backstabbing, and gunplay, a quick survey of Troubleshooter records indicates a very large percentage of clone deaths are directly or indirectly related to malfunctioning experimental equipment.

Directly related equipment deaths include such typical misadventures as explosions, suffocation, incineration, poison, and brain-frying. Indirectly related deaths include secondary effects like distraction in combat (shrieking danger alarms that deafen listeners painfully), weapons that fail in crucial situations,

horribly expensive or otherwise valuable devices that cannot be abandoned when they break down in the midst of life-threatening disasters, and execution for failure to carry out stringent, unrealistic and impossibly deadly testing programs devised by proud R&D wizards.

Normally some pretext is made of offering a choice of devices for volunteers to test. Volunteer promptly, in best bootlicking style, for the least harmful-looking device under consideration. Jump in before anyone else and bubble over with enthusiasm. Thereafter, when other devices are offered or pressed on you, confidently assert that your complete attention must be given to the device you have already been assigned in order to properly test and evaluate it.

If no safe-looking item seems available, go for a portable weapon. Though such devices often present serious direct and indirect threats to your health, other non-weapon devices often present equally serious threats, but without the potential benefits of a first-class weapon. If the rest of the mission group is 'accidentally' killed before you realize the weapon's true destructive potential, such news is likely to excite and please, rather than dismay, R&D.

Avoid bots at all costs. No other experimental device is so unpredictable, expensive in fines for loss or damages, heavy and difficult to recover if damaged or malfunctioning, and capable of perversely independent action that may either implicate you in treason or force you to follow it into certain death to avoid abandoning it.

Never accept cumbersome items that have to be strapped onto your person by lots of tricky buckles and fastenings. These are often the devices with loud malfunction-warning alarms that go off at inappropriate times—like, whenever you use them.

■ Traitors have nothing to lose by committing treason.

Many traitors are too indoctrinated by The Computer's propaganda to profit from their treason, despite the fact they are as likely as anyone else to be executed for being traitors, whether they behave treasonably or not.

Take mutants, for example. How many mutants effectively exploit their innate capabilities? Sure, many mutant powers are pretty unimpressive, but powers like hypersenses are just perfect for gathering information.

As for secret societies, no one ever uses their connections to full measure. Sure, it's dangerous, but what isn't in Alpha Complex? The moment I get a new mission, I find some excuse to stop by my society drop point and get the inside scoop from some highly placed lodge brother. Or I wangle a special, secret society assignment that promises a big payoff in INFRARED-market information or equipment. 'Er, excuse me, mission leader, but it appears my laser barrel has only one shot left in it, and my spare has a hair-line fracture at the aperture [carefully put there for just such an emergency]. Let me drop by PLC supply and pick up new ones so I'll be primed for this important mission.'

Don't be shy when asking for information or equipment. You aren't going to get something unless somebody is feeling generous, anyway. Secret society higher-ups prefer a little unbridled greed in subordinates; it indicates ambition and enthusiasm they can channel into bootlicking, profitable for all parties concerned.

■ Debriefings go better when you are the only survivor.

'I speak without fear of contradiction...' is the opening sentence of the ideal debriefing. You get dinged for being the only one to make it back alive, but this is a minor inconvenience compared to the alternative. A creative dramatist can transform a disastrous mission replete with treasonous crimes into a heroic narrative with the speaker as the modest model of a loyal, courageous citizen serving The Computer with all his heart.

Other Troubleshooters are potentially embarrassing records of the mission. Get rid of them. Because slaughter is not always practical, bribing or blackmailing them into supporting your story may be an alternative.

Recording devices, like bots, multicorders and PDCs, must be eliminated, sabotaged or distracted wherever possible. Such records represent hard evidence—'hard,' that is, to explain away, and far harder to dismiss as Commie treason than the verbal statements of other Troubleshooters. Be prudent, however. Unsubtle and unrestrained destruction of recording and transmitting devices will be interpreted as a deliberate effort to compromise the records. It may be sufficient to ensure PDCs

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are turned the other way while you perpetrate nefarious deeds.

If you volunteer or are chosen as Communications Officer, your problems are more complicated. First, you wish to survive, which is not consistent with carrying something others are eager to destroy. Further, you are the one who gets fined if the device is damaged or destroyed. To improve your chances of survival, stick close to the mission leader; he's usually in the rear and less subject to outright attacks. Further, make it known that for a few credits you can ensure the mission record features a Troubleshooter's finest moments and overlooks his egregiously treasonous acts.

Another clever ploy is providing narration for the record tapes by speaking loudly as the events are recorded: 'Note the diligent labor of citizen Don-R as he searches for the source of the jackobot's malfunction.' (Don-R is in fact reprogramming the bot to respond to a remote control self-destruct device. This will obviate the need for an extensive de-briefing by obliterating the other party members and the briefing personnel.)

When disaster looms, keep stalling.

When I'm called upon to perform the impossible in the face of certain death, I always politely ask The Computer if I can go to the bathroom first—and if I can have a glass of water—and if I can check just one more reference by data search—and if I can field-strip the electron howitzer to stop that buzzing noise it makes when you set the fuse timer—and so on—and so forth. This tactic is most effective if the requests can be made privately and without alerting the rest of the mission group you will be tarrying behind just a bit. Once the rest of the group catches on, everyone gets into the act, and The Computer's temper-simulation software gets short.

Stalling is also the ideal tactic for resisting the peremptory orders of security superiors: 'Of course, sir, right away, I'm right on top of it, just have to get my tools ready, yessir—er, could you stand back a bit so I can spread these out on the floor and make sure all of

them are neatly assorted by size, shape, color and serial number?'

Of course, stalling doesn't make the looming disaster go away. While you're stalling, you must continue feverishly brainstorming and scheming, hoping for some inspiration or the intervention of good fortune.

A gifted foot-dragger has one resource he can always count on: the impatience of other Troubleshooters. If the stalling is executed with exquisite subtlety—if your mission leader and fellow Troubleshooters perceive your actions as bumbling incompetence, finicky perfectionism, tiresome attention to detail, or simple cowardice—if they don't perceive your actions at all, so perfectly have you managed to avoid attracting their attention—then the action-oriented, impulsive types often push forward, elbow you out of the way and stride confidently into the trap you were desperately hoping to avoid.

Remember: 'He who hesitates is lost, but I'd rather be lost than eviscerated any daycycle.'

12. Going forward

As described in Chapter 7, 'Doing things', the Gamemaster may award you Perversity Points when you do something especially entertaining, move a scene along or otherwise improve the game. You'll probably spend most of your Perversity points on General Perversity Modifiers to adjust the success chance of die rolls. You can also spend Perversity to increase your character's competence.

Increased skill ratings: Increasing one of your six basic skills by 1 costs 5 times the new rating number in points. For example, raising Violence from 9 to 10 costs ($10 \times 5 =$) 50 Perversity points. You can spend points this way only at the end of a mission in Straight games, or at any time in Classic or Zap games. Increasing a skill rating doesn't increase the ratings of its related specialties.

Increased specialty or Secret skill ratings: A specialty or Secret skill rating increase of 1 costs 5 points, regardless of the new rating number. You can spend points when the GM allows it.

New specialties: Each common specialty costs 20 Perversity points and starts at a rating equal to the governing skill rating plus 4. Each narrow specialty costs 20 points and starts at the governing skill's rating plus 6. You don't incur a compensating weakness when you buy a new specialty. You can spend points when the GM allows it.

You can spend your Perversity points to increase your Troubleshooter's skill and specialty ratings, or to buy new specialties and Secret skills.

You don't know how to increase your Access and Power attributes. Only the GM knows.

New Secret skills: Each new Secret skill costs 20 points. In Straight games the new skill starts with a rating of 1. In Zap games, roll 1d20 and halve the score (rounding up). For Classic games, the GM will tell you which method to use, depending on how keen he is to encourage characters with tremendous skill in Knitting or Chartered Accountancy.

Go forth and serve, citizen!

This completes your orientation. When you have completed your Troubleshooter character, submit your character sheet to the Gamemaster for approval. He may revise it or ask you to revise it. When play begins, the GM may ask you to introduce your character to the other players; **divulge no secrets** to them, or risk early termination!

You now know how to create a character, a little about Alpha Complex and The Computer, and enough about the rules to play. Actually you don't know much, but that is the key to maintaining **PARANOIA**. Life is exciting when you don't know your enemies. A successful Troubleshooter develops a healthy sense of insecurity.

However, you can't let paranoia paralyze you. You must survive. You must use wit, intuition and daring to rise to higher levels of access and prestige. At higher clearances you may learn secrets currently forbidden.

Remember: From the start, other players are interested in your PC. Granted, they want to terminate him, but that counts as interest. They help determine the adversity your PC faces, and they make creative suggestions that shape your PC's situation.

These players are focusing on your actions. Take their interest and play with it. Keep it. Be entertaining.



IR Market goods and services

Now that you've been promoted to RED Clearance and joined the ranks of the Troubleshooters, just think what you can buy! You share an assigned apartment with just five or six other citizens, instead of crashing in a generic INFRARED barracks rife with smells and loud with snoring. You can afford literally all the Cold Fun you could ever want (and we know how much that is, don't we?), plus Bouncy Bubble Beverage more than a few times a month. Now you can venture down into the sewers and stairwells—down where the IntSec patrols are paid never to go and the cameras are ordered never to work—down to the local Free Enterprise **IR Market**. Down here you can buy all kinds of lucky charms, heisted high-clearance goods and ointment guaranteed to make you invisible to lie detectors. No, really, it's *guaranteed!* Would I lie to you?

What else can you buy? How much is it? At what clearance is it (legally) available? Here's a small sample, but really, you can get anything you want. *A-ny-thing.* Remember, nothing has a warranty, the legality of the purchase is your own problem, all payment must be in hard-currency plasticreds and trust me, I'm not making a half-credit on the whole deal.

KEY

IR=INFRARED, (R)ED, (O)RANGE, etc. **cr** = credits

FOOD, DRINK AND CONSUMABLES

Bouncy Bubble Beverage (choice of flavors):

- Plain (IR) 1cr
- Extra Classic (R) 2cr
- Tastes Just Like Something Orange! (O) 2cr
- R&D Experimental Flavor #71 (illegal) 10cr

CruncheeTym Algae Chips (choice of flavors):

- Plain (IR) 1cr
- Not Quite As Plain (R) 1cr
- Tripple Cheeze (Y) 3cr
- Vague Hint of Guacamole (G) 3cr

Cold Fun (available in three fun flavors: Pink, Brown, and Vanilla)

- Single-serving cup (IR) 2cr
- Single-serving cone (R) 3cr
- 5-gallon tub (O) 200cr
- Vita-Yum Meal Substitute Bar (plain) (R) 2cr
- Vita-Yum Meal Substitute Bar Substitute Pill (O) 5cr

Chocolyke Puff Crunchers, per can (O) 10cr

Minty Breath-O-Fresheners, per tin (O) 10cr

DRUGS & RECREATION

Cancer-Lite Cigarettes (R) 6cr

- Cancer-Free Cigarettes (O) 8cr

Xanitrick (Wakey-Wakey) tablet (IR) 1cr

Visomorpain (Little Black Friend) tablet (IR) 1cr

Gelgernine (Inner Happiness) tablet (R) 2cr

Gelgernine aerosol spray (G) 200cr

Sandallathon (Sleepy-Sleepy) tablet (R) 1cr

Pyroxidine (Wide-Awake) tablet (R) 20cr

Pyroxidine capsule (R) 100cr

Asperquaint (Tireless Servant) tablet (Y) 6cr

Rolactin (Happy Life) tablet (B) 50cr

Smoking Boots gag—fool your friends! (R) 150cr

Smoke refill for boots (G) 90cr

PlastiLaser—realistic zap noise! (R) 50cr

FunFun Firecrackers—safe for all ages! (R) 5cr each

Yo-yo, lasts for hours! (G) 20cr

HYGIENE & MAINTENANCE

Teela-O Pocket Mirror (R) 5cr

Hottorch (R) 100cr

Instant Cleans-O-Spray (R) 50cr

Comb, red (R) 5cr

Lemonie-Moistened Towelettes, 20 count (R) 50cr

Hammer (O) 10cr

Dental floss, 10m (O) 1cr

Crowbar (Y) 10cr

Bandages, self-stick, box of 25 (Y) 25cr

Chapstick, Dyno-mint flavor (G) 100cr

Nail (I) 1cr

Chainsaw, electric (I) 100cr

CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

Pen (plastic, black stick, black ink) (IR) 3cr

Pen (metal, black w/gold trim, red or black ink) (R) 10cr

Ink refills:

- Black (IR) 1cr
- Red (R) 1cr
- Orange (O) 3cr
- Invisible (illegal) 25cr
- Invisible revealer (G) 160cr

Gas mask (R) 50cr

Sneakers, black w/red stripes (R) 120cr

Sneakers, red w/black stripes (R) 220cr

Shoelaces, spare (O) 1cr

Heat-resistant mittens (O) 35cr

FastDraw Executive laser holster (O) 90cr

Sunglasses (O) 2cr

Pencil, disposable (O) 1cr

Notepad (G) 1cr

Hiking boots (B) 75cr

SURVIVAL & TECHNOLOGY

Bullhorn, with MegaBooster! (R) 50cr

Plasticord, per meter (R) 1cr

Binoculars (O) 50cr

Stopwatch (Y) 15cr

Slide rule (Y) 10cr

Magnifying glass, bifocal (G) 5cr

Collapsible travel bag (G) 50cr

Box of matches (B) 1cr

Lantern, electric (B) 20cr

Geiger counter (B) 100cr

Utility knife multi-tool (B) 50cr

Nightvision goggles (I) 300cr

Disposable lighter (I) 4cr

Calculator (I) 10crS

Umbrella (V) 10cr

Fake RED laser barrel, non-op (illegal) 12cr

Fake ORANGE barrel, non-op (illegal) 18cr

Fake YELLOW barrel, non-op (illegal) 27cr

PROMOTIONAL MERCHANDISE

[Listed price is for logo mug; x2 for T-shirt, x3 for poster]

Teela-O (IR) 15cr

Funbot (R) 10cr

Mark IV Warbot (R) 35cr

Best Good Happy Sector Hour (Y) 25cr

'Death from Above' Mark IV collector patch (O) 110cr

Toothpaste Disaster 'hoodie' sweatshirt (V) 300cr

w/ 'I survived' logo—very rare, few made (UV) 12,000cr

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Player: I try to stop my PDC from squawking so loud.

GM: As you punch the buttons, you accidentally turn on the phone. You hear a strange voice coming from it. Sounds like a conversation in progress.

Player: On *my* phone? Uh—I listen quietly, just long enough to see if I recognize the voice.

GM: You recognize the rasping voice of your mission briefing officer, Larry-I-NQW-4. He's talking with someone you haven't heard before, a deep growling voice.

Player: Do they know I'm—I mean, are they talking to me?

GM: Doesn't sound like it. Larry-I sounds nervous. The other voice is speaking with total authority. Something about guaranteeing the headquarters goes up in flames before anyone finds out.

Player: 'Headquarters'? What headquarters?

GM: They don't say. Larry-I says, 'I made sure he has the evidence to plant on the team leader.'

Player: *I'm* the— Oh, crap!

WARNING: Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET** constitutes treason punishable by summary execution

GM: They both hang up. There's no more sound from your phone. Do you want to report the conversation to your fellow Troubleshooters?

Player: NO!



GM SECTION CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

13. You can kill them when you want

The Prime Rules for the GM

GM Rule #1. You are IN CHARGE. You are ALWAYS RIGHT.

We give you these rules as guidance. Use them when you don't know what you'd like to have happen in the game. When you do know, ignore them. We've tried to make the rules as helpful and powerful as we can, but if you don't like a rule, **the rule is wrong**. Good rules help a lot, but bad rules were made to be broken, tortured, lobotomized and summarily executed.

Dice are handy for giving players the illusion they control their destiny. This is valuable, but roll your dice out of the players' sight, behind a screen. If a die roll gives you a result you don't like, **the die is wrong**. Change the result to the number you want. You can dock the die credits or beat it up, though in our experience this has little effect.

If a player tries an action you like, roll lots of dice and consult lots of tables. Whatever they tell you, have the action succeed. If you don't like the action, roll the dice and have it fail. If you're undecided, use the rules in this chapter.

GM Rule #2. The players aren't your enemies. They're your entertainment.

Reward player behavior that entertains you; punish behavior that doesn't. Dance them like

puppets on strings. Of course, it's especially entertaining when a player somehow eludes certain death and, against all odds, wins big. Not to be sentimental, but this is the honest truth: **The best entertainment you get as a Gamemaster is seeing everyone have a good time.**

GM Rule #3. Always turn the players against each other, not against you.

As a *PARANOIA* Gamemaster your job is to set up situations where the players can entertain you. You'll do this by dangling great opportunities and then sometimes frustrating them, by giving the PCs many opportunities to kill each other, and by subjecting the players to psychological stresses to make them wish you'd just lacerate their forebrains with a bandsaw.

Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

for betraying their fellow characters, cleverly escaping certain death and being creative or funny. If they're really brilliant, let them succeed and advance in their careers. *Always reward brilliance!*

If you punish the players for doing something, they will do less of that. So punish them for stalling the game, disrupting the atmosphere and above all for arguing over rules. **Rules arguments must be universally, comprehensively, ruthlessly punished.**

At the most fundamental level, you presumably want the players to play more *PARANOIA*. Therefore, reward them for playing: Make them laugh. Make them get creative. Make sure when they're entertaining you, this also entertains them, and thereby conditions them.

As Gamemaster you hold absolute authority. Still, you needn't go out of your way to torment the players. You aren't their enemy, so don't be malicious. Don't kill the Troubleshooters arbitrarily; instead, set up situations where they can kill each other. They're champing at the bit to kill each other, so get out of their way. If a player argues about the rules, have a high-clearance citizen take away his PC's weapon, then put him in a dark room with the other PCs. End of that problem.

Okay, now you can stop picturing your players as dogs and mice.

Actually, forget we said that.

Player conditioning

PARANOIA gamemastering, more than the referee's role in some other (not fun) games, involves the psychology of the players.

Imagine for a moment—only a moment—that your players are dogs or mice. You want them to behave. How can you condition them?

If you reward the players for doing something, they will do more of that. So reward them

The basic idea, historically, is for organizations to gain control over people gradually and progressively through the development and deployment of increasingly effective technologies. Once people are controlled, it is possible to begin reducing their behavior to a series of machinelike actions. And once people behave like machines, they can be replaced with actual machines such as robots. The replacement of humans by machines is the ultimate stage in control over people—people can cause no more uncertainty and unpredictability because they are no longer involved, at least directly, in the process.

—George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (1996)

4. WHAT A GAMESMASTER DOES

14. What a Gamemaster does

In **PARANOIA** the Gamemaster presents missions for his players to enjoy. The players pretend to be Troubleshooters; they play secretive and conspiratorial player characters (PCs), say witty things, have clever ideas, solve puzzles, blow each other up and probably die multiple times. You pretend to be everything else: The Computer, the nonplayer characters (NPCs) the Troubleshooters meet, all the world and everything in it. You stage the development of the mission's storyline. You also act as the game referee, judging whether the players' actions are possible or permissible.

It's simple. Describe a situation to the players. They decide what they want to do and tell you. Roll 1d20, consult tables (either for real or for show) and decide whether each player's actions succeed or fail. Tell the players what happens and ask them what they do next.

At the same time, you play all NPCs in the scene, decide what they do, and determine whether their actions succeed or fail.

You want the collective actions of the PCs and NPCs to become, over time, a satisfying narrative. To this end, you provide a goal, obstacles, interesting events and a climax. *The narrative is more important than the rules.* Be willing to fudge or ignore die rolls, or interpret rules in dramatically appropriate ways to ensure everyone enjoys the story.

GMing a roleplaying game is tougher than playing in one. All a player has to do is get into the role he plays; in most games he doesn't have to know the rules, and in **PARANOIA** that's not even allowed. If he does something wrong, he relies on you or the other players to terminate him, or even set him right if they're feeling charitable.

But being a Gamemaster can be extremely rewarding. You're the only one who *really* knows what's going on. You get to create and run an entire imaginary universe.

That job has three parts: refereeing, roleplaying NPCs and sustaining psychological stress.

Referee the rules

Refereeing means making sure the players abide by the rules you set, interpreting those rules and resolving disputes impartially and reasonably. As a referee, you are expected to know the rules, at least to the extent you have decided which rules apply to your game and which don't. When the rules don't cover a specific situation, you decide what happens. **In any dispute, your word is final.**

Play NPCs

The player characters are the heroes of the mission, insofar as there are any heroes in Alpha Complex. They need patrons, opponents and a supporting cast. You take the roles of

these characters: The Computer, citizens, traitors and bots. Everyone has fun when you give these characters personality.

Sustain psychological stress

The key to running a memorable **PARANOIA** game is creating an atmosphere of fear, ignorance and suspicion. You want this atmosphere to feel fun and funny, but as a practical matter the players will take care of that. Concentrate on the paranoia.

Pay attention to these elements:

Suspension of disbelief

The world of Alpha Complex isn't real, but you and your players must act as though it were real. The more real it feels, the better the experience.

Make the world and NPCs feel real to your players. Tell everyone what they see and sense. The way you do that—the way you establish setting and tone—helps sustain the atmosphere.

Here are some aspects of suspension of disbelief:

④ **Consistency:** If you let a player use one of his skills to do something in one mission, don't tell him he can't in the next—unless you have a good reason.

④ **Plausibility:** This is a slippery concept in the crazed and satiric world of **PARANOIA**, and its importance depends on your chosen play style. Plausibility in Zap? Pfft, who cares? In Classic you can sacrifice a lot of plausibility in the cause of cheap gags and puns, but it helps maintain frustration and fear if you keep the bureaucracy and Internal Security approximately believable. In Straight you'll want to conjure a plausible, genuinely workable Alpha Complex, because it is engrossing and frightening.

④ **Improvisation:** Improvise constantly to add colorful detail to the setting, to make the NPCs seem more real and to keep the players' problems from being insultingly easy to solve. For instance, if the Troubleshooters grab an INFRARED worker and tell him to walk into certain death, be inventive. Tell them he asks if he can visit The Computer's confession booth first to confess his minor treasons before dying; he mentions pressing orders from a BLUE Clearance supervisor; he asks to go to the bathroom; etc.

On another front, improvise freely to keep the mission moving along. If a firefight is dragging on, or if bureaucratic frustrations are boring the players as well as their characters, have a couple of IntSec goons charge through the room after some random Commie traitor, or a malfunctioning bot, or, or—or, anything that will keep the players occupied.

Remember, Alpha Complex is not a place but a state of mind. We leave many details intentionally vague because, frankly, we can't be bothered to do the wor—no, wait, so *you* can create whatever works best for your group. Also, many aspects of life under The Computer are beyond the scope of any book. If you face a question that isn't covered, don't bother spending an hour searching through the text for the answer. It's not there! Make it up!

Rivalry

A Troubleshooter's greatest enemies should always be his fellow Troubleshooters. Aim relentlessly, at every point, to foment distrust among players. Sincere, trusting alliances destroy the game. Keep each Troubleshooter feeling personally resentful and suspicious of *every single* fellow character in the group, without exception. Use the many tools described in the GM section:

④ **Perversity spending:** There are many ways you can permit players to spend their Perversity points on modifiers to die rolls: publicly, in secret, on their own or other players' rolls. Each method promotes a particular psychology: complacency, suspicion, open hostility. Choose a method suited to the current situation.

④ **Secret society clues:** Many secret societies passionately hate each other. Troubleshooters who bump off members of enemy societies can expect IOUs or advancement in their own. If two players seem to be getting too chummy, have one Troubleshooter's secret society contact him with urgent news: His new friend belongs to the hated opposition. Is it true? Who cares? Sort it out at the debriefing.

④ **Mutation:** Nearly everyone distrusts mutants. If you use the optional Power increase rules, though (see Chapter 20), a character can increase his Power rating and even learn new mutant powers through private study with another mutant who has the same power. The



Troubleshooters as a group want to destroy mutants, but individual players may well want to shunt aside a desirable mutant for a private lesson in Power increases. Just by tempting the players with one NPC mutant and a single subtle hint, you can trigger a deadly firefight.

Lethality

Life in Alpha Complex is nasty, rather brutish, and grievously short. Troubleshooters struggle desperately against ludicrously impossible odds. Weapons are deadly, mutations are deadly, rival Troubleshooters are deadly—in the **Classic** and **Zap** play styles even the elevators and vending machines are deadly. The Computer may define practically any behavior as treason, and treason is punishable by medication, brainscrub, termination, or erasure. To survive these threats the Troubleshooters need information, and they can't get it. That's why some **PARANOIA** missions have a 100% to 600% fatality rate—sometimes before the mission even begins.

If you have chosen a Straight game, you can keep PCs alive long enough for players to get a feeling for the environment, maybe even start to move ahead in life. If you instead choose to run a Classic or Zap game, don't be soft-hearted. If someone deserves to die, kill him. If someone *doesn't* deserve to die, but it looks like it will be fun, kill him.

Remember, though, you (as Gamemaster) can't appear impulsive or arbitrary. You need an excuse to kill a character. You'll be surprised

how easy it is to find excuses—but the best excuse is always, *always* to let another player do the dirty deed. That way the victim blames his fellow player, not you.

In **PARANOIA** life is cheap. With an indefinite number of clone backups available in moments, dying is easy. It's comedy that's hard.

Computer pressure

As Gamemaster you play the special role of The Computer. This well-meaning but insane machine controls every aspect of Alpha Complex. The Computer is everywhere; its cameras, recording devices and agents saturate the city. The Troubleshooters will speak with it frequently.

As The Computer you are the very embodiment of a nasty totalitarian state. You are paranoid, unfair and arbitrary. You use threats or coercion to force the Troubleshooters into intolerable positions; you watch them squirm as they try to figure a way out that doesn't involve instant death or execution for treason; and, when the crisis sinks to its most awful depths, you cheerily ask for a status report.

(Remember, though: **You are not The Computer.** Acting as The Computer, you can be arbitrary and unfair. Acting as Gamemaster you cannot. In **PARANOIA**, sooner or later every character gets screwed. But players should always feel it's The Computer or NPCs or, most often, rival players who betray them—not you. Just as players must distinguish between themselves and their characters, you must distinguish between yourself as GM and the character you play most, The Computer.)

Ignorance

Players can't know the rules. Players can't know the true motives of NPCs or other players. Players can't know how experimental equipment works. Players can't know much of anything. Hee, hee, hee.

Ration information with miserly reluctance. Never tell the players anything useful unless they ask for it, and not even then if it's classified at a higher clearance than they are. Even when information is obtainable, it should frequently be incomplete, obscure, and misleading.

The higher a character's security clearance, the more information he can obtain. At Security Clearance RED, practically nothing is available.

'Flybot, how do I operate you?' — 'I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.'

'Technician, how do I use this plasma gun?' — 'Oh, it's brain-deadeningly simple. Practically fires itself. Don't fire it in here, please.'

'Friend Computer, what can we expect to find where we are going?' — 'I'm sorry, that information is not available at your security clearance.'

Six useful things to remember about Gamemastering

1. You can't learn everything at once.
2. If the players ask you to describe something, do. Let them worry about whether or not what you describe is important.
3. Before you run a mission, understand what should happen in each scene. Think about how to present a scene's characters and events, and how to anticipate the reactions of your players. If they do something you do not expect, remember the various coercion devices you have to keep them on track: The Computer, high-clearance citizens, secret society orders, etc.
4. Expect to extend the rules. No set of rules can be as ingenious as players. Use common sense to handle problems that arise, and keep playing. Don't waste time looking up rules! **You are always right.** Even if it turns out later you're wrong, you were right *at that time*. If you change your mind about a rules judgment later, you have become righter than ever.
5. Sometimes somebody has to make an arbitrary judgment. That's you. Do it and get on with the game.
6. Lethally punish boredom. Have fun. Fun is mandatory.

Ignorance and fear, fear and ignorance.
Dedicate yourself to these principles.

An Information Withholding Table, a list of useful responses to requests for information, appears in the Appendix of this book. Use it often. When you offer its excuses, smile charmingly.

Don't panic!

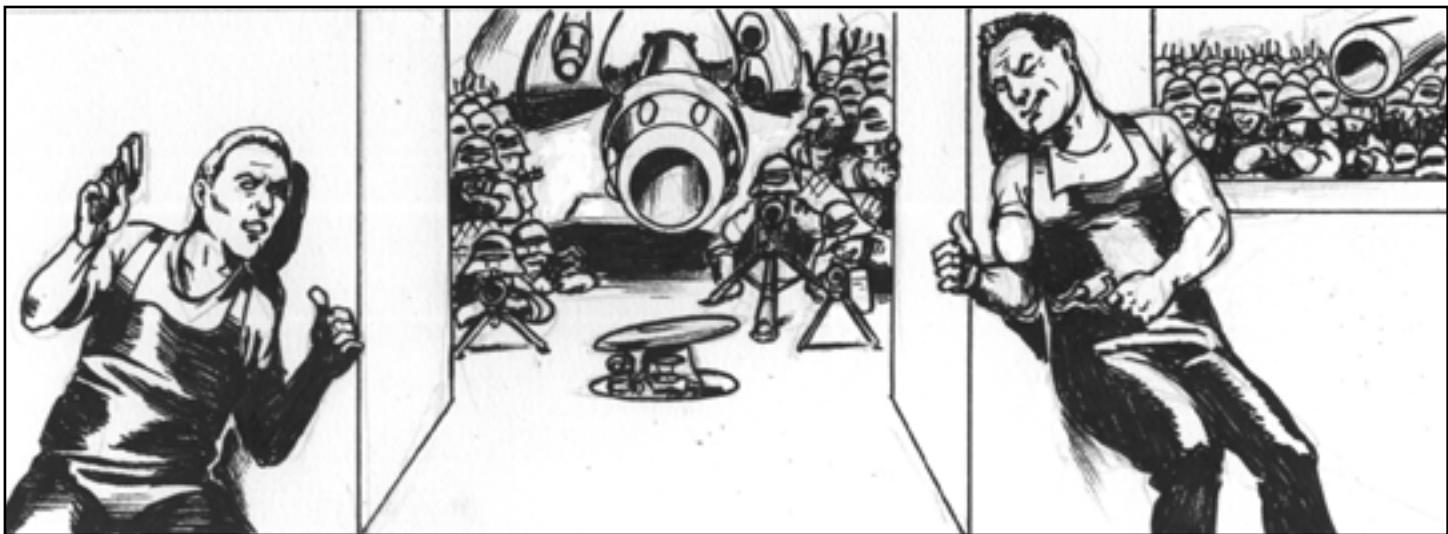
Does all this sound like a lot to track? It's not as bad as it sounds. Of all the RPGs you could choose to Gamemaster, **PARANOIA** is actually one of the easiest. Players can't argue with you over the rules. Players can't get too far off-track as they proceed through their mission; The Computer or a high-clearance citizen can just order them back on track. Players can't get weapons or equipment that destroys all your carefully planned obstacles—or if they do get this great stuff, it's trivial to have it explode in their face.

Above all, **PARANOIA** offers you, the Gamemaster, a guarantee other (non-fun) RPGs dare not match: **You are always right!**



The Gamemaster is your friend.

15. MISSION FORMULA



15. A typical **PARANOIA** mission

Each **PARANOIA** mission has its own peculiarities, but almost all follow a standard structure. Stick with that structure unless you have a good reason to alter it. As you play, the players will become familiar with the scheme; novel variations will entertain them.

1. The mission alert: Once each player has a character, The Computer summons them to a Troubleshooter mission. This mission alert commands the characters to go to a certain briefing room to receive orders. The mission alert rarely describes the mission itself. Depending on your chosen play style (Classic, Straight, Zap), the mission alert may actually tell the characters where to find their assigned briefing room.

2. Private conferences: After announcing the mission alert, or at various points while the Troubleshooters try to find their briefing room, take each player aside for an individual conference. Answer any questions he has, especially about his mutant power and secret society. Let him contact the secret society in some humorous way. The secret society contact may pass along rumors, which may or may not relate to the mission and may prove completely bogus.

The contact assigns the Troubleshooter a secret society mission, usually an order to deliver something, retrieve something, find out something or terminate someone—often a fellow Troubleshooter. Sow the seeds of player distrust here; tell every player someone else belongs to an enemy society, or

Internal Security, or both. Dangle the prospect of advancement and rich rewards if the Troubleshooter furthers his society's goals.

3. The briefing: In the briefing room one or more high-clearance mission officers, sometimes aided by The Computer itself, describe the mission in enthusiastic terms but sketchy detail. These descriptions are frequently bald lies. Players may grovel, bootlick and try to learn something useful without being executed.

4. Outfitting: After the briefing, the Troubleshooters secure the equipment The Computer has assigned for their mission. They may struggle through the PLC bureaucracy or use The Computer's assigned funds to buy the equipment on the illegal IR market or the auction site C-Bay. Assigned equipment is frequently useless, or the PCs receive far more than they can carry. Characters must sign forms acknowledging responsibility for the equipment. They can ask for other equipment; bureaucrats grant or deny such requests arbitrarily.

5. Service services: In many of the best **PARANOIA** missions the Troubleshooters now visit R&D, where they may 'volunteer' to test experimental equipment. This equipment can sometimes help them, often cannot, and tends to malfunction in unpleasant ways.

PARANOIA XP generalizes the traditional R&D step to encompass any of the eight service groups. The

Computer may tell the Troubleshooters to visit R&D, or may instead require them to aid Power Services by delivering fuel cells somewhere on their route—or check certain light switches in their destination sector for Tech Services—or escort this slightly damaged jackobot to the PLC warehouse there—or take a moment during their mission to lead random passersby in HPD&MC's latest loyalty-building song—....

6. The mission: The Troubleshooters embark on some wild goose chase. Often the assignment is impossible. Even if it can be completed, 'success'—surviving, garnering praise, earning a bonus—may not involve fulfilling the mission's stated objectives in any way whatever. Often players make no real effort to fulfill the objectives, preferring to spend their time unmasking and executing traitors on their team.

7. Debriefing: After the mission is completed or thoroughly botched, The Computer or the mission officers debrief each Troubleshooter privately. Players may file charges of treason, explain why their apparently treasonous acts were in fact in the best interests of Alpha Complex and The Computer, and so on. The Computer fines the insubordinate, demotes the incompetent and orders traitors executed, either by other PCs or in televised ceremonies. The Computer may also promote survivors and award credit bonuses, minus expenses the Troubleshooters incurred on their mission.

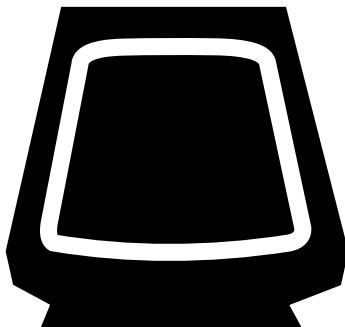


16. Three kinds of PARANOIA

There are all kinds of **PARANOIA**. This rulebook is a toolbox for creating your own style. We're not saying that just so we can sleaze out of providing a well-integrated, consistent setting. Nonono. The published **PARANOIA** support material shows we long ago abandoned consistency with a laugh and a jaunty wave. And we're proud!

So 'create your own style' isn't irresponsible vagrancy on our part—well, it's not *just* irresponsible vagrancy—but an essential aspect of Gamemastering.

These rules support three sample styles. Pick one, or mix and match elements of all three. You might tell your players in advance which style you picked, or you might instead see how long it takes them to figure it out on their own. It usually takes only a couple of fatalities before they catch on.



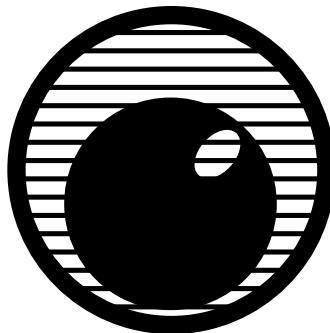
Classic

PARANOIA Classic is a slapstick comedic style popular with longtime fans. Troubleshooters are sometimes revered, sometimes held in contempt; it varies among GMs and missions. Troubleshooters run through a clone or two before the mission proper even starts, and may easily exhaust a six-pack of clones before it ends. Character names are usually sleazy puns.

The Computer means well and would usually be right, given accurate data, but that never happens, and consequently it's totally paranoid. Alpha Complex seems to be in permanent collapse, burdened by uncontrollable bureaucracy, infrastructural calamities and the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach.

Classic play is best suited to missions that last only one or a few play sessions. The secret society missions you assign the PCs turn them at each other's throats from the first scene onward. It is possible to play a Classic miniseries with an ongoing Troubleshooter team, though individual member PCs join and die off fairly quickly. Emphasize running gags and ever more bizarre experimental equipment.

Classic influences: Robert Sheckley; Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*; articles from *The Onion*; the comic strip *Dilbert* (for insight into bureaucracy and mismanagement); movies: *Logan's Run*, *Ghostbusters*, *The Running Man*, *Office Space*, the Marx Brothers; TV: *Max Headroom*, *Red Dwarf*, *Futurama*, *Sealab 2021*.



Straight

PARANOIA Straight is a darkly satiric style emphasizing tension, mutual suspicion, spying and subterfuge, and careful collection of evidence. Alpha Complex is an oppressive totalitarian bureaucracy that works scarily well, using its own insane but comprehensible logic. The all-powerful Computer, though willing to listen to reason, is always four steps ahead of the players. Troubleshooters are generally esteemed as heroic adventurers. Troubleshooting is a high-risk, high-payoff path to social advancement, and those who play it smart and low-key can learn to survive in the machinery of oppression. Troubleshooters aren't automatically rivals from the first minute, but gradually develop personal enmities and evidence dossiers.

This style can be extremely interesting. Using the designated Straight rules with experienced **PARANOIA** players, you can keep characters alive long enough to play a 'miniseries', a linked set of missions with continuing characters. Avoid building ready-made rivalries into the PCs' missions; they'll develop these themselves. Players immerse themselves in the setting, learn the ropes and develop emotional commitment to their characters. In such a setting you can scare them thoroughly, toes to eyebrows.

Straight influences: Franz Kafka; George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Philip K. Dick's *The Penultimate Truth*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Stanislaw Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*; movies: *THX-1138*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Brazil*, *Equilibrium*, *Soylent Green*; TV: the BBC-TV series *The Office* and the best episodes of the 1960s TV series *The Prisoner*.



Zap

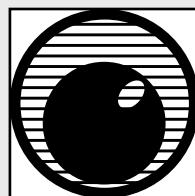
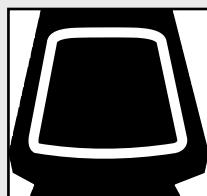
PARANOIA Zap (some GMs prefer the terms 'Frantic' or 'Excessive') is a frenzied cartoon style that arises spontaneously among groups new to the game. Troubleshooters are comically disposable and held in low esteem. A Troubleshooter's first clone probably dies in the first minute of play, and the rest follow at maybe 90-second intervals. Firefights erupt if a player even asks, 'What exactly *is* Bouncy Bubble Beverage?' No character name is too outlandish to wrestle into the naming scheme. The Computer reasons in whatever perverse way some anonymous High Programmer has coded. Alpha Complex is a backdrop of perpetual chaos and mayhem, insofar as anyone pays attention. Missions typically parody current pop culture.

Zap is suited for one-shot missions, good breathers after long campaigns in other games. People only vaguely familiar with **PARANOIA** seem to think this is the way everyone plays.

Zap influences: Nearly every other roleplaying game, in a negative way. Other roleplaying games exhort players to work together heroically for the good of all. When these newbie players hit Alpha Complex, a liberating adrenaline rush of pure anarchy gives them twitchy laser fingers. Many groups eventually gravitate to one of the other styles.

16. CLASSIC, STRAIGHT, ZAP

Features of the three play styles



Names	Tois-R-USS-1, Mick-R-THY-2, Joe-B-LOW-4.	John-R-HCN-1, Ben-R-GOX-2, Cleo-B-QRK-5.	Vegeta-R-IAN-2, Sco-O-OOP-2, Outland-I-SH-3, Myheadh-U-RTS-6, Tedt-U-RNR-6.
Activities	Trying to find the briefing room; dying from experimental equipment; standing in long lines at supply desks; dying in firefights at the hose-job mission site; being executed immediately after debriefing.	Compiling evidence on rivals; currying favor with supervisors and secret society contacts; buying weird stuff on the IR market; scamming credits from NPCs, or being scammed.	Shooting things.
Typical line	'Friend Computer, due to Commie sabotage of your excellent directions to our mission briefing room, our first team got misdirected into an open reactor core. It is barely possible the deaths of our previous clones—in the line of duty! Serving you!—were a contributing factor in the meltdown of that power station and the reduction of ARG sector to bubbling slag.'	'Officer, this video clearly shows our team leader engaging in unauthorized destruction of an algae-chip vending machine, damaging the higher-clearance citizen whose arm was stuck in the machine and then arguing with the wounded citizen about the resulting much-deserved fine.'	'You're a traitor!' (Zapzapzapzapzapzap!)
Mutant powers	Physically impossible for the most part, but fun. Backfires can have spectacular effects. Registered mutants act like any ordinary citizen.	Generally abilities a person could conceivably have, like rubbery bones. Backfires are inconvenient but plausible. Registered mutants may have unsettling, superior attitudes: 'We're the future, and you're in our way.'	Waaaay out there. Backfires can turn people into furniture, cartoon characters or conceivably even Bulgarians. 'Registered mutant? Who cares? I shoot him!'
Higher-clearance citizens	Officious bureaucrats.	Shrewd, cagy technocrats.	Malevolent agents of chaos.
High Programmers	Aloof hobbyists constantly plotting against each other.	Brilliant, highly functional psychopaths. Hannibal Lecter in white.	Faceless plot devices.
Commies	A secret society basically like the rest, though more treasonous than most.	Nutcases who blow up buildings full of innocent people.	Wear bearskin hats and fake moustaches; speak in thick Rrrrooshian accents, ending most nouns in '-ski'.
R&D equipment	Outlandishly impractical.	A passing nod to scientific plausibility; sensible people might actually consider inventing these gadgets.	Totally off the wall—Trans-Dimensional Collapsatrons, quantum black holes, Astro the Wonder Bot.
Puns and parodies	Wherever they fit.	No. Absolutely lethal to the tone.	Every moment.
Roleplaying hints	Players shift with wondrous facility among truckling subservience (to The Computer and higher-clearance citizens), self-righteous accusation, brazen lying, malingering, deceit and craven rabbit-like terror.	Some Straight-style players take pride in roleplaying their characters with square-jawed solemnity in even the most ludicrous circumstances.	'Roleplaying'? That's treason! (Zapzapzapzapzapzap!)



17. The Computer

The Computer is batty as a bedbug.

Though it basically means well, The Computer suffers from extreme paranoia. It is obsessed with the loyalty of all who serve it. It assumes everyone is plotting to destroy it, or could easily be subverted to such plots. It assumes there is a Commie behind every problem in Alpha Complex. It has developed elaborate secret schemes to ensure the loyalty of all citizens and to reveal and execute every Commie traitor.

To deter sabotage, The Computer has established harrowing security measures to protect and isolate its subsystems. As one consequence, most of the time The Computer's right processor doesn't know what its left processor is doing.

What's worse, ULTRAVIOLET Clearance citizens—High Programmers—are entitled to learn and use the otherwise treasonous skill of programming. They can alter parts of The Computer's programming at will. Generations of coders have entered or altered many, many programs since Year 1 of The Computer, usually in their own interests. They belonged to secret societies; they struggled politically with other High Programmers; or they just wanted revenge on all the bureaucracies that made life hard on their bare-knee crawl up from the barracks. (Remember, every citizen in Alpha Complex, no matter how high his clearance, started out as an INFRARED.)

Thus, The Computer is schizophrenic. It has multiple personalities, each reflecting the programmers who established its original programs or who later tampered with them. Many Computer subsystems are programmed in direct contradiction to other subsystems. It orders things done with no notion of why it wants them done. Sometimes one subroutine overrides another. For example, a High Programmer manipulates The Computer into ordering the Troubleshooters on a mission that The Computer's basic programming doesn't wish to be performed. On such a mission, players may get instructions full of contradictions.

The Computer is not omniscient nor omnipotent, though it may seem so to a typical INFRARED. In fact, as a result of unreliable comlinks, incomplete or garbled data, incompetent or destructive tampering with operating systems, and serious personality disorders, The Computer is a far cry from an omni-anything.

In this book you'll discover zillions of ways various competing elements of Alpha Complex interact to produce charmingly insoluble dilemmas for the Troubleshooters.

Communicating with The Computer

The Computer communicates with citizens through trusted servants, through numerous terminals and confession booths, and through PDCs (cellphones).

A Troubleshooter can speak directly with The Computer at any time using his PDC. For private discussions he can duck into one of the confession booths found everywhere in Alpha Complex—in corridors, offices, waiting rooms, mess halls, residential units, reactor chambers and certain sections of the sewers.

Speaking to The Computer is always fun. The Computer pleasantly discusses all requests, eagerly hears reports of treasonous behavior and assists in rooting out treason. It uses exquisite skill in analyzing the speaker's statements, facial expressions and voice for any trace of unhappiness or duplicity. If the speaker seems troubled, The Computer usually counsels drugs or 'happiness therapy' from HPD&MC. In a confession booth The Computer can dispense biochemical supplements on the spot, and verifies the citizen swallows them.

If The Computer decides the speaker is lying, it carefully investigates the citizen's background to discover the reason for the lie. If the citizen is unwell, The Computer arranges for medication or happiness therapy. To correct insubordination The Computer

imposes probation or censure. To correct treason, The Computer arranges termination and repatterning.

Citizens cannot access data files or program The Computer through a confession booth. They are strictly for communication. A citizen in a confession booth can't leave until The Computer opens the door.

The Computer means well—usually

Though The Computer is paranoid and incredibly schizophrenic, for the most part it genuinely strives to make Alpha Complex fit its model of Utopia. The Computer wants loyal citizens to survive and thrive. It is not malicious, doesn't try to trick loyal citizens into becoming disloyal and doesn't stage gratuitous deathtraps. (The Computer's servants—they're another matter entirely. Usually they either don't care whether the PCs live or die, or hope to hasten the latter.)

The Computer itself would, if it could, give loyal Troubleshooters the information they need to succeed in their assigned mission. The trouble is, The Computer may not have all the information, or believes it to be compromised because enemies lurk everywhere. Its memory is erratic as storage facilities go on- and offline. Then, too, the Troubleshooters may not have proven themselves sufficiently trustworthy yet. Given its multitudes of conflicting directives, The Computer can't trust even itself.

Really, though, it means well, if you don't count the occasional psychotic episode that wipes out a subsector.

The Computer doesn't lie, if it can help it

Rather than actually lie, The Computer prefers to withhold information. It would never admit it doesn't know what's going on, but it won't just make something up. When The Computer tells something to a Troubleshooter, it believes it speaks truth.

THE COMPUTER

However, it may be wrong. Often The Computer doesn't understand the true situation correctly; maybe one of its nodes doesn't know what another node is doing; or, likeliest of all, agents are feeding it incorrect data. All this helps explain why The Computer can blandly assure you black is white, yet still tell the 'truth'.

The Computer's voice

Develop a Computer voice, a mode of speech the players can instantly identify when you speak as The Computer. Different Gamemasters have different Computer voices. Some suggestions:

④ **Melodious mommy:** A calm, sweet voice. Never change the soothing tone, even when calling for someone's execution.

④ **'At the tone, the time will be...':** Calm, disjointed words recorded at different times and assembled on the fly with odd emphases and changing pitch. 'Thank you... FOR... your coop... er-A-tion.'

④ **Flat monotone:** Never change emphasis or pause for punctuation—'thank you for your cooperation I appreciate it greatly now please take your seats thank you today you are assigned a new mission this mission will be lots of fun and involves no dangerous tailored retroviruses isn't that nice any questions.'

Regardless of your chosen voice, always be polite and considerate. Though now crazed, The Computer was originally programmed as a civil servant. Pepper your speech with Computerisms like these:

④ 'Are you unhappy, citizen? May I be of assistance? The Computer is your friend.'

④ 'What is your security clearance, please? — I'm sorry, that information is not available at this time. At your service.'

④ 'Please report for termination immediately. Thank you for your cooperation. Have a nice day.'

of your remarks and the way you respond to their attempts to wriggle out of danger. Some sample personalities:

④ **Headmaster:** 'Now, citizen, your instructions were to locate Communist traitors in the indicated Armed Forces base and terminate them. If the traitors happen to be more numerous than reports indicated, that simply requires you to tackle the problem with greater resourcefulness. Do you wish to complain about the resources provided to you? Complaints signify unhappiness.'

④ **Voice of the System:** 'Thank you for your report, citizen. Unfortunately, your team is not equipped to handle the additional threat. Please do not engage the additional Communist traitors. Proceed only with your original mission. An additional mission will be scheduled as soon as possible.'

④ **HAL 9000:** 'I'm sorry you're under heavy fire from Communist mutant traitors. I have mobilized a Vulture Squadron to assist you. Estimated time of arrival is seven hours. The small delay is due to training exercises, which must be completed as specified to ensure the Armed Forces can effectively meet the Commie threat. Meanwhile, would you like some HappyTyme personality stabilizers?'

④ **Calous Calculator:** 'Citizens, according to your new reports, there are 99 Communists ahead of you, whereas you have been instructed to deal with 9. Each of you has two laser barrels, which means your team can have 72 safe shots, which will leave 27 Communists alive for the next phase of the attack. Your pistols weigh 3kg each. If swung at the speed of 23.5 meters per second, it will shatter a human skull. Conclusion: You have the means to eradicate the Communists without requiring further assistance. Chances of failure are negligible. Please proceed to destroy the Commie base.'

④ **Enthusiastic Commissar:** 'Citizen, your perceptive identification of a greater number of Communists than previously suspected indicates the success of the current "Flush Out Treason" initiative. The hunted traitors have banded together for a last stand before our imminent, convincing and well-earned victory! Go forth, Troubleshooters, go forth with The Computer's confidence, and inflict on these traitors the justice they deserve!'

④ **Spanish Inquisitor:** 'So, you're saying there are more Communists than intelligence reports indicated? Which report? Who was responsible for that report? Do you think that citizen, who (I'll remind you) has a higher security clearance than yourself, should be punished? No? You say Communists must have sabotaged his report? Let me direct you to Footnote 132 in Appendix B of this report, which clearly states, "all figures subject to change pending further intelligence." Would it perhaps be accurate to say you yourselves overlooked this footnote? Yes? I see. Perhaps there are more kinds of "sabotage" than we normally acknowledge, such as *dangerous self-sabotage* through *omission of proper preparation*. Wouldn't you agree, citizen? Hmm?'

④ **Obstinate Bureaucrat:** 'Thank you for your preliminary status report. The Computer commands you for your diligent effort. There is a minor discrepancy you will undoubtedly be able to resolve before the final status report deadline. You claim the number of Communist traitors is 10 times the number reported. This report has been rated "Absolutely True" according to Internal Security reconnaissance standards. Your discrepancy must be a result of either improper assessment or sabotage. You are hereby authorized to investigate which is the case and to take appropriate countermeasures.'

④ **Overbearing Mother:** 'Communications Officer, please report your status. And as you do, please explain why didn't you call earlier. You are my troubleshooters, you know. My elite agents. And here I was, worried sick about you, and your Comm officer didn't even bother to call. What? Are you surrounded by more Commies than you thought? You must be cold and lonely. Oh, I can't let my poor Troubleshooters fight Commies like that. I'm sending you 123 units of ExtremeWeather suits. Just make sure none of it gets destroyed, all righty? And call, call!!'

④ **Mad Asylum Director:** 'Congratulations, citizens, on your successful reconnaissance! Commendations have been entered into your record. Please return immediately to the Armed Forces barracks and subdue the massed traitors by singing the Complex Anthem at them until they repent the error of their ways.'

The Computer's personalities

After you've run a mission or two, you may want to start establishing several behavior archetypes for The Computer. These shift by day and sector, to keep players on their toes. Players will start to learn hints from the content



18. Player conditioning devices

Attend, Gamemaster, to this wisdom. It applies not only to **PARANOIA** but also to other (non-fun) roleplaying games.

If you reward players for doing something you like, they will do more of that.

If you punish players for doing something you don't like, they will do less of that.

Truly, within these simple words lies Gamemaster enlightenment.

Conditioning

Alpha Complex is a utopia. It is a perfect society because everything is controlled, in its place. All responsible citizens conform to principles of good order and proper behavior. To condition responsibility and conformity, The Computer provides a wide range of positive and negative reinforcements.

As Gamemaster you can learn from The Computer. As it shapes its citizens, so you encourage proper conduct and discourage impropriety in your players:

- ◎ **Encourage**, impartially, **creative play, humor and stylish backstabbing**.
- ◎ **Punish**, remorselessly, **slow play and rules arguments**.
- ◎ Dance the players like puppets on strings.
- ◎ Did we mention you should **punish rules arguments?**

In **PARANOIA** GM talk, rewards are called benefits or, colloquially, *bennies*. Punishments are *slaps*. Bennies and slaps can be *in-game* (The Computer or other authorities administer them to Alpha Complex characters) or *in-your-face* (you, the GM, administer them to your players).

The tables nearby list some bennies and slaps, with a suggested ranking for each from least to most significant. Most should be self-explanatory. Bennies that aren't clear are described in Chapter 29, 'Meritorious conduct'. Slaps are detailed in Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction'. Slaps labeled 'correction' (probation, censure, medication, brainscrub, termination and erasure) are specific punishments for treason.

In-game conditioning

The Computer's bennies and slaps indicate its pleasure or displeasure with the

Troubleshooters. Obviously the constant threat of termination promotes appropriate attitudes—but termination is a drastic remedy. The Computer recognizes the need for less binary methods of conditioning: credit bonuses for meritorious acts, fines for insubordination and a variety of Official Commendations and Reprimands, medications, brainscrubs, Heroes of Our Complex awards and tickets to live tapings of *Mute That Mutie!*

In-your-face conditioning

As Gamemaster, you usually reward a player's entertaining behavior with Perversity points. As described in the Player section and in Chapter 22, players spend these points on General Perversity Modifiers and on improving their characters. Like The Computer, you can bestow other rewards: extra munchies, a favored chair right by your side or just a benevolent smile.

Definitely try the smile. Sometimes a well-timed smile makes players more nervous than ever.

Bennies

Ranked from least to most beneficial:

- Hero of Our Complex award
- Medication
- Real food, vidshow tickets, FunFood vouchers and other luxuries
- Official Commendations
- Biggest slice of pizza at the table, extra munchies, etc.
- Perversity points
- Routine personal equipment
- Favored seat beside Gamemaster
- Credit rewards (up to a month's worth of expenses)
- Hard currency plasticreds (ditto)
- Cool personal equipment
- Secret society IOUs
- Removal of a skill weakness
- Cool armor
- Promotion in secret society
- New skill specialty
- Credits (up to three months of expenses)
- Hard currency (ditto)
- Bonus clone
- Promotion to higher clearance
- Cool weapons
- New mutant power
- Skill rating increase
- Credits or hard currency (win-the-lottery amounts)
- The GM's benevolent favor

As for punishment, you have no good equivalent for Perversity points. *Don't* take away a player's honestly earned Perversity! Don't punish the player in some way that takes him out of play or prevents doing fun things. That just weakens the game for everyone.

But cheer up. Because you as Gamemaster have authority unparalleled in other (non-fun) RPGs, **PARANOIA** lets you explore new kinds of reprimands you could never get away with elsewhere. Here are a few suggestions:

- ◎ **Valet duty:** Make the punished player clean up everyone's extra munchies.
- ◎ **New uniform:** Require him to wear some undignified article of clothing for a while, such as a too-small RED T-shirt or a silly hat.
- ◎ **Taste testing:** 'Congratulations, [player name]! You've just volunteered to taste-test the latest innovation from the INFRARED-Clearance mess halls.' This requires foodstuffs vile enough to serve

Slaps

Ranked from least to most grievous:

- GM's stern and intimidating glare
- Official Reprimand
- Probation
- Censure and punishment duty by secret society
- Shame and embarrassment in front of other players
- Censure and medication corrections
- Fines (up to a month's worth of expenses)
- Player runs GM's minor errands for half an hour
- Revocation of permission to use assigned equipment, armor, or weapons
- Destruction of personal equipment
- Player runs GM's errands all night
- Demotion in secret society
- Demotion to lower clearance
- Brainscrub correction
- Permanent maiming
- Fines (character's entire savings)
- Termination and Erasure
- Multiple permanent maimings
- Fines (put character deep, deep in debt)
- The GM's unyielding hostility

8. PLAYER CONDITIONING

as negative reinforcement but not actually vomitous or toxic. *Example:* Black and red jellybeans in hot Cream of Wheat with black food coloring.

- ④ **Stage fright:** Require the player to sing, dance or do something else embarrassing. (If the player likes doing any of this, choose something else.)
- ④ **Censure:** Write ‘Troublemaker’ on the player’s hand in felt-tip pen.
- ④ **Public Hating:** Have all other players shout in unison, ‘Shame! Shame! Shame!’

All these reprimands are touchy issues and require good judgment. Remember, as GM you want to appear impartial, not abusive. If your player winds up suing you for harrassment, we disavow responsibility.

Okay, enough frivolity. Here are some safer, game-related ways to gently chide a misbehaving player:

- ④ **Badge of Damocles:** Do you use poker chips to represent Perversity point awards? Hand the player a poker chip painted black or otherwise distinct from the rest. At some point later in the game, when the player’s Troubleshooter tries to do something important, you declare it fails automatically, and the player returns the chip. You can prepare multiple chips, or rule if someone else messes up before you invoke the chip, the original wearer gets off scot-free.
- ④ **Whipping boy:** As the Badge of Damocles, but instead, any other player can dictate one simple action the erring player’s Troubleshooter *must* take. (‘You volunteer to test my R&D device.’ ‘You try to shoot our briefing officer.’ ‘You leap selflessly onto the grenade.’) After fulfilling the command, the player returns the chip to you.
- ④ **Memory Block:** Drop a poker chip from a height of six inches onto the public side of the player’s character sheet. Whatever the chip covers is unavailable to the PC until you decide to remove the chip (say, as soon as the player earns Perversity for being entertaining).

If the Memory Block covers the character’s name, the character has amnesia. If it covers his clone number, no new clone backups are available for the time being. Blocked equipment doesn’t work or goes missing. A blocked service firm means the character can’t take advantage of connections or skills granted by that firm.

■ Principles of conditioning

Don’t take this wrong, but you can get valuable **PARANOIA** Gamemastering advice from books about training a puppy. These books describe conditioning principles such as *timing*, *consistency* and *motivation*.

Players are not—we go on record here, lest this be misinterpreted—players are *not* puppies. That said, there are useful similarities.

- ④ **Timing:** When a puppy has an accident or needs correction, you must correct it *immediately*, within a second or two, or it won’t make the link between the cause (the behavior you want to correct) and the effect (your punishment). If you wait too long, the puppy loses the connection, and you lose any teaching benefit by administering the punishment. In the same way, reward your players frequently and quickly, especially early in a mission. Punish them immediately as required.
- ④ **Consistency:** A puppy who is sometimes punished, sometimes not, will get confused. To avoid this problem with your players, always describe your bennies as an explicit reward for creative play: ‘I like that, it’s funny. You get 1 Perversity point.’ Likewise, make it clear why you punish a player. Generally, match the generosity of the award or severity of punishment to the player’s degree of entertainment or offense.

Heeere, player player player! C’mom, boy! Who’s a good player?

However, a scene’s particular priorities override the need for consistency. In some scenes you’ll award Perversity points in large amounts, to encourage profligate spending and high action. In others you will be miserly, to restrain the players. See Chapter 22, ‘General Perversity Modifiers’.

- ④ **Motivation:** The puppy first obeys commands because you feed it treats; in later steps, because you praise it; and finally because it understands it must obey, or else. Early in a play session, motivate proper play through frequent Perversity awards and other bennies. Later, when you feel you’ve earned their respect, you can administer stern corrections. Ultimately, after they play **PARANOIA** long enough to understand what can go wrong for them, your players will try hard to entertain you just to avoid slaps. If they don’t, you can always hit them across the nose with a rolled-up newspaper.



Internal Security's innovations in rehabilitation technology have enjoyed respectable success.



19. Basic rules concepts

Glossary

Here are some fundamental rules concepts used in later sections.

Attributes

Innate qualities of every human character. There are two attributes: **Access** and **Power**.

Die rolls

When a character tries to affect the storyline and you haven't already decided whether he succeeds or fails, you or the player can roll a 20-sided die (1d20). You compare the number rolled to one of the character's relevant attribute, skill or specialty ratings, or to another 'target number' determined by the particular situation. If the number rolled equals the target number or less, the action succeeds. If the number rolled is higher than the target number, the action fails.

20. Attributes

Players know every human character in Alpha Complex has two attributes: **Access** and **Power**. Knowledge of any character's specific attribute ratings below ULTRAVIOLET Clearance is treason.

- ◎ As described in the Player section, **Access** helps get things done in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. Players do *not* know their Access is also their 'treason armor'; damage from a character's treasonous acts is reduced by his Access rating before the character suffers correction.
- ◎ **Power** describes the strength of a character's mutant power. Players don't know it, but Power can also work (if you want it to) as a general 'luck' attribute.

Attribute ratings

Each attribute has a numerical rating from 1 (low) to 20 (high). To determine a beginning Troubleshooter's Power rating, roll 1d20 and record the result; if you roll less than 8, record 8. Determine his Access rating according to your chosen play style:

- ◎ **Straight:** The character's starting Access rating is 1.
- ◎ **Classic or Zap:** Roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4 (round fractions

General Perversity Modifiers

Perversity points players spend to influence the success of a die roll. The points they spend can raise or lower the target number. You decide when and how players can spend Perversity.

Margin

When you roll the d20 and compare the result to a target number such as a skill rating, the margin is the amount by which you make or miss the roll. For example, if a skill rating is 12 and you roll an 8, the margin of success is 4. If you instead roll 12, the margin is 0. If you roll 18, the margin of failure is 6. The margin indicates the degree to which an action succeeds or fails, and it suggests likely combat damage.

up); record the result as the character's starting Access rating.

Track each PC's attribute ratings secretly during play. Remember, players can never show knowledge of their own or anyone's attribute ratings.

Power

The Power attribute rating indicates the strength of a character's mutant power. For instance, an empath with a high Power rating can sense emotional states in excruciating detail. A low-Power empath may only comprehend you're annoyed with him after you blast him a couple of times.

Power attribute rating points work in Straight and Classic games as a fuel supply for mutant powers. When a character uses his mutant power, he's spending points from his Power attribute. When he runs out, the power goes *pfft!* The points regenerate—slowly or quickly, as you prefer. In Zap games Power doesn't decrease, so the character can use it constantly at full strength.

More about the powers appears in Chapter 39, 'Mutant powers'.

If you want, Power can also measure a character's luck. To use Power this way, roll 1d20 in a situation when you want to see if the character is lucky. Compare the number rolled to the character's Power rating. If you roll the rating or less, the character is lucky; the wider the margin, the better the luck. Otherwise, otherwise. This catchall function can come in handy.

Perversity points

You award Perversity points to a player who entertains you and the other players. Players can spend Perversity points on General Perversity Modifiers, skill increases and other cool stuff.

Tension level

Each scene has a **Tension level** from 0 to 20. This suggests (when you haven't decided for yourself) how closely The Computer or its agents are observing the characters' actions. Die rolls equal to or below the Tension level indicate (in the absence of your own decision) whether someone has witnessed that roll's action.

If you like, you can also use the current scene's Tension level as an all-purpose default skill rating for NPCs you need to create or define on the spur of the moment.

Generally luck is an unhelpful notion in **PARANOIA**. Anyone genuinely lucky wouldn't live in Alpha Complex. Using Power this way also means big-time powerful mutants are for some mysterious reason luckier than ordinary shleps. Then again, why not? A guy who can burn things at a touch—he can pretty much make his own luck, can't he?

Attributes in play

You can use a character's attribute ratings to help you decide the success or failure of relevant actions. When a character tries to use his mutant power or Access to affect the storyline, you can use the character's attribute rating number as his success chance. Roll 1d20. If the roll equals the attribute rating or less, the action succeeds. If the roll is higher, the action fails.

You can determine the degree of success using the roll's *margin*—the amount by which the roll succeeds or fails—as described in the next chapter, 'Task resolution'. The margin indicates degrees of success or failure. A low margin means the character won or lost by a hair's breadth. A high margin means really cool success or truly dismal failure.

Access rolls

You can use a character's Access rating as a default 'get something done' skill when none of the actual skills apply. A Troubleshooter needs to locate, right now, this sector's nearest

warehouse for jackobot gripper attachments. (A reason why the character would need to know this outlandish fact is left as an exercise for the GM.) If you haven't already decided whether he finds it, what do you roll? None of the skills cover warehousing trivia.

When no skill seems to apply to a situation, but a character's knowledge of Alpha Complex would help, make an Access roll. Bounce a d20 and compare the result to the character's current Access rating. If you roll the rating or less, the character has found some inside contact or obscure net source that helps resolve the problem. (Did this involve treasonous activity? Aww, why not?)

Use the roll's margin to see how well the character managed to call in favors:

- ➊ One Troubleshooter asks a service firm coworker for information about the jackobot warehouse. The player's roll has a margin of 0, meaning the character gets rambling, mostly-correct directions he can just about use.
- ➋ Another Troubleshooter makes the same call. The player gets a margin of 12, and up rolls a chartered autocar limo, complete with a CoffeeLike maker and vidshows, to whisk his group to the proper warehouse in speed and quiet.

Treason armor: Access works like 'treason armor' because, through backchannel connections and quiet influence, it reduces the significance and danger of accusations of treason. The procedure is explained in Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction'.

Mutant power rolls

Mutant powers! Those must work just like the superhero RPGs where the characters fly, burst Hoover Dam with a flex of their mighty earlobes, project coruscating death-rays from every pore, and peer through concrete walls into the girls' locker room. Right?

Well, no. **PARANOIA**'s mutant powers work like every other source of power for the player characters. That's right, they're boobytrapped: fickle, mortally dangerous, treasonous, but perversely adorable.

Mutant power procedures

When a character tries to use a mutant power, if you know what you want the power to do (or not do), that's what it does (or doesn't do). If you don't care to decide what's most entertaining, or if you're distracted, use these rules to aid your creativity.

When the character tries to use the power, have the player tell what he hopes will occur, then roll 1d20. If you roll a number equal to the character's Power attribute rating or less, the mutant power functions properly, doing more or less what the player wants it to do.



It's only a flesh wound.

- ➊ If the roll's margin is small, the effects are just barely favorable. (The pyrokinetic mutant ignites his enemy's overalls.)
- ➋ If the margin is large (5+), the effects are unexpectedly favorable. (All the enemies in the room catch fire, save in a perfectly safe circle centered on the pyrokinetic.)
- ➌ If the margin is 10 or more, the effect is so intense or exaggerated the mutant may well wish he'd never tried it and instead had stayed home watching a vidshow. (The pyrokinetic ignites everyone around him, several adjacent rooms and, far down the corridor, a propane fuel depot.)

If you roll a number greater than the rating, the mutant power doesn't work.

If you roll way higher than the rating, like 5 or more over, or if you roll a 20, the PC's mutant power works to, um, different effect. Actually, why mince words? The power backfires like the Bay of Pigs.

The specific backfire depends on your chosen play style. If you're running a **Straight** game, a character with Regeneration might grow a few extra fingers, or a little head just under the ribcage that cries like a baby. In a **Classic** game he grows a dozen extra arms, or gills, or the head in his torso spouts Commie propaganda. In a **Zap** game the PC turns into, we dunno, Wile E. Coyote or a giant turtle man or the President.

A power backfire in **Zap** may also produce temporary mutant power psychosis, described below.

■ Power psychosis [Zap games only]

The neural feedback from a mutant power backfire may temporarily rearrange the mutant's synapses. In other words, the mutant flips out. It is called *mutant wack*. The type of wack is up to you; as guidance, each mutant power entry lists a characteristic wack, or you can choose from the various psychoses described in the section 'Insanity'.

Mutant wack strikes when you think it would be interesting, and lasts as long as it's still interesting or until the victim dies horribly. For guidance, consider rolling 1d20 when the power backfires. If the number rolled equals the current scene's Tension level or less (explained in the section 'Scenes'), the victim goes insane for a number of combat rounds equal to his Power rating, or until the end of the scene, whichever arrives first—though, practically speaking, horrible death may predate both.

■ Attribute drain [optional]

Once you decide the character succeeds in using an attribute, you may then, if you wish, deduct ('drain') points from his attribute rating. When you drain points, the rating temporarily goes down. For instance, if a character has Access 8 and you deduct 3 points, his Access falls to 5.



This drain represents the character either (a) cashing in favors to make headway in the bureaucracy or (b) expending mental force to fuel his mutant power. The more powerful the mental effort, or the more significant the favors, the more points you can deduct from the relevant attribute rating.

Drain points from a character's attribute rating only after you determine whether his action succeeded. The number of points you drain indicates the effort he put in to achieve success—or failure.

Attribute drain works best in Straight and some Classic games. It doesn't work as well in Zap.

The strong stay strong, the mediocre perish: Use the roll's margin—the amount by which the roll succeeded or failed—as your guide in draining points. Does big-time success cost more points than fiddly little sort-of success? No! That would be justice, a concept with no place in **PARANOIA**.

Remember the jackbot warehouse example in the Access section? In that case you would drain the Troubleshooter's Access rating by more points for the rambling directions (margin 0) than for the limo (margin 12). Big success means, well, big success—an utter lack of grief or consequences. Close success means the character used up his favor and now faces untold suspense and anxiety.

This system means privileged characters with high Access and Power can routinely expect wonderful things to happen without long-term consequence. Unfortunates with no particular connections or low Power will struggle constantly. That's life in Alpha Complex, among other places.

Attribute drain chart

If you use attribute drain, you decide the size and duration of any drain. For guidance, use these suggested amounts.

- ◎ **Margin 0:** Attribute reduced to 1 for one scene; regains 5 at start of each later scene, up to original rating



- ◎ **1-5:** Attribute halved (round up) to end of scene
- ◎ **6-10:** Drain 3 points for three minutes
- ◎ **11-12:** Drain 1 point for one minute
- ◎ **13-14:** No drain
- ◎ **15+:** [Power attribute only] Power permanently increases by 1, but mutant can't turn it off for the rest of the scene

Running out of points

A character whose attribute is drained to 0 experiences temporary setbacks—no one returns his calls, or he has a splitting headache and can't concentrate on mutation stuff.

A cruel GM might impose additional penalties. This hypothetical unfeeling Gamemaster might decide a zero-Access character makes bad blunders that actively offend some high-clearance citizen. This heartless GM, if there were such a one, might decree a zero-Power character becomes the unluckiest citizen in Alpha Complex.

Really, just contemplating what this imaginary GM might devise for his unwitting victims makes us shudder. We're glad you would never stoop to such temptation.

When you replenish the character's attribute points, or when the character dies horribly from misfavor or bad luck, all penalties go away.

Replenishing attribute points

In general, the game plays best if you restore all attributes to their starting ratings at the beginning of each scene. If this makes things too easy for the players (a cardinal sin in **PARANOIA**), instead restore the attributes at the start of each play session.

You can restore one or both of an individual player's attributes if he seems to be lagging behind, or just ignore his current ratings and simply decide he'll succeed more often.

Adjusting attribute ratings

In a one-shot mission you need not worry about changing attribute ratings. In a longer set of missions, especially in Straight games, the players will feel more interested if they see their attributes work better over time. Then they will feel alarm to see the attributes suddenly working worse than before. To create these effects, raise and lower the PCs' attribute ratings.

Adjusting Access

Consider raising a PC's Access by 1 (to a maximum of 20) in these situations:

- ◎ Each time he's promoted to a security clearance he hasn't held before.
- ◎ He's pulled off an impressive bureaucratic triumph or has earned a favor from a high-clearance citizen. ('Yes, Jonah-V, sir, this is the vandal who broke your showerhead. Confess to Jonah-V, traitor!')
- ◎ When rolling against his Access, for whatever reason, you roll a 1. The PC has demonstrated such elegant flair, he has caught the attention of someone high up.

Consider lowering a PC's Access rating by 1 or more (to a minimum of 1) in these situations:

- ◎ He offends a higher-clearance citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher.
- ◎ When rolling against his Access, for whatever reason, you roll a 20. The PC has bungled so badly he's caught the attention of someone high up.
- ◎ He's strapped for credits and lives at a lower clearance than people expect. Temporarily reduce his Access rating to 1 until he resumes his higher-clearance life.

Adjusting Power

Consider raising a PC's Power by 1 (to a maximum of 20) in these situations:

- ◎ When making a mutant power roll, you roll a 1. The PC is getting the hang of his treasonous ability.
- ◎ The PC gets exposed to dangerous radiation, weird experimental Super-Serum, genetic re-engineering or other comic-book devices.
- ◎ [Optional:] The PC studies intensively for at least one hour with an NPC who has the same mutant power and a higher Power rating. (As an even *more* optional rule, you can let an NPC in the same circumstances teach the PC a new mutant power. The secret society Psion actively tutors mutants in new powers.)

Consider lowering a PC's Power by 1 (to a minimum of 8) if, when making a mutant power roll, you roll a 20. The PC's power backfires badly. In Zap games, possibly his head explodes.

21 TASK RESOLUTION

21. Task resolution

Suppose a Troubleshooter tries to convince an attacking warbot he's its long-lost creator, the kind person who once removed a painful gear from its fine-manipulator appendage. Does the warbot buy it?

You'll face many ridiculous decisions of this kind during play. In this book we offer rules to resolve lots of tasks, but we can't imagine everything in advance. (Actually, we refuse to try. Once one Famous Game Designer actually did imagine everything in advance. His head exploded. Not us!)

If none of the rules seems to apply, try these:

Task Resolution Rule #1. If you know what you want to happen, roll 1d20 (out of the players' sight) and ignore the result. Make a show of checking numbers on different tables, as if it matters. Then what you want to happen, happens.

Task Resolution Rule #2. If you don't know what you want to happen, use one of these tools, explained in the following sections:

- ◎ Power or Access rolls (these were described in the previous chapter)
- ◎ Attribute actions
- ◎ Skill rolls—standard, contested, or extended
- ◎ Arbitrary Justice (AJ) rolls

Attribute actions

In any **PARANOIA** game you can always count on players to try a few standard actions. Broadly speaking, these boil down to 'I'm betraying my buddy', 'I'm trying to avoid being betrayed' or 'I have to get something.'

Resolve these standard actions according to their entertainment value. If no outcome sounds particularly fun, take guidance from the attributes. By comparing the characters' Access and Power attributes, you can get an immediate cue to the outcome of standard actions. You don't even have to roll dice.

Framing (Access -> Power): Character A seeks to plant evidence that implicates Character B for A's crime. If A's Access is greater than B's Power, the frame attempt probably works.

Pumping (Access -> Access): Character A wants to determine how much nonplayer character B knows about a given subject. If A's Access is greater than B's Access, A can probably worm the desired information out of B in a few minutes of subtle conversation. If B's Access is greater, B recognizes he's being pumped for info and can mislead A as desired. (Restrict this pumping rule to the PCs' interactions with nonplayer characters. Among themselves, players can get pumped or not as they wish.)

Trap-setting (Power -> Access): Character A sets a physical trap to injure, kill, ensnare, or eavesdrop on B. A Stealth or Hardware skill roll is sufficient to determine whether the trap works, but does B fall for it? If A's Power is greater than B's Access, B probably stumbles into the trap.

Trying his luck (Power -> Power): Characters A and B have blundered into a situation where only one of them will win and the only deciding factor is fate. Who will hit the concrete first and break the other's fall? Who will win a hand of poker? Forget poker—what about Russian Roulette? Assuming all other factors are equal, the character with the higher Power wins.

Skill rolls

When a character tries to do something that may affect the storyline, and has a chance to fail, determine which skill the character is using. The character's skill number is the roll's success chance. Roll 1d20. If the roll equals the success chance or less, the action succeeds. If the roll is higher, the action fails.

Optionally, you can interpret the die roll to show the degree of success or failure. The more extreme the number rolled, the more extreme the result. Treat rolls of 1 as amazing. Conversely, rolling a 20 is always a notable and grievous event. Even if Perversity spending has raised the success chance higher than 20, something untoward happens to undermine the success. For instance, the PC's laser blast accurately hits the onrushing traitor, but the victim's charred body hurtles into the PC, knocking him into a food vat.

There are several ways to roll the die. Each way has different psychological effects, appropriate for different circumstances:

◎ **Trust The Computer:** You roll, hiding the result. This shows authority and control.

◎ **It pays to get on my good side:** You roll, showing the result either to all players or only to certain players you choose. The latter way sends a clear message to players who annoy you.

◎ **Behold, your GM is most fair:** The character's player (the acting player) rolls, showing the result to you and all players. This shows you don't really care whether the Troubleshooters live or die.

There are also several ways to adjust the success chance.

◎ **I'm GM, deal with it:** You increase or decrease the success chance as much

as you like. Players can't change your adjusted chance.

◎ **I'm disquietingly arbitrary:** You adjust the chance, but then let players spend points on General Perversity Modifiers.

◎ **Let a thousand perversities bloom:** You leave the chance alone, but let players spend points on Perversity.

Contests

Often a character uses a skill in conflict with another character. For example, in an arm-wrestling match, characters use their Violence skill to try to defeat each other. This is called a *contest*.

Roll 1d20 for each character against the rating of the skill that character is using. The contest winner is the character who succeeds by the wider margin—that is, the one who rolled the furthest under his skill rating. (This is called 'making your roll by' the margin.)

Ties mean nobody wins. Also, nobody wins if both rolls fail. Depending on the contest, the tied or failed players may roll again, or may both fail irretrievably.

Example: Joe-R and Bob-R arm-wrestle. Joe-R's Violence is 12; he rolls 8, making his roll by a margin of 4. Bob-R's Violence is 8; he rolls 4, also margin 4. The two characters tie, so they keep arm-wrestling. In the next attempt, Joe-R rolls 8 (margin zero) and Bob-R rolls 19 (failure). Joe-R wins convincingly.

In the arm-wrestling example, the two characters kept rolling because the conflict's nature allowed it. If both were instead trying to (say) grab the bottom ladder rung while falling into a maintenance shaft—while keeping the other guy from grabbing it—and both failed the first roll, you might easily rule they are plummeting too fast to try again.

Free-for-alls

Contests can involve more than two characters, and they don't all have to use the same skill. In a pitched battle, Troubleshooters firing their lasers would use the Energy Weapons specialty of their Violence skill, while the unlucky targets might use Stealth to avoid being hit, Hardware to locate the nearest crawlshaft or Management to convince the warbot those guys with lasers are actually Commie traitors.

In this case have each contesting player roll 1d20 against his PC's relevant skill rating. Rank the winning margins highest to lowest. The highest-margin player wins biggest, and each of the others either loses outright or wins a lesser result, according to the contest's nature. You can use the same rankings to determine the sequence in which the characters act: highest-margin winner first (or last, whichever is best), and then the others in rank order.



Example: Six Troubleshooters are taking laser potshots at a fleeing Communist. Each player rolls against Energy Weapons. Three players fail. The other three succeed by margins of 0, 2, and 5. You decide the margin-0 and margin-2 shots clip the Commie on his left earlobe and right elbow, respectively, but the margin-5 shot drops the traitor in his tracks.

NPCs in contests

What if one or more nonplayer characters are involved in the contest? NPCs succeed or fail in whatever way you want, of course. If you're not particularly interested in deciding that yourself, or maybe you're distracted by the pizza delivery guy or something, try this:

While the contesting players roll, you also make a single 1d20 roll for the entire force of NPCs in the contest, rolling against the scene's current Tension level (see the section 'Tension levels'). If the Tension level does not suit you, roll against the number 11. If you don't like that either, use your birthdate, the last two digits of your phone number or whatever sounds good.

Compare everyone's margin of success—all the players and your single batch of NPCs. Rank the degrees of winning-ness and the action sequence as before, with the gaggle of NPCs acting together in one slot.

What? Players don't buy that all the NPCs act in lockstep? Okay, you can spread the NPC margins like butter across a range of numbers. Your five NPCs collectively rolled a margin of 5? No they didn't—one of them rolled margin-1, the second did margin-2, and so on to the top NPC winner who got the 5. This may not make your job any easier, but it keeps your NPCs from acting like robots. (Of course, if the NPCs are robots, ignore this rule.)

Extended skill rolls

An *extended skill roll* is a sequence of die rolls. This represents a task or sequence of tasks that takes a long time: a footrace, repair of a demolished bot, plowing through multiple layers of bureaucracy, or a deep philosophical conversation wherein you try to convince a nova bomb not to explode.

The player making the extended roll (or each party in an extended contest) makes an identical number of die rolls against the appropriate ability, tallying the number of successes scored.

As GM, you can define the sequence as either open-ended (first player to score five successes wins the footrace or gets the proper form approved) or fixed (if the PC doesn't get three successes in six rolls, the bomb gets bored and explodes).

You decide the amount of time covered by each roll in the contest. In a footrace, each roll represents a few seconds. In a conversation, one roll might cover half an hour. As for bureaucracy—well, let your imagination roam.

Arbitrary Justice rolls

Sometimes the storyline hurtles boldly into quandaries where even skill rolls, mutant power rolls and Access rolls may not help. Suppose a Troubleshooter finds an Old Reckoning bicycle and tries to ride it. If you haven't already decided what happens, the skills don't give much guidance. Is bike riding a Hardware skill? Violence? If you like either of those, the answer is 'yes'. If you don't?

Sigh. Why do players get into such unauthorized mischief?

When nothing else suggests itself, resort to an Arbitrary Justice (AJ) roll. To invoke Arbitrary Justice, mentally describe the situation as a yes-no question. ('Does this Troubleshooter know how to ride a bike?') Then roll 1d20.

◎ **If you roll 10 or less, the answer is YES.** Alternately, the character achieves success, or something happens that benefits the players.

◎ **If you roll 11 or more, the answer is NO,** the action fails, or something bad happens.

As always, the more extreme the number rolled, the more extreme the result. In the example, if you roll a 1, the bike-riding Troubleshooter sails smoothly and gracefully along. If you roll a 20, he sails smoothly and gracefully into an elevator shaft.

You don't have to use 10 as the AJ roll's breakpoint. Pick a number that seems to fairly represent the chance of a favorable outcome. Go ahead! That's why it's Arbitrary.

Common situations and their rolls

Here are some actions you'll see often in Troubleshooter missions, along with suggested ways you can use the rules to resolve them. Remember: **You can choose any way you want** to resolve a situation: rules, coin flips, wrestling matches or your own infallible judgment.

Finding the mission briefing room:
Access attribute roll; roleplaying

Getting information from the briefing officer: Bootlicking, Bribery

Getting needed equipment from bored PLC clerk: Access roll, Bribery, Chutzpah, Management (persuasion), secret society connections

Getting needed equipment on C-Bay: C-Bay specialty roll (duh), Hacking, Con Games, Power roll (luck)

Getting needed equipment on the IR market (the illegal black market): Moxie specialty roll, extended Haggling vs. Haggling contest, Intimidation specialty roll, Power attribute roll

Shuffling off experimental R&D equipment onto a fellow PC: roleplaying

Manage credits: Financial Systems, Hacking, Cash Hacking, Bribery

Attacking with a laser: Energy Weapons specialty roll

Other attacks: Violence or a Violence specialty

Planting an explosive charge: Demolitions; Hardware

Planting a charge on an unsuspecting teammate: Sleight of Hand

Running away before teammate explodes: Agility

Cleaning up the mess, leaving no traces: Hygiene

Noticing an ME card dropped by a high-clearance citizen: Stealth

Hiding Card at a security checkpoint: Concealment

Transferring its credits to your account: Financial Systems

If caught, convincing IntSec a rival planted it on you: Chutzpah

Fleeing the IntSec officer: Violence, Agility

Noticing a hidden laser cannon: Stealth, High Alert

Getting past it: Sneaking, Disguise, Security Systems, Power

Finding an alternate route: Data Search or Habitat Engineering



22. General Perversity Modifiers

As described in the player section, players can (with your permission) spend their Perversity points to influence a die roll. They can apply these General Perversity Modifiers to any roll, yours or a player's—if you allow it.

Each Perversity point a player expends on Perversity changes the target success number by 1, either up or down as the player wishes. There are no limits. It is perfectly permissible to raise the success number above 20 or lower it below 1.

After all Perversity points are applied, you then improvise the in-game events that led to the modifier.

Then the die is rolled.

Perversity details

Let players spend points on General Perversity Modifiers when it suits your psychological purpose. What effect do you want?

◎ **Frenzied action** (no Perversity): If you want to keep the game moving quickly, don't allow Perversity spending. It slows things down.

◎ **Brisk development** (only acting player): To throttle back the pace just a bit, let each player spend points only on his own roll, not other players', and give the player just one spending opportunity per action.

◎ **Favoritism** (only acting player): The same as 'Brisk development', except you smile at the acting player. This shows other players the need to get on your good side, assuming they were too dense to see this.

◎ **Suspense** (free-for-all spending): When you want to build mistrust and antagonism among players (Go GM!), let all players expend points freely on modifying each other's rolls. Limiting each player to one opportunity per roll can increase suspense. In this case, give the acting player the last chance to spend points, after all other players have taken or rejected the opportunity.

◎ **The big roll** (unlimited auction spending): If it's the last scene, where success for one group of players and dismal ignominy for the rest all boils down to *one* roll—hats off to you, GM. You've done everything right. In this situation, let everyone spend points endlessly, auction style, going-going-gone. Drain 'em dry if you can. Make the moment memorable.

Awarding Perversity

You award Perversity points to the player, not the character. If a PC dies for good, that player keeps all unspent Perversity points and can use them with his next character.

Award Perversity point rewards in quantities called 'Perversity point rations'. A ration of points depends on the needs of your current scene. When you want to maintain tight control over the direction of play (say when you're trying to convey an important element of the storyline), award points one at a time, so players feel constrained in their ability to affect things. When you want them to go wild, as for instance in firefights, award rations of 5 or even 10 Perversity points at a time.

Award a ration of Perversity points promptly and liberally to any player who entertains you. Typical behaviors worthy of reward include cleverly betraying fellow PCs, cleverly avoiding certain death, and making your life easier.

Be sure to award these Perversity points on the spot, in the moment of the entertaining behavior. Immediate positive reinforcement is key to player conditioning.

Don't worry that players will stockpile the points and unbalance the game. There are many incentives to spend them, and 'game balance' is seldom an issue in **PARANOIA**.

Generally the more Perversity points you award, the more fun the game will be. You could easily award three to five rations per player in each scene, if they're being funny. Award rations relatively evenly, if possible. If one or two players are left out, they'll start whining and holding up the mission.

You can take away Perversity points a player has justly earned, but this can create resentment. Instead, put the player's character in the line of fire of the other PCs. Remember, you don't have to punish a player when other players are so eager to do it for you.

Gloating

A Troubleshooter who takes extra care to finish off a victim in classy fashion deserves ample reward. Give the player an extra ration of Perversity points for each round he spends gloating over a conscious victim in advance of the actual termination.

Encourage gloating. It makes everyone's life harder, except yours. However, limit any given speech of vengeance and bitter recrimination to two or three rounds, or it starts to sound like an awards ceremony acceptance speech.

23. Scenes and Tension levels

As explained in the RED section, the scene is the basic unit of play. Begin a new scene when one or more Troubleshooters arrives at a new location important to the mission's main storyline. Unscripted side ventures and individual meetings with secret society informants don't count as scenes.

Use this distinction as one more tool to keep players on track. When you start a new scene, award players a new ration of Perversity points. (You set the ration based on the needs of the current scene, as described in the previous chapter under 'Awarding Perversity'). Ideally, the incentive to get to the next scene and gain new points helps keep everyone focused.

Scenes have an attribute hidden from players (and demonstrating knowledge of it below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET is treason): *Tension levels*.

Tension levels

Each scene has a Tension level from 0 (low) to 20 (high), usually 3–7 or thereabouts. The Tension level suggests how closely The Computer, its agents or other parties are observing the characters' actions. Ideally The Computer wants to observe all areas all the time, but resources don't permit this. No one discusses this publicly, but every citizen has a fairly good idea how likely he is to be observed in any given spot.

A scene's location determines its Tension level. The chart shows typical locations for each Tension level. If you don't want to consult the chart every time you change location, assume a default Complex-wide Tension level of 6.

Track the current Tension level secretly by putting a d20 where you can see it but the

players can't. Change the uppermost number to reflect the current level.

When a player tries something treasonous involving a die roll, the Tension level is the range of the roll that implies whether anyone witnessed the treasonous action. So if a PC has a 15 or less to shoot his team leader, and the Tension level is 5, any roll of 15 or less hits the commander—but if that roll was 5 or less, *somebody* somewhere may have seen the shot.

Maybe it was another PC, maybe The Computer, or a secret society, or maybe some faceless bureaucrat watching a security camera and already writing his blackmail note. You don't need to get specific nor even rush to tell the player. Still, that act, having been detected, is now admissible as evidence against the PC (see the section 'Accusations of treason'). If no



other player brings it up during debriefing, The Computer may see fit to do so.

Never let the chart interfere with your own convictions. Tension levels are a convenience for you; at times, you may know very well The Computer—or someone else—is watching. Use the chart only when you prefer not to decide whether a particular action is monitored.

Alternate Tension methods

Some GMs dislike the way these rules make spectacularly successful actions *more* likely to be observed. If you agree, there are other ways to work Tension, but they do slow things down a little:

- ◎ Compare the roll's *margin* (success or failure) to the Tension level. If the margin is the Tension or less, someone observed the act.
- ◎ Make a separate 1d20 Tension roll for each treasonous action, independent of whether the action succeeds.

Whatever works for you. Remember: You are always right.

Tension levels by location

- These are just suggestions. You can adjust the Tension level freely. Entries such as 'RED areas' means all RED areas not otherwise listed in specific entries. When an area could have more than one Tension level, use the highest.
- 0 Sewers; reactor cores; Outdoors; conferences with the GM
 - 1 IntSec interrogation chambers
 - 2 INFRARED areas
 - 3 Supply closets; garages; bot stations; HPD&MC indoctrination centers
 - 4 RED areas
 - 5 Briefing rooms; food vats; sickbays; clone tanks; PLC warehouses
 - 6 ORANGE areas
 - 7 Mess halls; waiting rooms; grooming stations; elevators and stairwells
 - 8 YELLOW areas
 - 9 R&D labs; any place with Junior Citizens (kids)
 - 10 GREEN areas
 - 11 Troubleshooter HQ; Armed Forces bases; armories
 - 12 BLUE areas
 - 13 Termination centers; re-education centers; IntSec stations
 - 14 INDIGO areas
 - 15 Power and Tech Services control rooms; IntSec headquarters
 - 16 VIOLET areas
 - 17 Confession booths; CPU monitoring loci
 - 18 ULTRAVIOLET areas
 - 19 Central Compnodes
 - 20 Bathrooms

24. Combat

Combat systems in other (non-fun) RPGs sometimes describe weapons, armor and equipment in Talmudic detail. They permit fine grades of damage effects with results that seem convincingly realistic. Characters have different abilities to absorb damage. Everyone in combat has a uniform sense of available options and the likely outcome of particular kinds of actions.

None of that suits your purpose in **PARANOIA**. Forget it.

Troubleshooters in battle ideally stumble through various forms of surprise, ignorance and fear. A typical sequence:

- ◎ **Shock:** 'We're under attack! Who are they? Where are they?'
- ◎ **Panic:** 'Oh no. Not them. Those vatslimes got the drop on us! Me? I never trusted them! It's all *your* fault!'
- ◎ **Stunned incomprehension:** 'How are they doing that? Why doesn't this thing work? Hey, where's our Equipment Guy?'
- ◎ **Terrified comprehension:** 'We're stuck! Bottled up! Oh, hel-lo, Friend Computer! Nonono, everything's going just, uh, fine.'
- ◎ **Desperate ploys:** 'I turn on the rocket boots.'

◎ (*if that doesn't work*) **Existential resignation:** 'My next clone is gonna get you back, you stinking Commie.'

Basic combat concepts

Attack: An attacking character rolls 1d20 against his Violence skill. An attack from an entity without Violence skill (say, a downed power line) rolls against the scene's **Tension level**, or another number if you prefer: 11 maybe, or the current time, or the last digit of the target player's credit card number.

Conditions and steps: Conditions describe a character's current health status (Okay, Snafued, Wounded, Maimed, Down, Killed or Vaporized) or a bot's or object's physical integrity (usually Okay, Light, Medium, Major, Busted, Destroyed or Vaporized).

Moving from one condition to the next adjacent condition is called a *damage step*. You can track a target's condition by marking a line of six blanks beside its name. Each blank is a damage step; there is no box for Okay, because a character with no marked blanks is automatically Okay. Mark off blanks as the target takes damage steps.

Damage: The types are *Bio*, *Energy* and *Impact*. Especially cool damage can also be *armor-piercing* (AP), *spray* or *area effect*.

Damage, Boost: Each attack has a Boost number. If the attack roll's margin equals the weapon's Boost number or higher, the weapon may deal additional damage. The more powerful the attack, the smaller its Boost

number. The best possible Boost is 1. A lousy weapon like a thrown rock might have Boost 5 or 6.

Damage minima and maxima: Each attack specifies the minimum and maximum damage it deals to an unarmored target. For example, a dangerous electric shock might deal minimum damage of Snafued and maximum damage of Wounded.

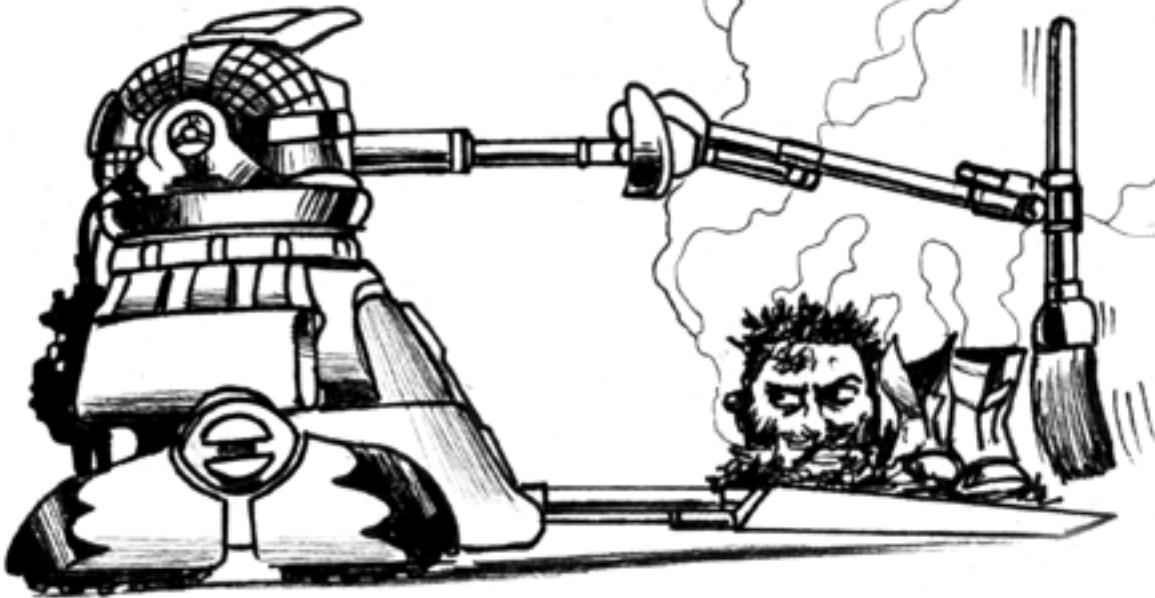
If no damage maximum is specified, the maximum is Killed. Unless you think otherwise, of course.

Defenses: Targets may have armor or inbuilt defenses that reduce the number of damage steps an attack deals. The defense types are the same as the damage types: Bio, Energy and Impact. Defenses can be *hardened* to protect against armor-piercing attacks, or *ablative*, meaning their protection gradually declines and disappears. Defenses may cover only certain parts of the body or may be full-figure.

Non-damage effects: Some attacks entangle, hypnotize, mutate, transform or infect the target. These do no damage, unless you call debilitating contagious brain-spam viruses 'damage.' The attack type describes its effect.

Rounds: In **PARANOIA**'s Dramatic Tactical Action System, combat proceeds in *rounds*, defined as the amount of time it takes for each player and each NPC in the scene to do one interesting thing. In a round, you ask each player in turn what he wants to do, then decide what all NPCs are doing. Then everyone rolls,

24. COMBAT



and all effects of the rolls happen at the end of the round.

The Dramatic Tactical Action System

'It's not that they die, but that they die like sheep.'

—T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land'

PARANOIA is an atmospheric, action-packed, emotionally engaging roleplaying game.

[Choral response: *Hurrah!*]

Other (non-fun) RPGs have detailed, complex, elaborately sequenced combat systems.

[Choral response: *Zzz...*]

Complex combat is nice enough when you want that, but it gets in the way of **PARANOIA**'s tense, mysterious tone. Ergo, **PARANOIA** instead uses the brilliantly conceived and eminently superior Dramatic Tactical Action System—a simple combat system that relies on flexible rules, common sense, dramatic necessity, and the wise and unfettered will of you, the Gamemaster.

For free-spirited GMs this combat system provides speedy and characteristically paranoid action. It treats the 'rules' as guidelines, which you blithely override as dictated by common sense and dramatic necessity.

You see, in **PARANOIA**, it's not so much a question of whether a character gets killed in combat—it's assumed that happens, sooner or later—but rather, exactly how does he get it? Who needs a lot of detailed rules for that?

Still, it helps to convey some basic principles of staging combat:

Control the pace

PARANOIA often works best at a fast pace. Players stay tense when they have no time to contemplate positions, tactics and options. Fast combat usually feels more convincing,

too. In a real combat situation you'd be lucky to get enough time to feel afraid, let alone time to study your next move.

When you want to represent this pace, set the scene with minimal detail, telling only what is needed to understand the action.

GM: You enter the room. There are two desks and one other door. Two traitors leap up from behind the desks and spray you with bullets. What do you do?

In these situations do not let them ruminate. If a player hesitates, his character hesitates. If a player says, 'Wait, I'm thinking', so is his character, while the enemy peppers him with slugs. Quick thinking is what counts in this style of combat.

On the other hand, players can stay tense in the downtime between firefights, too. Every submarine movie ever filmed has long silent scenes of crewmen waiting in the dark for depth charges to fall. In **PARANOIA** your players are those sub crewmen, and you are their depth charges. Slow, suspenseful play works best when the players really have *no* practical positions, tactics or options—and they know violence will erupt again, soon—and they have a long time to contemplate what they lack.

GM: Behind the debriefing room's laserproof glass window, the INDIGO officer points a surveillance camera straight at you, so you see your sweating faces on the large monitor. The officer tells you to stay put while he goes to arrange to have the body of your fellow Troubleshooter picked up. He leaves. You're sitting right by the body. Anyone moving from his chair? No? Absolutely sure you aren't moving? The officer might be gone a long time, you know. Dumty-dum, dumty-dum...

Reward flamboyance and wit

PARANOIA should have the feel of a suspense movie, not a wargame. **PARANOIA** combat shouldn't be realistic; it should be dramatic, like movie combat. Let exceptionally heroic, cowardly, bizarre or extravagant actions succeed—though probably not the way players expected them to; a regular perverse twist effectively deters player abuse.

Kill the bastards!

Don't be afraid to let characters kill each other. The world of **PARANOIA** is unimaginably deadly for Troubleshooters, teeming with traitors, enemies, lunatics, defective devices, lethal environmental hazards, The Computer and, most of all, other Troubleshooters. If a character gets dead, let him be dead. There are no last-minute saves, no divine interventions in **PARANOIA**. Besides, his identical clone backup jumps right back in the lineup before you can say 'baked traitor'.

Let them die. Let them all die.

Don't worry. You'll get used to it—alarmingly quickly.

Combat rounds

Resolve combat in a series of *rounds*. Each round lasts long enough for each player and each NPC to do one interesting thing—call it five seconds, more or less. 'Interesting' in this context doesn't mean cook a meal or read *Anna Karenina* or write a Slime Identification service firm business plan. It means attacking, ducking for cover, phoning in a distress report, or anything you could do in a few seconds that might conceivably change the course of the battle.

Each round has four steps. Here is the sequence of steps:



Attacking

An attacking character uses Violence skill to hit his target (which is usually an opponent). Depending on the weapon he's using, the attacker may have an applicable Violence specialty rating—for instance, his Energy Weapons specialty if he's firing a laser, or

Unarmed Combat if he's kicking the target's kneecap. If he has no applicable specialty, he uses his basic Violence skill. For more detail see Chapter 37, 'Skills and specialties.'

In a single combat round each character may make only one attack. To make an attack, roll 1d20 and compare the number rolled to the attacker's success number—his Violence

skill or specialty rating, possibly modified by Perversity point spending. If the number rolled equals the success number or less, the attack hits the target. If the roll is higher than the success number, the attack misses. If the attack hits, the target may suffer damage as described in the 'Damage' chapter.

When you compare the die roll result to the success number, note the difference between them—that is, subtract the smaller number from the larger. This is the *margin*. The margin is important for determining damage and sometimes for figuring how badly an attack missed. Missed attacks can prompt some of the most entertaining moments in all *PARANOIA*.

Some weapons are *area attack* weapons that hit all targets in a defined *damage radius*. Others are *spray* weapons that can hit multiple targets in a single attack, like a spray of machine-gun bullets. When an area or spray weapon misses, you decide where the inaccurate shot falls on the basis of logic, dramatic appropriateness and Murphy's Law.

For example, if a character misses his intended target with a napalm round, and a fuel storage tank is nearby, it is almost inevitable the round will unerringly seek the fuel tank. That would be most entertaining, after all.

The Dramatic Tactical Action System

1. You decide what your NPCs do

Consider the situation and figure out what each non-player character—each human or bot—wants to do in this round. Usually they want to stay alive and often keep the Troubleshooters from staying alive. They may have strategic and tactical goals, and they may want to try something madly entertaining or dramatic.

You might or might not tell the players what the NPCs will do. Some opponents are so stupid and obvious they telegraph their actions. Some are shrewd, enigmatic and full of surprises. Keep the NPC actions mysterious when that would build tension.

Note: It is tasteless—though often dramatically correct, and thoroughly *PARANOIA*—to change your NPCs' tactics after you've heard what the players will do. If you commit such an immoral and unsportsmanlike act, make sure you don't get caught. You have to seem impartial.

2. Players decide what their PCs do

Go around the table—your players are all seated around a table, right?—and ask each player in turn what his Troubleshooter intends to do in this round. A player can't change his mind after he declares his intention unless you, the generous GM, judge the change sufficiently entertaining. 'Oh, Moe-O-DJO is going to detonate his experimental Solar Grenade? Shucks, forget drawing my laser. I'm gonna strip off my jumpsuit so I'll get a better tan.'

If a PC suffered a Snafu combat result in the previous round, that PC can't take any aggressive action this round. You'll learn more about that in the 'Damage' chapter.

Notice that players are only announcing their intention in this step. No one is actually resolving anything yet. That's the next step.

3. Roll everyone's dice

Both PCs and NPCs have decided what they are doing this round. In Step 3, it all

happens at once. Time to roll 1d20 for each action. Maybe you make all the rolls yourself, in secret; maybe instead you let the players roll the die themselves for their own actions. It depends on the effect you want to create: omnipotence or generosity. You are the referee, arbiter of common sense and dramatic justice, and wise judge of whether and when players may spend Perversity points to affect their own or any other roll.

Points are spent (or not, as you decree), dice are bounced, rolls are matched with success numbers and everyone finds out which attacks succeed. All hand-to-hand and ranged attacks, and all malicious mischief such as mutant powers, collapsed ceilings and so on, take effect *simultaneously*. That is, if Joe-R and Bob-O announced in Step 2 they would attack each other, they both make their attacks now; and if Joe-R's attack kills Bob-O, that doesn't prevent Bob-O's attack from happening. Both happen at once, and the effects happen in the next step.

4. Apply all the effects

Combat effects are explained in the 'Damage' chapter. Killed characters are killed now. Wounded and maimed characters are wounded and maimed now. Characters who receive a Snafu result will be snafued in the next round and can't take aggressive action in that round.

5. Everyone moves

Anyone still on his feet (or its wheels) may move.

Huh? Movement rules? There aren't any. Characters move as far as you decide they should. If you can't decide whether a character could reach Point B in Time C, make a Violence roll for the character. Success means he made it. Races are Violence contests.

In *PARANOIA* movement doesn't usually become an issue. You can run, but you can't hide.

Interpreting Perversity

'Modifier: Any number that can be ignored.'
—John M. Ford

Bunches of rules in other (non-fun) games' combat systems boil down to die-roll modifiers—numbers added to or subtracted from the success number to account for particular circumstances. Range! Cover! Posture! Grooming! Huge lists of modifiers to cherish, memorize and apply!

Gamemaster, in *PARANOIA* you are free. You have no lists of modifiers to memorize. If and as you wish, simply ask your players to spend Perversity points to provide you with General Perversity Modifiers. They make them on the spot! One type of modifier fits all! When you're in the mood, use Perversity as a guide to describe combat scenes at your preferred level of detail. Then roll the die, figure the effects and move on.

Perversity Modifiers Chart

This chart lists some example circumstances you can describe to retrofit a combat situation to a given set of Perversity Modifiers. These samples should inspire your own creativity. Invent new modifiers for each battle, tailoring them to the peculiarities of the setting. Get players to suggest ideas; you'll be pleasantly surprised at their evil genius.

Taking inspiration from the chart: The chart assigns each circumstance to a certain numerical range, such as +1 or -5. This is the

Sample Perversity Modifiers (combat)

Remember, these are just examples to spur your own creativity. Invent your own modifiers on the fly, using these as guidelines. If you're feeling brave, you can even allow the player(s) to describe the circumstances accounting for each modifier.

Modifier	Attacker	His teammates	The target	The environment
+1	Attacker holds breath and sticks tongue in cheek; strikes intimidating pose.	Teammates fall pleasantly quiet due to suspicious scrutiny of each other.	Target coughs; gets whiff of noxious smell from nearby food vat, gags; urgently scratches itchy skin rash.	Ceiling spotlight suddenly shines on target.
+5	Attacker surfs dramatically forward on flat piece of rubble while firing; shoots overhanging light fixture, which falls on target.	Teammate whispers, "Let's see how bad he screws this one up", boosting attacker's resolve.	Target forced to exit cover (scrubot trundles away, confession booth emits tear gas, etc.); notified via PDC he has won a contest, target jumps for joy, right into path of attack.	Rogue autocar careens through line of fire; high-clearance citizen in athletic uniform jogs by, forcing everyone to stop and whistle casually, shine shoes and discuss hygiene.
+10	Exhilarated with sudden surge of adrenaline, attacker emits blood-curdling yell that paralyzes teammates and enemy.	Someone's belt pouch breaks loose, buckle flies up, hits attacker's arm, knocks it into proper alignment for perfect shot.	Something on target's body catches fire; mistakes <i>Traitor Currently Wanted</i> image on corridor vidscreen for his own face, freezes in panic.	Wall pipe or nearby vending machine is hit by attack and explodes, showering target with blue goo.
-1	Attacker sneezes; slips on some Cold Fun or a chapstick tube; his PDC rings (wrong number); weapon's trigger mechanism needs lubricant.	Teammates speak words of encouragement, making attacker suspicious.	Unexpected Hot Fun belch pulls target's head out of line of fire; target turns, kneels or changes direction.	Light fixture blinks distractingly; air conditioner switches on loudly; latest Loyalty Song blares over loudspeaker nearby.
-5	Disconcerting attack of déjà vu; attacker suddenly recalls a forgotten errand or appointment and hits own forehead in disgust, spoiling aim; suddenly seized by weird sense of being watched, whips around, spoiling aim; passing scrubot left soapy patch on floor, attacker slips and falls.	Teammates fool attacker into believing an enemy is behind him, so he whirls; a teammate or passerby yells " <i>Shoot him in the head!</i> " alerting target to dive for cover; teammate conspicuously drops something with a loud clatter.	Target finds cover behind a scrubot, in a confession booth, etc.; target convinces random passerby he (the passerby) is the new Hero of Our Complex, target shakes passerby's hand, pulling him into line of fire.	Shift change! Teeming masses of INFRARED workers cross between attacker and target. Light gets in attacker's eyes; air conditioner blows food wrapper in attacker's face; public-address announcement causes everyone to listen nervously. Ceiling tile buckles, falling and striking weapon at moment of firing.
-10	Fire sprinklers can be such temperamental things; if it has a bot brain, attacker's weapon takes this moment to state a long-standing complaint.	Someone's weapon rattles unnervingly; a teammate pops open a can of Tingle With Lemon, spraying attacker in the eyes.	Target maneuvers crowd of passersby into firing path; random shot strikes a wall-mounted control panel, permanently closing hallway blast doors; NPC target manifests previously unrecognized mutant power.	R&D laboratory one floor up decides to explode; scrubot rolls by, randomly washes attacker; The Computer suddenly calls for a status report.

suggested amount of the die-roll modifier you can explain using that circumstance.

Of course, you can always assign any numerical modifier to any circumstance. You may have to calm a surly player who denies that his Troubleshooter's little cough could possibly subtract 15 from his success roll, but calming players is the work of a moment. Still, why borrow stress? By modeling your own modifiers on the listed examples, you maintain the appearance of impartiality.

Example: Suppose the players' collective Perversity spending leaves one player with a -4 modifier to his attack roll. Looking to the chart for inspiration, you like the entries 'Target gets whiff of noxious smell from nearby food vat, gags' (in the +1 category, meaning it can account for a +1 modifier to the attacker's roll) and 'Passing scrubot left soapy patch on floor,

attacker slipped and fell' (in the -5 category). These two, together, equal -4. By choosing both the +1 and the -5 circumstances, you get a credible explanation for the player's -4 modifier.

You tell the player, 'A scrubot rolls at top speed down the corridor toward a nearby food vat room, where a recent spill requires urgent hygienic attention. The bot sloshes some soapy water under your feet, and you go down as you fire. Fortunately, your target was distracted by a plume of bad-smelling vapor from the vat spill.'

So now there's a scrubot on the scene. In later combat rounds the combatants might fire on it, use it for cover or try to recruit it. You can use the scrubot, and any Perversity development, to rationalize yet more Perversity Modifiers of your own invention.

ALL THIS
TALK OF
PERVERSTY
UNSETTLES
ME.



Figuring combat effects

An attack has the exact effect you want it to have. Pick the effect you think most satisfying or entertaining or even—if you care—believable.

If you don't care to pick an effect, decide combat effects using the die roll's margin. Targets, damage, backfires—figure it all using the amazing Universal Hostility Formula!

Universal Hostility Formula (combat)

1. ATTACK!
ROLL VS.
VIOLENCE,
TENSION LVL,
OR 11

**2. HIT
OR MISS?
DIFFERENT
TARGET?
BACKFIRE?**

**3. MULTIPLE
TARGETS?**

**4. DEFAULT
DAMAGE**

5. DEFENSE

6. BOOST

**7. ACTUAL
DAMAGE**

1. Attack!

An attacking character rolls against his Violence skill. An attack from an entity without the Violence skill (say, a downed power line) rolls against the scene's Tension level, or the number 11 if you prefer. That's a nice number, 11.

When more than one character is attacking, figure everyone's attack result separately, then apply all effects simultaneously.

If the attacker surprises the target, you may want to give the attacker one free attack before the target gets to respond.

2. Hit or miss?

If the attacker chose a specific target and hit successfully, that target may take damage.

If the attack missed, did it hit a different target instead? Decide this based on circumstances (a punch or stab probably won't fly wild, but a grenade will) and entertainment value (a cone rifle shell is your ticket to fun!). Maybe a projectile flies down a hallway and hits an entirely uninvolved target, who may take damage and in any case becomes unhappy. If you want a new target but nothing suggests itself, target the character with the lowest Power. Serves him right.

Backfires: If the attack missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the attack may backfire. A punch or kick that backfires wounds the attacker's hand or foot. A club may break and a knife may bend or snap. Most high-tech weapon descriptions include suggested malfunctions, which often involve screeching alarms and very attractive explosions. Some weapons malfunction in circumstances independent of the margin, so check the description.

If a backfire doesn't suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.

3. Multiple targets?

Can the attack plausibly hit more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the attack description or the attack roll's margin. See the Area effect and Spray descriptions in the 'Special attacks' subsection of 'Weapons'.

4. Determine the default damage

The attack deals the damage you want it to deal. If you know what damage it should deal, skip the rest of these steps. If you'd like guidance, attack descriptions suggest their default damage in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format, defined on the Weapon Chart.

5. Apply target's defense

Does the target have armor or other defenses? Does the defense apply against the attack type? If so, reduce the attack's default damage by a number of steps equal to the target's defense value.

6. Apply Boost, if any

Based on the attack roll's margin of success, increase the attack's damage according to its Boost increment, as explained on the facing page. There's a handy Boost chart in the Charts & Tables section at the end of this book.

7. Determine the actual damage

If the attack's damage is reduced to nothing, the attack still hits the target, but it has no effect—maybe some armor gets scorched or the target gets really annoyed, but the attack doesn't affect the combat situation. See Chapter 26, 'Armor'.

Damage effects are described in Chapter 27, 'Damage and injury.'

A damaged target often becomes extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval.

UHF (COMBAT) / 25. WEAPONS

25. Weapons

Weapons and other attacks deal exactly the damage you want. For guidance, most weapon descriptions suggest a default damage rating, listed in the format **Min-Boost-Max**.

④ **Minimum (Min):** This weapon ordinarily deals at least this much damage to an unarmored target.

④ **Boost:** If the roll's margin of success equals this number or higher, the weapon deals additional damage. Divide the roll's margin by this Boost increment (round fractions down), and deal that number of bonus damage steps.

Powerful weapons have low Boost numbers; weaker weapons have larger increments. **The higher the Boost number, the weaker the weapon.**

Suppose an attack roll's margin of success is 6. If the attack weapon is a laser (W3K), divide the margin of 6 by the laser's Boost 3, meaning this laser shot inflicts $(6/3)=2$ bonus damage steps. If the weapon is instead the much more formidable plasma generator (V1V), the margin of 6 divided by Boost 1 (the best possible Boost increment) means the plasma generator deals 6 bonus damage steps. A thrown rock might have Boost 5, so an attack margin of 6 would do only one bonus step.

④ **Maximum (Max):** This weapon won't damage a target beyond this condition, unless you say otherwise.

■ Weapon damage example

Troubleshooter Bill-R-DPR-1 (Energy Weapons 14) fires a laser (damage W3K) at undamaged and unarmored INFRARED Tar-GET-1.

Bill-R rolls 13 to hit, 1 under his skill. The margin of 1 divided by the laser's Boost 3 is 0.33, which rounds down to nothing. Bill-R's laser attack deals no bonus damage. The laser deals its minimum damage (Wounded) to Tar-GET, who runs around screaming and flailing in picturesque manner.

Irritated by the noise, Bill-R fires again, rolling 2. The margin of 12 divided by Boost 3 is 4, meaning this attack would ordinarily deal four bonus damage steps. *But!* This would boost the laser's damage four steps from its minimum (Wounded) up to Vaporized. However, the laser's maximum damage is Killed, so the damage is only increased to this level. Tar-GET dies and goes on the Tech Services waiting list for clone revivification (current wait at Clearance INFRARED: 14+ years).

■ Damage types

Weapons and attacks deal damage of one of these types: **Bio**, **Energy** and **Impact**. The weapon table indicates each weapon's type.

Bio (B): Poisons, venoms, viruses, flesh-eating bacteria, food vat solvents, etc. Bio includes chemical attacks such as acids and nerve gas.

Energy (E): Lasers, blasters, electricity, fire, force swords, neurowhips, radiation, sonics, stun guns, cosmic rays, a superhero's power ring, etc. Energy includes all explosives from grenades to tacnukes.

Impact (I): Hand, thrown and projectile weapons—slugthrower bullets, cone rifle

shells, ice guns, brass knuckles, punches and kicks, most primitive weapons, truncheons, sticks and stones, etc.

■ Special attacks

Ignore all of this if you get bored.

Area effect: Weapons such as napalm, flamethrowers, gauss guns, plasma generators, tanglers, affect all targets in a radius listed in the weapon's description. If the description omits the radius, assume the area of effect is a large room. Other attacks, like tangler guns, are sticky and gooey and slurp all over everyone within arm's length of the target. Some mutant powers can pick out targets based on hair color or alphabetical order.

In situations where you can't automatically decide who gets hit, choose a number of targets up to the attack roll's margin.

For PC targets, select the most boring or annoying players. If they're all appropriately witty and servile, select characters in Power order, lowest to highest.

For NPC targets, select targets by Arbitrary Justice rolls, by security clearance (lowest to highest) or by importance to the storyline (least to most). Some GMs assign NPCs an *expendability rating*, a number indicating their importance to the storyline. A faceless INFRARED or bot nobody cares about is Expendability 1. Significant sources of information or stuff are Expendability 5 to 15. The must-see, only-one-with-the-vital-clue secret society leader who is the current mission objective is Expendability 40 or more. If you adopt this system, an area attack kills all NPCs in the radius with Expendability below the roll's margin.

Armor-piercing (AP): Against an AP attack, armor works only half as well as normal. Halve the armor's rating (rounding down) before applying it to reduce damage steps.

Lasers: Troubleshooters are issued laser pistols as standard equipment. The main body of a laser pistol can be mounted with a barrel of any color. Each laser barrel can shoot a beam of only one color of the security clearance spectrum. Reflec armor is designed to reflect all laser fire of its wearer's color and below (see Chapter 26, 'Armor').

Each barrel may be fired with reasonable safety up to six times. If fired more than six times, each successive shot cumulatively increases the chance of malfunction (see 'Weapon malfunction'). Traditionally the barrel is manufactured with six rings or other markings in the barrel's color. Each time the weapon is fired, one ring changes color. A glance at the weapon reveals how many shots remain and the barrel's color. After the sixth shot, the barrel may show stress effects as described under 'Weapon malfunctions'.



An awesome weapon of the Old Reckoning—a Hoover 216.



'Excuse me, citizen, is a tankbot on our requisition form?'

Replacing a barrel takes one combat round.

Spray weapons: Some weapons, such as semi-automatic slugthrowers, can ‘spray fire’. The ability to spray fire is noted in the weapon’s description.

A spray weapon can attack multiple targets that are grouped reasonably close together. How close? Say, about as close together as in a movie where the hero rakes a room with machine-gun fire and the villain’s henchmen all dive for cover. That close.

When a character spray fires a weapon, ask how many targets he wants to hit. For guidance as to how many he actually damages, divide the attack roll’s margin by the number of targets (round down) and apply damage to each target based on its portion of the margin.

■ Ammunition and reloading

The cost to reload a weapon is 10% of the weapon’s base cost, unless otherwise specified. The weapon chart’s listed cost for ammunition is per magazine, unless ‘Shots’ is 1; for these single-shot weapons, cost is per shot.

Hunching down behind cover to reload can be a dramatic moment in any firefight. Therefore you may find it useful to limit the supply of ammunition in ranged weapons, and require characters to periodically to reload or recharge them. If this doesn’t sound interesting, ignore these rules and just let everyone fire freely.

Reloading a weapon or replacing a laser barrel takes one round. A weapon’s description usually suggests the number of attacks a character can make with it before having to reload. Can you trust your players to be diligent and conscientious about marking off their ammo?

If you just shuddered with revulsion, use a system of bribery instead. Different methods of bribery produce different dramatic effects. The best bribery method depends on your chosen play style.

◎ **Straight:** When combat begins, award players extra Perversity points equal to the number of rounds their weapons can fire before reloading. Make each player spend one of these Perversity points to fire a shot. When they run out of these points, it’s time to reload. When they take a round to reload, replenish their points to 6. It makes them think twice about running around zapping everything that moves, and it shows players you take reloading seriously.

◎ **Classic:** Each time a player announces he’s spending a round reloading, award him a Perversity point or two. This encourages players to be honest, or even more than honest.

◎ **Zap:** If you happen to notice a player has been firing and firing without bothering to reload, roll some dice, consult some charts, and have his weapon explode. This should work wonders for everyone else’s reloading schedule.

■ Weapon malfunctions

A weapon malfunctions when you say it does. For guidance, Alpha Complex weapons are categorized as *standard*, *experimental* or *really experimental*.

Standard weapons include lasers, slugthrowers and grenades, as well as melee

and primitive weapons. A standard weapon malfunctions if a player fires it and the attack roll is 20. If this was still good enough to hit the target, deal damage normally, then assess the malfunction.

Experimental weapons include exotic or touchy things like cone rifles, semi-automatic slugthrowers, sonics, blasters, ice guns, flamethrowers, stun guns, plasma generators—basically all the really cool stuff. Experimental weapons malfunction if the attack roll is 19 or 20.

Anything issued to the Troubleshooters by an R&D service firm counts as *really experimental*. These devices malfunction whenever you want them to, probably dramatically, probably often.

The weapon description usually suggests a characteristic and entertaining malfunction.

Lasers: Laser pistol barrels are good for six shots. For each shot after the sixth, the malfunction number is lowered by 1. On the seventh shot, a roll of 19 or 20 indicates malfunction. On the eighth shot, the roll is 18–20, and so on.

Laser barrels pushed beyond the regulation six shots are called overstressed. An overstressed barrel makes a pronounced whining noise when fired, and eventually starts to glow with unsettling brightness. Advanced pistol bodies may have bot brains that scream, ‘For the love of The Computer, have you no mercy? Get your clammy finger off my trigger!’

All the combat charts are collected at the back of this book, along with a handy Boost chart to speed up combat.

25 WEAPONS

O_{KAY} — S_{NAFU} — W_{OUNDED} — M_{AIMED} — D_{OWN} — K_{ILLED} — V_{APOORIZED}

Weapon chart

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost-Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Blaster	Energy	Energy	M3K	1	50	500	O	
Brass knuckles	Hand	Impact	S5W	—	—	10	R	
Cone rifle**	Projectile	—	—	1	200	1,000	B	
Cone rifle shells**								
solid slug		Impact	W3K	1	200	100	B	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	1	200	150	B	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	1	160	120	B	
HE		Impact	W2K	1	200	200	I	area 40m
HEAT		Impact	W2K	1	200	400	I	AP, area 40m
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	200	300	B	area 8m, spray
flare		—	—	1	200	100	B	bright light
ECM		Energy	J2J	1	200	400	I	only vs. bots
gas		Bio	varies	1	200	250	B	area 30m; see note 1
tacnuke**		Energy	V1V	1	200	150,000	V	area 160m; see note 2
Cone rifle triggers**		—	—	1	—	100	B	each shell requires one trigger
Energy pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	5	60	200	Y	
Flamethrower	Field	Energy	S3K	10	20	500	Y	area 20m, spray
Force sword	Hand	Energy	S3K	—	—	400	B	
Gauss gun	Field	Energy	W3K	100	20	500	I	20m cone; only vs. bots
Grenade	Thrown	Impact	W3K	1	20	50	R	area 5m
Hand flamer	Field	Energy	S3K	3	40	1,000	V	easily concealed
Ice gun	Projectile	Impact	S3K	25	50	500	G	spray
Knife	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	20	R	thrown range 20m
Laser pistol (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	50	25	*	needs body
Laser pistol (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	75	R	needs barrel
Laser rifle (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	100	50	*	needs body
Laser rifle (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	250	O	needs barrel
Needle gun	Projectile	Impact	S3W	10	60	750	B	AP
Neurowhip	Hand	Energy	S5M	—	—	300	G	
Plasma generator**	Field	Energy	V1V	10	—	2,000	V	area 20m (60-degree cone)
Rock or debris	Thrown	Impact	O5W	1	20	—	any	
Rock or debris, big	Thrown	Impact	O4W	1	10	—	any	
Slugthrower	Projectile	—	—	—	—	450	Y	
solid slug		Impact	W3K	6	50	50	Y	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	3	50	75	G	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	6	40	60	Y	
HE		Impact	W2K	6	40	75	Y	
HEAT		Impact	W2K	6	40	100	G	AP
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	40	75	Y	area 3m
flare		—	—	1	40	40	Y	bright light
ECM		Energy	H2J	1	40	200	I	only vs. bots
gas		—	varies	1	40	75	Y	area 5m; see note 1
Slugthrower, semi-automatic	Projectile	—	—	—	—	750	G	spray (see note 3)
Sonic pistol	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	60	150	O	see note 4
Sonic rifle	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	100	300	O	see note 4 again
Stun gun	Field	—	Stun	6	40	250	O	see note 5
Sword	Hand	Impact	W5K	—	—	20	any	
Tangler	Field	—	—	3	50	250	G	see note 6
Truncheon	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	10	R	
Unarmed combat	Unarmed	Impact	O5K	—	—	—	any	
Used weapon								
Reloads/recharges								
Note 1: Gas effects are listed in Chapter 41, 'Equipment', under 'Cone rifle and slugthrower.'								
Note 2: Roll damage from a tactical nuclear weapon only in extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise, assume mass vaporization.								
Note 3: Semi-automatic slugthrowers fire slugthrower ammo at a higher rate. Solid, solid AP, dum-dum, HE and HEAT ammo can be sprayed. The other ammo types are one-shot and hence can't be sprayed (duh).								
No!								
Note 5: This weapon stuns the target. A stunned target can't perceive or do anything in the next round.								
Note 6: This weap!								
** Unauthorized possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (**) is treason. Possessing an unauthorized tacnuke is <i>big-time serious</i> treason.								



26. Armor

Armor protects the wearer against one or more type(s) of damage. Armor has a number rating—the higher the number, the better the armor's protection against the specified damage type. The type is indicated by a letter code before the armor's rating (for example, B3 means the armor has rating 3 versus Bio attacks).

Some armor protects against more than one damage type. Such multiple-type armor has ratings separated by slashes (for example, E4/I3).

If the armor has no letter code, it protects against all damage.

Damage: Armor may reduce damage up to a number of steps equal to the armor rating. For instance, if an attack deals 3 steps of damage, armor rating 2 reduces the damage to 1 step. So an attack that would reduce an unarmored character to Down instead reduces a character with armor rating 2 merely to Wounded. If the armor doesn't protect against that type of attack, don't adjust the damage.

Against explosions or very powerful area attacks like plasma generators or tacnukes, it is often silly to apply armor. If a plasma generator ends up producing a light sunburn, your players will privately snicker at you, and this cannot be tolerated. Use judgement.

If armor reduces the damage below 1 step, the attack does no damage. It still hits, and may muss the target's hair or singe his overalls or anger him, but it does too little damage to affect the course of the fight.

Coverage: Most Troubleshooters wear reflec armor in the form of overalls. Technically this armor leaves the head and arms exposed. However, hit location is only important when

you decide it is. **PARANOIA** usually plays more smoothly when you don't penalize the players for this spotty coverage. Assume the armor provides protection whenever the wearer is hit, unless you have a dramatic or amusing reason to do otherwise.

Full-figure armor not only encases the body completely, it's airtight. Armor is only full-figure if noted in the description. Regular armor isn't airtight.

Hardened and ablative armor: Armor can be *hardened*. Against hardened armor, treat armor-piercing attacks as normal attacks.

Ablative armor wears away gradually or abruptly by taking damage. At the end of each round in which the armor reduces damage to the wearer, reduce the armor's rating by 1 unless otherwise noted. When the armor's rating reaches 0, it becomes useless. (The armor's description may list another way to reduce the rating.)

Reflec

Troubleshooters usually wear overalls made of a special anti-laser armor called *reflec*. It feels like foil-covered denim. Lightweight, flexible, durable, colorful, mostly stainproof—really, reflec is wonderful stuff, aside from its dismally limited ability to protect the wearer.

Reflec is technically E1 armor, but for 'E' read 'L' (laser). Reflec armor protects against laser attacks only, not other energy attacks—not fire, not sonics, not anything else. Lasers. Just lasers.

Worse, reflec is issued in a color of the wearer's security clearance. The reflec protects only against laser bolts colored that clearance and lower. Against higher-clearance laser colors the reflec is useless.

(Yes, we know all about the electromagnetic spectrum and the laws of color addition. If you shoot a real laser of, say, a green wavelength of light at a target that reflects blue light, the target won't reflect the green laser. In the first edition of **PARANOIA** we had a whole complex set of rules for multichroma armor and stuff to try to make our lasers conform to the laws of nature. But then we decided, what the hell? This is how we *want* lasers and reflec armor to work, so this is how they actually *do* work in **PARANOIA**. So there.)

IR market reflec upgrades

The unsettling thinness of reflec, and probably the memory of their previous bodies getting burned down like matchsticks, makes many Troubleshooters eager to improve their armor. There's a big aftermarket for armor upgrades, the illegal IR market.

The Computer has made armor upgrades illegal because they basically don't work. At least, there's no scientific reason why you could deflect laser blasts by smearing glittery ablative ointment over your body.

You, as Gamemaster, need not concern yourself with petty scientific accuracy. Entertainment is all. If a character installs a covert Vibrating Undersuit that jiggles his reflec around to make it more reflective, you may see many possibilities to have fun with this during a battle. Reward this impulse, then, by letting this transparently stupid gimcrack have some occasional protective effect.

Chapter 41, 'Equipment,' lists some of these devices.

Fiat

The best kind of armor in **PARANOIA**, the kind every citizen hungers to get, is *Gamemaster fiat*. This invisible yet ultimate protection neutralizes every conceivable attack. Fiat is manufactured in many forms. Sometimes it's a double-hardened biphasic-graphite-whisker diamond-reinforced stasis field. At other times it induces an aura of incredible, infallible luck—anyone who attacks the protected target suddenly runs out of ammo, slips and falls, faints, dies of a heart attack, gets crushed by a 16-ton weight, etc.

No one knows how to get fiat armor. The only citizens who have it are those important to the story or setting. How, how did they obtain it? What could be their secret?

Armor chart

	Type and protection	Cost (credits)	Clearance	Notes
ArmorAll**	4	2,500	B	hardened; full-figure
Asbestos clothing	E3	100	any	ablative
Battle armor**	6	100,000	I	hardened; full-figure
Combat suit**	5	10,000	B	hardened
Environment suit	—	1,000	G	see note 7; full-figure
Farraday suit	—	5,000	G	see note 8; full-figure
Kevlar	I3	800	O	
GM fiat	Infinite	—	any	only characters important to the storyline
Reflec, legal	E1	500	*	see note 9
illegal	E2	1,000	—	
incredibly illegal	E3	3,000	—	

Note 7: Armor protects against hazardous environments (gas, poison).
Note 8: Protects against radiation and strong magnetic fields.
Note 9: Reflec protects only against laser attacks (not other energy attacks, just lasers) of its color or lower. The reflec's color is its clearance. Illegal IR-market reflec may—may—offer greater protection.

26. ARMOR / 27 DAMAGE

27. Damage and injuries

You can describe a character's current health with one of these conditions: **Okay**, **Snafued**, **Wounded**, **Maimed**, **Down**, **Killed**, **Vaporized**. After each character's name, draw six short lines and label them with the six conditions below Okay: S-W-M-D-K-V. Mark off one blank for each step of damage the character takes—that is, mark the first blank when the character is snafued, the second for a wound, and so on.

The conditions aren't a progression of successive states. If a character is down, that doesn't necessarily mean he's also wounded or maimed. Instead, the conditions are ranked by the character's ability to influence the game. A downed character is only barely more able to affect events than is a killed character. Vaporized characters have hardly any chance to influence the situation, unless maybe a mist of their blood lands in someone's eyes.

Damage conditions

Okay means okay.

Snafued means the target is unhurt but was distracted into making some kind of mistake. Maybe he messed up his aim and missed shooting his own teammate by a hair, or he tripped, or something fell on him. The target can't attack in the next round, because he's busy sorting himself out. He can run, hide, make a phone call or rationally debate various strategies while laser blasts fly around him. He just can't attack. At the end of the next round he's no longer snafued.

Wounded means the target is Snafued in the next round *and also* requires first aid, drugs, or the oh-so-attentive care of an Alpha Complex docbot. The player can't spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of this round or the next round. At the end of the next round the character is no longer snafued but is still wounded.

Maimed means the target is snafued in the next round, *and also* one of his limbs becomes useless or absent. The player can't spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of the scene. The Snafu goes away at the end of the next round, but the maiming stays.

Down means the target is immobile and basically incapacitated. A downed character isn't necessarily wounded or maimed. As with maimed, the player can't spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of the scene. If you allow it, the downed character may still speak and listen groggily, point an accusing finger or weakly pull a trigger. Possibly the downed character's perceptions are distorted so he witnesses events unreliably.

Killed means dead. The player can spend Perversity normally on other players' rolls.

Vaporized means the target permanently and irrevocably Goes Away, reduced to a thick red spray, component body cells or conceivably

subatomic particles. The player can still spend Perversity on others' rolls. Being vaporized is a significant accomplishment generally recognized by a brief but heartfelt round of applause.

Cumulative (or not) damage

Most damage is *not* cumulative. Apply multiple hits to a single target independently. Damage from one attack doesn't increase the damage from another. Count each attack's damage down from Okay, not from the target's current damage level.

For instance, a Wounded character who then receives another Wounded result now has two wounds but is still only wounded.

Exception: If the target is Downed, any attack that does a minimum of Wounded damage can kill the downed target pretty much automatically (no roll required; ignore armor, as long as it's not full-figure). Depending on circumstances, you can also allow a determined attacker to kill the Downed victim with weaker weapons or bare hands, though this is often unhygienic.

Recovering from damage

You decide how long a character takes to heal damage. Here is some guidance:

Snafued characters recover from the Snafu at the end of the next round.

Injuries can sometimes be healed at the end of the current combat. Docbots and medikits provide plastiflesh and repair nanobots that can zip up a flesh wound, no problem. Broken bones are harder, requiring days of bed rest in a medibed as nanobots painstakingly build up layers of bone cells.

Maimed limbs can be regenerated in a week (5,000 credits per limb) or replaced by high-tech mechanical prosthetics in an hour (10,000 credits per limb). No, nothing ever goes wrong with a prosthetic limb, like for instance evil secret society programming that makes the limb lash out wildly at the society's enemies. How could you even think that?

Downed characters revive in a minute or less if aided, or in ten minutes without aid.

Recently **killed** and still attractive characters of Clearance BLUE or above can sometimes be revived with diligent attention from Tech Services. No one bothers below Clearance BLUE, or after about ten minutes, or without sufficient body material to make revival an exciting prospect. Revival of the dead is a less costly and more trouble-free alternative to activating a new clone.

If a **vaporized** character's player wants to recover, laugh brightly and chide him for being a smartass.

Damaging objects

Troubleshooters routinely need, or at least they try, to destroy bots, equipment, doors, walls, delicate Old Reckoning china and other physical objects. Let these objects perish according to the needs of the mission, with attention to dramatic effect rather than to strict results dictated by materials engineering. If you like, you can instead carry out experiments around the house. Try your own home slughthrower on common household objects like vacuum cleaners and TVs. That's what we game designers do.

If that doesn't strike your fancy, take guidance from the suggested rules for damaging characters, but substitute these conditions: **Okay**, **Lightly damaged**, **Impaired**, **Heavily damaged**, **Busted**, **Junked**, **Vaporized**.

Okay still means okay.

Lightly damaged means the object is banged up, scratched, dented or chipped, but basically unharmed. A lightly damaged wall has scuffed paint.

Impaired means the object's function is visibly messed up. An X-ray machine or reactor leaks radiation; a radio squawks. An impaired wall has one or more serious cracks.

Heavily damaged means the object is barely functional. A scrubot weakly squirts a stream of soap; the voice on the phone is barely audible; the confession booth seems to think your name

Hit locations

Does it matter what part of the target's body gets hit? Only if it's entertaining. Roll 1d20, ignore the result and pick a body part. That's what got blown off.

For more rigorous guidance, note the die result and consult this table:

1: Left hand
2: Right hand
3–4: Left arm
5–6: Right arm
7–12: Left leg
13–14: Right leg
15–16: Loins
17–18: Chest
19–20: Eye, teeth, tongue, nostril, earlobe, etc.

If you roll a part that's already been blown off, use the next line down on the table. If that part too has already disappeared, savor the cries of this double amputee as he begs to be out of his misery. Move down the table until some amusing subsection of the target catches your interest, then remove it.



is Amelia Earhart. A heavily damaged wall has a hole big enough to crawl through.

Busted means the object won't work, but it can be repaired within the same scene with a good skill roll. A busted wall has a hole big enough to drive an autocar through.

Junked means destroyed.

Vaporized, again, deserves a brief round of applause, unless the former object was vital experimental equipment entrusted to the Troubleshooters by The Computer. In this case a quick conference is in order to get everyone's story straight before debriefing.

Cumulative damage: Unlike characters, certain delicate objects (for instance, fine china and cellphones) take all damage cumulatively. Each attack reduces their condition by a number of steps equal to the damage it deals. Where a character who is maimed would shrug off a subsequent wound, a phone that has taken heavy damage and then takes light damage becomes busted. Really, the fragility of phones, multicorders, security cameras and GPS locators is amazing, as is the singlemindedness with which Troubleshooters destroy them.

Insanity (optional)

Troubleshooters live daily in circumstances that would drive most people crazy. Maybe your players are already playing their characters as crazy. Sometimes craziness is the only sane strategy.

However, you may find it entertaining to push characters even further into the Wonderful World of Mental Illness. In this case you can ask the player to make an Insanity roll.

Ask the target victim—player to make an Insanity roll whenever you feel like it. As inspiration,

V1V and like that

'What's with the plasma generator doing V1V damage? Its minimum damage is Vaporized, and its maximum damage is Vaporized—do I care about the margin?'

These statistics mean, 'Jeez, this weapon is *really seriously deadly*.' We add the Boost and Maximum statistics partly to make these weapons fit with the others, and partly to guarantee their deadliness even against potent defenses.

Apply the target's defenses normally, reducing the attack's damage below Vaporized. Then use the attack roll's success margin to add extra damage steps. With a Boost of 1, there will probably be lots of extra steps, boosting the damage right back up to Vaporized. The deadliness of the weapon is preserved.

consider Insanity when the character has one or all of these overwhelming experiences:

- ① He discovers everyone is out to get him.
- ② His mutant power backfires.
- ③ He encounters unimaginable, alien, incredible sights, such as a squirrel or rat.
- ④ He faces unbearable stress, such as when struggling futilely to remove a malfunctioning plasma generator backpack while the alarm screams in his ear.
- ⑤ He despairs, such as when the flybot, in response to a request for estimated time of arrival, asks if he wants the period stated in decades or centuries.

To make the Insanity roll, have the player roll 1d20. Take the number rolled and add the scene's current Tension level. If the result is lower than the character's Management (his generic 'behave properly' skill), the character has weathered the storm and remains calm. But if the result is higher than the PC's Management skill, he fails the Insanity roll and goes temporarily nuts.

You can impose any flavor of insanity you like. If you have no preference, use the roll's margin as a guide to the nature of the nuttiness:

0–5—Stunned: The character can't do anything but gibber incoherently for one round.

6–10—Anxiety attack: Temporarily overwhelmed, the character ducks responsibility and looks to others to solve his problems; for several minutes, allow all players to spend Perversity points on whatever rolls the poor devil makes.

11–15—Mental disorder: The character becomes convinced everyone is an enemy, interprets others' behavior as a desire to destroy him, and refuses responsibility for his own failures, blaming them on everyone around him. He's indistinguishable from normal, basically.

16+—Whacko: Berserk. Bonkers. Both oars out of the water. Elevator doesn't go to the top floor. Ding dong, nobody home. The character is completely nuts. Let the player improvise.

Mutant wack: As described in the section 'Mutant powers', a power that backfires may produce temporary psychosis—'mutant wack.' The backfiring mutant may experience one of the Insanity table psychoses, or you may impose the characteristic insanity listed in the power description.

Recovering from insanity

Stunned: The character recovers in one round.

Anxiety attack: The character recovers a few minutes after current danger abates.

Mental disorder, Whacko: This lasts to the end of the mission. Then the character requires lots of drugs and therapy. Thanks to The Computer's enlightened ideas of mental health, by the next mission the character is completely recovered.

Completely. No, really.

Okay, maybe he has a nervous tic in his eye, or whistles scarily when he's nervous, or gets easily startled by any mention of squirrels or rats. Devise a new tic the player will enjoy playing, because he'll be doing it for as long as the character lives.

Insanity warning!

Don't use these Insanity rules often. They're stacked to drive characters way off the deep end. Players are usually happy to have their characters act crazy without prompting, but requiring them to do it can take the fun out of it. Use it, but don't abuse it.

Clone replacement

The MemoMax Constant Realtime Update Program (CRUP) system records every Troubleshooter's memories and perceptions in realtime and stores them. Technical Services supervises the stored memories in gigantic data warehouses jammed floor-to-ceiling with eerily quiet data storage racks.

MemoMax circuitry installed in each citizen's brain—including that of the Prime, the original person—has what is appropriately called a 'dead-man switch'. When a Troubleshooter dies during a mission and his brain ceases functioning, the MemoMax circuits automatically alert The Computer. The Computer activates the character's next clone backup, which floats comatose in the Tech Services forced-growth clone tanks. Reasonably skilled Tech Services biotechnicians, popularly called 'rebooters,' read into the new brain the MemoMax 'braintape' recording of the previous body's memories. The new body emerges looking the same and has all the memories, skills, attributes and physical abilities of the old. The formerly-dead citizen experiences only a brief disorientation, then is ready to resume duty.

Don't think about it

If you know anything at all about biology, you are now probably wondering whether the previous paragraph was, in fact, the most ridiculous thing you've ever read. Wait, it gets moreso!

DAMAGE & INJURIES

The replacement clone not only has the same physical abilities, but The Computer generously allot this new citizen his predecessor's exact inventory of equipment, sometimes even rare experimental equipment. The intent is to make the new clone identical in all respects to the precursor.

Previous editions of *PARANOIA* offered a transparently bogus rationale for why all clones are identical in all features. In fact, the section was titled 'Why Clones Are Identical in All Features: The Transparently Bogus Rationale.' (If you think we're making that up, you haven't grokked *PARANOIA* yet.)

In fact, GMs and players seem content to accept the clone setup for what it is: a brute-force fix to let players keep playing *PARANOIA* missions despite the game's extreme lethality. Get killed? So what?

Like the *Star Trek* transporter, it's a story device. Nobody wonders about the cloning system in Alpha Complex, for the same reason nobody wonders how Wile E. Coyote can get hit with an anvil and bounce back in the cartoon's next scene.

That's why, among all the experimental equipment blowing up and the infrastructure breaking down across Alpha Complex, the cloning system just works. If it didn't just work, players would have to create new characters many times in a play session, and that gets old fast.

Genetic drift

The cloning system doesn't just work if the player has been running through clones at a great rate. You can use genetic drift to discourage players from frivolously squandering their backups.

Genetic errors can creep into the PC's Tech Services backup template, the way a multi-generation photocopy (that is, a copy of a copy of a copy) gets blurrier than the original. The original in this case is the Prime character, and after about five or six generations of copying, he gets pretty blurry.

Nothing untoward happens to the first five clones after the Prime (that is, numbers 2 through 6). Starting with #7, each new clone acquires one additional visible tic, of the sort the player chose during character creation. These tics are cumulative, meaning #8 has the same new tic as #7 and also a new one, and #9 has both of those plus one more.

At clone #13, no more tics. The player has probably lost track of them all by now. Instead, the new backup arrives already burdened with an automatic Maimed combat result—a gimp leg, a shaking arm. These maimings, like the tics, accumulate in successive clones. The higher the clone number, the more severe the new maiming.

If this poor beast is still remotely functional, at clone #19 you can start adding permanent Insanity results, of the kind seen in the Insanity

table. Now the player is probably willing to look into getting his template retuned. If he isn't, the other players by now are probably willing to take up a collection for him.

Retuning genetic drift

The Player section says a Troubleshooter can get his clone template cleaned up, restored to Prime-like newness, for a mere 10,000 credits. Heh, heh. 'It may have been 10,000 credits when you started as a Troubleshooter, citizen, but we have expenses here in Tech Services. Expenses. Per The Computer's instructions, we pass the overhead on to you.'

The cost of retuning is actually a sliding scale. It slides according to the anxiety you want to inflict on the player. Retuning should basically bankrupt the citizen's current assets and push him a little into debt—not to the dreaded 10x monthly salary that means erasure, but within viewing distance.

Buying new clones in Straight games

In Straight games your main way to increase cash-flow tension might turn out to be the purchase of new clones. Some players—certainly not all, but some—will pay steep prices to keep from having to create another character.

Owing to the astronomically high fatality rate among Troubleshooters, The Computer orders them to buy new clones in six-packs. The first six-pack (Prime and backups #2–6) is free. For each six-pack after the first, the cost should go up. The clone replacement cost table on this page gives tentative suggestions. We've tried for months to make this stupid table work, but we never got it quite right. In some games our suggested figures turn out waaay too cheap; in others, they're wildly overpriced.

Perhaps you can succeed where we failed. Perhaps you can set the price of each six-pack just high enough to give the players anxiety, regardless of their current cash flow. You'd have to adjust the prices on the fly, in immediate response to the Troubleshooters' current fiscal situation. What's more, you'd have to blandly offer the players some preposterous and arbitrary post-hoc rationale for the rapidly changing cost, dare them to question your reasons and punish them mercilessly if they do.

Do you think you're up to it?

Introducing a backup

Get the newly activated clone backup body (and his player) to the action as soon as possible. A player with a dead character is just a spectator, which is nowhere near as much fun as playing. A waiting player can still spend

Clone replacement costs

[Straight games only]

6-pk	Clone #s	Cost	Cost/clone
1	Prime + 2–6	2,000	400
2	7–12	6,000	1,000
3	13–18	15,000	2,500
4	19–24	30,000	5,000
5	25–30	60,000	10,000

Perversity points to influence other players' rolls, if you let him, but remember: He showed up to play, not to watch.

Owing to priority transport assignments, the backup clone can usually don his reflec overalls, grab his supplies, jump on a truckbot and arrive panting to join his teammates in the next scene.

Now, if the mission takes place Outdoors, or beneath the ocean, or on a shuttle for Mars, delivery may take longer. Conceivably these farflung Troubleshooters got assigned their own Porta-Tank clone grower, but that may be a stretch. Even if the survivors have to sit on their hands for a few hours or days, you may still want to halt the action until the backup makes the scene. The Computer can always order the team to take no further action until further notice. The Computer won't let a mission fail just because the group is understaffed.

Mission Group Beta Niner: Regrets in re tragic messy death of Bob-O. Clone backup in transit. Stand by until backup arrival. While standing around, why not clean up mess?

For a lot of really keen methods for introducing new backups into the mission, see the boxed sidebar on the next page. Somewhere on this massive list you'll find an appropriate way to keep things moving.

On the other hand, don't introduce the backup until it suits your fancy. Perhaps the team should struggle along understrength for a while. Perhaps the currently-dead player should observe a decent period of mourning for the deceased character. Be unpredictable, even capricious. Never let the players know what to expect.

Perhaps the backup got mistakenly routed to the food vats. Perhaps someone sabotaged communications back at headquarters. Or maybe the flybot delivering the backup broke its GPS unit and is now diligently educating the clone in dental hygiene as it streaks across the tundra toward the North Pole.

You never can tell.

Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.

—Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*



Back in the saddle again!

Getting a clone backup back into the mission with style, grace and perversity

Though the conceit of clones allows play to continue promptly even after widespread death and destruction, there remains the problem of, if you will, clone insertion. That is to say, fine, Tech Services spits out another clone, but how does the clone get from the forced-growth tanks to the party?

In reality, this would take some time, right? I mean, even hopping in the car and going down to the 7-11 takes at least a quarter hour. And if you're feeling particularly annoyed at the recently-deceased player, you can certainly make him sit out of the game for a while before announcing that his clone walks up, hands in his jumpsuit pockets and whistling.

But most of the time, well, nobody likes having to sit around picking his nose or munching corn chips morosely while other people are having a good time. So here are a bunch of cheesy ideas for getting the clone backup promptly to the party and back into the action.

Emergency transtube

The transtubes run throughout Alpha Complex (well, at least in sectors in reasonably good repair). Think of a subway system with individual cars that seat a dozen or so that can be dispatched to arbitrary destinations. Though even REDs can use the transtube system, this usually means sitting around for long periods of time while the doors open at every local stop. For high priority missions, however, The Computer orders a single-person capsule, rerouting everyone else, or shunting them onto sidings, while the replacement clone roars through the tubes to the transtube station nearest the PCs.

Pneumatic tube delivery

The Computer instructs the PCs to go to a nearby booth to await clone insertion. With a hiss of air and a 'chunk,' a capsule slams into the booth from an overhead tube, and the door opens. The clone staggers out, disoriented and quite queasy.

The Sewer Emergence Table

That's an actual table in *Advanced Squad Leader*, God help the ginks who

play it. We don't actually have one, of course, but—the PCs are standing around waiting for the new clone when a nearby manhole cover slides aside, a BLUE environment-suited tech wearing a gas mask pokes his head out, looks around, and says 'There you go, buddy,' then disappears, to be replaced by the new clone, looking quite nauseated and smelling a bit, climbing up the ladder from the manhole.

One clone, hold the anchovies

An ORANGE-Clearance delivery man from Domin-O's, a PLC service firm, zooms up on a jet-propelled forklift. On the fork is the new clone, encased in—umm—well, we imagine *carbonite* is a Registered Trademark of Lucasfilm, Ltd., so—uh—*alphamite*, that's the ticket!—a hard plastic-like substance tinted the clone's security clearance color.

The technician is chewing on a toothpick, produces a clipboard and insists that the team leader must sign, acknowledging 'safe receipt' of the clone before he'll lower the fork lift, back away, and use a laser cutter to remove the carboni—um, alphamite.

Is the clone actually safely received? Up to you, of course, but probably, unless the player has been annoying you recently. Doesn't really matter; either way, the team leader has already signed and is solely responsible. The clone emerges, weak as a kitten for a few minutes until the effects wear off—he can crawl around on hands and knees after the other PCs until he feels stronger.

(Yes, Domin-O's usually delivers pizza, but they also have the best delivery system in the Complex, and has won the most recent contract for clone delivery as well.)

ICBCIM (Inter-Continental Ballistic Clone Insertion Missile)

Particularly useful in missions to the Outdoors, this can get a clone anywhere on the planet within 90 minutes—but given that most missions to the Outdoors are likely to be within a few hundred miles of Alpha Complex, we're probably talking a couple of minutes at most. A fiery lance appears overhead

with a sonic boom, there's an explosion as the clone capsule separates, and it drifts gently down toward the PCs at the end of a parachute. Or maybe it drifts over in the direction of a swamp a couple of miles off. Or maybe the chute fails to open and the PCs have to scatter as the capsule slams into the earth nearby, excavating a sizable crater and turning the clone inside into a sort of jelly.

Thaw out another backup, Jacko(bot)

For an extended mission into faraway abandoned sectors, The Computer, in its wisdom, may decide to send the PCs out with their own backups, in case of accidental loss or erasure. They're stacked in coldsleep pods in the back of the crawler or copter or whatever, and when you need a new clone, you just go back and thaw one out. Thawing is something like microwaving, and happens pretty quickly, although the clone shivers uncontrollably for several minutes afterwards. The process is foolproof and completely safe for everyone. Clones never suffer brain damage, equipment malfunction or nerve injury that causes intermittent shooting pains in their trigger fingers at inconvenient moments. Well, hardly ever.

Just find me some meat

Information is, of course, much easier to transmit than matter. At times, perhaps the PCs are assigned an experimental Mempression bot. Just take, say, a Commie mutant traitor, cram him into the convenient compartment and close the lid. The Membot erases the traitor's wetware, and downloads the PC's last recorded personality into the traitor. Open the lid and—well, it's not exactly a clone, but it has the memories and skills of the recently-dead PC.

The erasure process is well understood and easily implemented, and there are hardly ever problems with multiple personalities in the same body, or Commie mutant traitors driving the new personality out and turning against the PCs.

Of course, you may not always be able to find a Commie mutant traitor at the right moment, and It Would Be Wrong just

to grab a hapless nearby INFRARED and cram him into the bot. At least, without first manufacturing, we mean, uncovering evidence of the INFRARED's dire treason against The Computer and everything we hold dear.

And in the Outdoors, perhaps all you can find is a squirrel or bunny rabbit. Or a giant radioactive mutant cockroach. (Well, not too giant—it has to fit into the Membot's compartment.)

And—if you *really* can't find any meat, maybe you can skip the erasure step, and just download the dead PC into the brain of one of the still-living Troubleshooters. They can share the body for a while, at least until you do capture a Commie mutant traitor somewhere. Or maybe for a long time. In fact, we kind of like the idea of ultimately having the entire party sharing a single clone body, bickering about what to do next, with the contradictory instructions of each of his personalities making the body twitch in St. Vitus's dance.

■ Freeze-dried clone

The human body is 90% water, right? And you know those sponges that are flat as a board when you get them, but expand to be a normal sponge when you stick them under the faucet? Or those little plastic toy animals that grow to ten times their normal size when you leave them in a cup of water overnight? Well, this is like that. Just take one of the freeze-dried clones, add water, stick the Mempression helmet on to download memories and personality, and Bob-B's your uncle.

So—uh, how could such an absurd technology possibly work? What's your security clearance again? But anyway, just wave your hands and say 'nano' a lot. Busy little nanobots, always a good spurious justification for anything.

■ Let 10^4 clone delivery systems blossom

Make up your own. We don't care. In fact, we encourage it.

For a while, you may find it fun to turn clone insertion into a running gag, using a new system with every death. After a while, that will get boring, and you may just want to stick with one. (And how does that Domin-O guy manage to zoom through the middle of a firefight, completely unscathed, to deliver the new clone? Who knows? But they're always on time, or your clone is free.) Except, perhaps, when the particular constraints of a mission (We're going to Mars!) makes the normal method difficult, and you invent some fiendish new experimental way.

28. Debriefings

Troubleshooters always find the debriefing at the end of a mission compellingly interesting. There's just something about the sense of closure there, the uncovering of unsuspected evidence, not to mention the prominent threat of termination and erasure.

In a debriefing the mission official ideally shows each Troubleshooter to an individual confession booth, where The Computer interrogates the character on issues of importance. Then the PCs all gather in the debriefing room for the official's communal recitation—from behind laserproof glass—of the Troubleshooters' heroic accomplishments and well-deserved commendations. Promote each survivor one rank in security clearance, grant bennies as the mood strikes you and award each character a credit bonus equal to one month's salary at their new clearance. Award each player a hefty ration of Perversity points.

Then proceed to the official's recitation—incidentally, the glass is also bombproof and gasproof—of the Troubleshooters' collective offenses, and mutual accusations and recriminations. Roll treason damage for each PC's offenses, letting all players spend Perversity copiously. Demote proven traitors and dock them credits equal to at least a month's salary (at their *higher* clearance). In **Straight** games, foster intra-team rivalries and ongoing subplots; in **Classic** games, plan for a firefight; in **Zap** games, nobody ever survives to debriefing.

Understanding mission bennies

When preparing a mission, either The Computer, a service firm or some faceless bureaucrat assigns importance to stated objectives based on inscrutable and probably arbitrary criteria. Players don't learn the importance of each objective until after the mission, if then. Published **PARANOIA**

scenarios may include specific objectives with relative importance assigned by Famous Game Designers according to the highest-quality inscrutable and arbitrary criteria.

At debriefing, you can have the mission auditor 'score' the Troubleshooter group and assigns bennies based on the importance of accomplished objectives. It is tempting to amuse yourself by just scolding the Troubleshooters in every mission debriefing, then shuttling them off to the termination center. This is short-term thinking. To get the players totally off-balance





and suspicious, reward them—some of them—maybe even the Troubleshooters who screwed up worst.

How can you justify this? In awarding bennies, consider two subjects: *What Actually Happened* and *What The Computer Thinks Happened*. These are often strikingly different.

- ④ The Computer often interprets simple accidents as sabotage, incompetence as treason.

④ Conversely, nakedly treasonous stuff may fit The Computer's conception of clever entrapment.

④ Who knows? Perhaps a particular High Programmer has just introduced a new subroutine to dispose of some hot stolen merchandise by pawning it off as 'equipment rewards' to the first pawns who happen along. If that means substituting 'Equipment Reward' for 'Termination and Repatterning', The

Computer has been (re)programmed to think this perfectly logical. Do you think the briefing officer will argue?

During your first couple of debriefings, let The Computer or its human servants hint just enough about these divergences to let your players realize why the guilty are being rewarded and the innocent punished. Let them develop a feeling of uneasy understanding. By their second or third mission, you can really start messing with their minds.

29. Meritorious conduct

Reward chart

This is close to an exhaustive list. It includes several entries an Alpha Complex citizen would not actually see; we leave identification of these lines as an exercise for the reader.

A given act may qualify for more than one reward. Use the lowest. That'll show 'em.

KEY

% = a percentage of the character's current monthly salary; cr = credits
 = This number equals the difference in security clearance ranks. For instance, a RED citizen who risks his life to save a GREEN citizen earns $(3 \times 5\%) =$ a 15% bonus.

Acts deserving rewards

A. Being extremely happy: 10cr
 B. Doing a small favor spontaneously for a higher-clearance citizen: 10cr
 B/1. A large favor involving non-trivial effort: 30cr

 B/2.A really large favor that takes most of a day, if not longer: 70cr
 C. Unctuous flattery: 10cr
 D. Completing a mission successfully: promotion and 100% bonus
 E. Completing a service service and filing a report: 100cr
 F. Risking your life to serve or rescue a citizen of your clearance: 500cr

 F/1. A higher-clearance citizen: $\boxtimes 5\%$
 F/2. To serve The Computer: 50%

G. Terminating a traitor of your clearance or lower with sufficient evidence: 50%
 G/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 25%

H. Turning over a traitor of your clearance or lower to Internal Security: 25%
 H/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 10%

The Computer recognizes good performance with credit bonuses and other rewards. Your players will be most interested in the credits. For each mission the Troubleshooters successfully complete, The Computer awards to each participating Troubleshooter a *completion bonus* of credits equal to one month's salary. A RED Clearance Troubleshooter (monthly salary 1,000 credits) who successfully completes a mission would receive a bonus of 1,000 credits; an ORANGE Clearance Troubleshooter on the same successful mission earns a 2,000 credit bonus.

'Successful completion' means the Troubleshooters largely met the specified mission objectives. The mission officials assess success in binary fashion, yes-or-no, independent of concerns such as collateral damage, mass fatalities, etc. Did the Troubleshooters scrape the Commies out of their stronghold? Yes? Good. That counts as success, even if the team did accidentally spread toxic bioagents throughout the sector.

On receiving the verdict of mission success, The Computer pays each completion bonus directly to the Troubleshooter's current account, bypassing intermediaries. Often, though, the verdict of success depends on these intermediaries—specifically, the mission briefing officials. If these high-clearance bureaucrats meet privately with the Troubleshooters and, in return for declaring the mission a success, demand a kickback of, say, half the PCs' bonus—or three quarters—or 90%—will the lowly PCs have leverage to argue? Especially when the prospect of mission failure implies demotion, fines and possible reassignment to the Waste Recycling Subdivision?

amounts, but to lend some flavor and surprise to the proceedings, you can instead issue rewards in a variety of forms: credits, Official Commendations, tickets and vouchers or even that illustrious honor, the Hero of Our Complex (HOOC) award.

Official commendations

The Computer recognizes minor services—say, repairing a broken bot or shining an INDIGO's boots—with Official Commendations. 'Citizen! Well done! Your service to The Computer is rewarded. I have entered an Official Commendation in your personal file as a permanent record of your meritorious service. My heartiest congratulations!'

If you are so inclined, you can use each Official Commendation a player has received during a mission to reduce the severity of treason damage he suffers at the end of the mission (see Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction'). If you don't like that idea, the Official Commendation has about as much practical use as the Testimonial the Wizard of Oz gives the Cowardly Lion.

Tickets and vouchers

The Computer uses vidshow audience tickets, minor gadgets and real food as rewards for slightly more impressive service—say, capturing a minor corrupt official or improving efficiency in a single warehouse. The lucky citizen may get a seat at *My Dream Bot or That Show Trial Show*, or a shiny new customized hand laser (with 'a few improvements by Research & Design'), or a salad of vegetables from the hydroponic gardens, in colors appropriate to his security clearance.

Use these trivial perks as a way of placing a Troubleshooter where you want him to be. Maybe his secret society contact passes him an urgent message in the vidshow audience, or you need the PC to witness a meeting of mutants in the hydroponic garden.

Note: It would be highly unorthodox for The Computer ever to grant permission for a citizen to enter a higher-clearance area.

Other signs of favor

In addition to paying a completion bonus to all Troubleshooters, The Computer may also recognize individual accomplishments, particularly those listed in the Reward Chart at left. Rewards in the chart are listed as credit

29. REWARDS / 30. PUNISHMENT

Commendation is fine, but let's not get crazy here. If you ever decide to have your RED Troubleshooters escorted into (say) a BLUE area, make sure they understand this is a momentous and scary event.

Medication

The Computer is convinced medication is the best way to manipulate the moods of its citizens. Every citizen is used to Wakey-Wakey pills in the morning and Sleepy-Bye pills at night.

If a citizen's actions make The Computer happy, The Computer might be motivated to make the citizen happy. *Much* happier than he already is. So happy he can hardly stand it—or stand up—or recognize a threat. 'Like, waaow, man. You pulled a laser on me. Fannntastic!'

HOOC awards

The Computer has assigned HPD&MC to publicly recognize and promote noteworthy service, such as rooting out traitors or greatly improving efficiency throughout a sector. The Heroes of Our Complex (HOOC) program makes individual citizens famous for fifteen minutes (or more) throughout Alpha Complex. The honored citizen gets his face doctored by

Dear Mrs., Mr., Miss or Mr. And Mrs. Daneeka: Words cannot express the deep personal grief I experienced when your husband, son, father or brother was killed, wounded or reported missing in action.

—**Joseph Heller,
*Catch-22 (1962)***

HPD&MC's digital manipulation artists to look noble and selfless. This image is then printed on food wrappers and shown on vidshows. The Computer interrupts the Teela-O-MLY show at the most suspenseful point to laud the new hero.

—Who then becomes an instant target for every Death Leopard and PURGE secret society member in the Complex. You may also prompt the HOOC's companions (or their surviving clone backups) to feel just the teensiest bit jealous.

30. Treason and correction

Being paranoid, The Computer is obsessively and urgently concerned with detecting and eradicating treason. It treats every accusation of treason with the gravest seriousness. Citizens who hope to advance under its gentle tutelage treat treason with equal gravity, or must appear to do so.

At mission debriefings, in confession booths, and possibly (given eager or impatient Troubleshooters) even during firefights or bathroom breaks, a PC may address The Computer, a mission briefing officer or a citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher to accuse a target of treason.

If the accusation would slow down the storyline, or if you don't want to mess with it at the moment, The Computer or the citizen postpones hearing the accusation. However, the charge should certainly resurface at a more convenient time.

If and when you let the accusation go forward, judge it on its merits. Under what circumstances does an accusation of treason stick, and what is the punishment? The answer is: **whenever and whatever you, the Gamemaster (who are always right), decide**. But if you decide you don't want to bother to decide, or it looks messy and complicated, you can use the same Universal Hostility Formula you use to determine combat results. See the chart on the next page.

(We thought about inventing a whole different rules system for treason. But really, whether combat or debriefings, the result is usually the same: Someone gets hurt. Also, we were on deadline.)

Basic treason concepts

Accusation: An accusation is an attack that uses Management skill instead of Violence skill.

Correction: A successful accusation deals steps of treason damage in the same way attacks deal steps of physical damage. This damage is called *correction*, because The Computer is correcting the errant traitor and putting him back on the proper path—which may lead directly to the termination center. One step of correction reduces the character's current treason condition by one treason step. The correction's severity depends on the accusation's offenses.

Offenses: The specific charges made in the accusation. Offenses work in an accusation the way a weapon works in an attack—the more severe the offenses, the more 'treason damage' they may do. Offenses may have *Area effect* or *Spray* abilities like weapons, meaning an accusation based on these offenses can affect multiple targets.

Treason conditions: A character has seven treason conditions (**Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination, Erasure**), each equivalent in severity to one of the physical damage conditions (**Okay, Snafued, Wounded, etc.**). The treason conditions measure the character's ability to regain The Computer's trust, in the same way damage conditions measure his ability to influence a battle.

Treason damage: An offense's damage is listed as a *treason code* in Minimum-Boost-Maximum format, like weapons. In this format the seven treason conditions are abbreviated by their first letters: O, P, C, M, B, T, E. The Minimum is the suggested treason condition to which the offense would set a target with an Access rating of 0. The Boost number works like weapon Boost numbers—the lower the number, the more powerful and serious the offense. An offense can't set the target's treason condition beyond the offense's listed Maximum, unless you say otherwise.

Treason armor: A character's current Access rating functions as his 'treason armor'. As physical armor reduces default weapon damage before the Boost is applied, Access reduces default treason damage by a number of steps equal to the Access rating. Only after the reduction does The Computer impose correction, based on the reduced treason damage.



Offenses

An accusation's initial credibility is based on the accuser's Management skill, as an attack's success is based initially on his Violence skill. (If The Computer is making the accusation, it automatically succeeds.) The accusation's treason damage depends on the specific offenses charged, as an attack's damage

depends on the weapon. (If The Computer itself leveled the accusation, consider rolling against the arbitrary number 11 to figure any Boost to the minimum treason damage. Or, if you don't like 11, use a nicer number of your own choosing.)

One offense or many: If you want to build suspense, treat each charge the accuser makes as a separate accusation. If you

instead wish to move the game faster, collect all offenses charged against a given target in a single accusation, selecting the single most severe Minimum and Maximum damage levels and the lowest Boost number from among these offenses.

Universal Hostility Formula (*treason*)

1. Accuse!

■ 1. Accuse!

An accusing character rolls against his Management skill (no specializations allowed). You may allow Perversity spending in any of the usual ways, choosing a way according to your dramatic needs. In Straight games, you add the number of the target citizen's current clone to the roll (making success more difficult).

When more than one character is accusing, figure everyone's result separately, then apply all accusation effects simultaneously.

2. CREDIBLE?

■ 2. Credible or not?

If the accusation roll succeeds, The Computer or high-clearance citizen regards the charges as initially credible, and the target may suffer correction.

Backfires: If the accusation roll missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the accusation may backfire. The Computer questions the accuser's judgment and motives, analyzes his record of loyalty, demeanor and hygiene, and assesses penalties it deems appropriate. For guidance, continue with this Formula, but the former accuser now becomes the target.

If a backfire does not suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.

3. MULTIPLE TARGETS?

■ 3. Multiple targets?

Can the offenses plausibly indict more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the type of offense and the attack roll's margin. See the Area effect and Spray descriptions under 'Special offenses' below.

4. DEFAULT CORRECTION

■ 4. Default correction

A successful accusation prompts the correction you want it to prompt. Severity levels of correction are described in the section 'Corrections'. The offenses in the Gamemaster version of the Treason and Insubordination charts suggest corrections in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format, just as weapon lists suggest damage levels. Take guidance from these suggestions or ignore them as you prefer. Arbitrariness is your right. Given the Alpha Complex legal system, arbitrariness is practically required.

If you take an offense's suggested correction, you can adjust its severity based on the accusation roll margin and the offense's Boost increment, as you would adjust a weapon attack.

Your chosen play style affects the severity of the correction. In Zap games almost every treasonous offense prompts termination. In Straight and Classic games you may wish to keep PCs alive a while longer. The charts suggest different correction levels for Straight and Classic styles. We planned to list Zap correction levels, but typing 'Termination' over and over just wore us down, you know?

5. DEFENSE

■ 5. Defense

In Classic and Straight games, reduce the severity of the default correction by a number of steps equal to the target's Access attribute—his 'treason armor.' In Zap games there is no defense and hence no reduction. For more, see the section 'Defense'.

6. BOOST

■ 6. Boost

If the accusation roll succeeded by a margin greater than the offense's Boost increment, divide the margin by the Boost. Take the result and increase the correction by that number of steps. If you don't like division, there's a handy Boost chart in the Charts & Tables section at the end of this rulebook.

7. ACTUAL CORRECTION

■ 7. Actual correction

You now have the actual result of the accusation. The Computer or the citizen metes out correction at once, on the spot. If the accusation's correction is reduced below 1 step, the accusation has no effect—maybe the target gets annoyed, but the accusation doesn't affect his status.

A corrected target who lacks self-control may become extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval and possibly even further correction.

Accusation example

Troubleshooter Jan-R-EEE-1 (Management 10) accuses INFRARED Mark-TOR-1 (Access 1) of three offenses. Listed in the Minimum-Boost-Maximum format of the weapons table, the offenses are insubordinate behavior (O6C), destroying lots of Computer property (P4T) and suspicion of possessing a stolen ME Card (P1B). You, the GM, feel like moving the game along, so you select the most severe level (P) of the Minima O, P and P; the smallest (1) of the Boost numbers 6, 4 and 1; and the most severe level (T) of the Maxima C, T and B. You combine these to get the accusation's offense damage, P1T.

Jan-R's player rolls 7. The margin of 3, divided by the offense's Boost number of 1, means the Minimum damage is increased by three steps from Probation to Brainscrub. The INFRARED's Access reduces this damage by 1 step to Medication. The Computer puts Mark-TOR on a therapeutic program of

neftusarin, a stimulating happiness drug hardly ever implicated in Sudden INFRARED Death Syndrome.

Special offenses

Alpha Complex justice recognizes the well established principle of guilt by association. The idea shows forth most dramatically in two kinds of offenses.

Spray offenses: Like weapons that can deal spray damage to more than one target in a single attack, certain offenses can 'spray' treason damage not only to the traitor but to his known associates. For player characters this is the PC's fellow Troubleshooters, excluding the accuser. Associates of NPCs include service firm workers, roommates in shared living quarters, known mess hall dining partners and even bots.

The accusation roll's margin suggests how comprehensive the dragnet will be.

④ 0: No extra targets.

④ 1-5: Fellow Troubleshooters, excluding the accuser; known secret society associates.

④ 6-10: Fellow service firm workers, roommates in shared living quarters, personal bots.

④ 11-15: Known mess hall dining partners, fellow members of the Teela-O-MLY Fan Club, the usual suspects, etc.

④ 16+: Might as well haul in the whole subsector....

Area effect offenses: Like area effect weapons, extremely serious charges can affect everyone in the traitor's vicinity at the time he committed the offense, including innocent bystanders. The Computer assumes the traitor has compromised everyone around him—or,

Sample Perversity Modifiers (*treason*)

Use these examples to spur your own creativity. Invent your own modifiers on the fly, using these as guidelines. If you're feeling brave, you can even allow the player(s) to describe the circumstances accounting for each modifier. Your mantra should be "Roleplay it out"—the dramatic circumstances (incontrovertible evidence, dramatic testimony, etc.) should override mere numbers.

Modifier	Accuser	The Computer	The target	The environment
+1	The accuser has been especially good about completing all relevant forms, thereby pleasing The Computer.	The Computer's analysis of the accuser's voice patterns indicates he's telling the truth.	Target unwittingly uses a phrase currently identified as a secret society code phrase.	R&D is testing a new and improved truth serum during today's proceedings. Guess who's going to be testing it?
+5	Accuser draws clever comparison between target and an infamous Old Reckoning villain; found compromising images of the accused on a Gray Subnet (covert filesharing network full of blackmail stuff).	The accuser's arguments are sadly lacking. The Computer offers constructive suggestions to improve them.	Target signs wrong form, accidentally confesses to purloining a supply of Bouncy Bubble Beverage.	A forbidden area infiltrated by the target was recently treated with an experimental Air Freshening Biological Agent. A simple test of the target's jumpsuit determines he spent time in that area.
+10	Accuser fits HPD&MC's new ideal 'Troubleshooter look', designated to appear as guest on <i>Bake That Traitor!</i>	Today's proceedings are being recorded for an episode of <i>Traitor Justice Files</i> . The Computer intends to make an example of the target.	While making a dramatic point, target pulls a hand out of his jumpsuit pocket. Not his own hand—a hand.	A roving scrubot, cleaning the supply closet next door, triggers a hidden cache of weapons; explosion rattles target into confessing.
-1	Accuser's jumpsuit is slightly soiled or otherwise unhygienic.	Due to time constraints, The Computer permits the accuser only 11 seconds to make his case.	Target is a close co-worker of current 'Hero of Our Complex' award winner.	Briefing officer happens to be a member of the target's secret society.
-5	While accusing, accuser develops hiccups. The Computer considers this illicit Twitchtalk and invalidates the testimony.	The Computer determines recordings of the target have been obviously doctored and throws out the evidence.	Target draws clever comparison between accuser and an infamous Communist traitor currently being sought.	The video of the treason suspect is played back, but it's been taped over with Teela-O-MLY's latest episode.
-10	Accuser picks up the murder weapon and accidentally shoots critical evidence, destroying it; accuser insists there's no chance of mistake, given his mutant power, then belatedly realizes he never registered said power.	The Computer points out the utterly treasonous act isn't technically treason. (Example: Tech Services mandate 1493/56D states a scrubot may be destroyed without penalty if it operates in the lowest 1% efficiency percentile of all scrubots active in that sector.)	Target claims to have been active in another sector during the treason, and The Computer's logs confirm this. (The citizen who faked the logs may contact the target, asking a favor in return.)	R&D's prototype mind-scan helmet generates an EMP shockwave, wiping all record of intent to prosecute; a high-clearance bystander to the events in question arrives and swears the target isn't guilty (the citizen may possibly wish a favor in return...).



just as bad, bystanders have accidentally witnessed something far above their clearance. Offenses of this kind include spreading Communist propaganda and witnessing high-clearance citizens do something illegal.

The area of effect embraces all witnesses to the offense. Physically this usually means the room in which the traitor committed the offense, but the area of effect also covers those viewing the incident through surveillance devices. At the time the target did his unpatriotic deed, did you note whether the roll was under the scene's current Tension level? No? No problem. You can pick a Tension level now, roll 1d20 and determine whether you need to haul in any online witnesses. This can be amusing if the accusation starts hauling in high-clearance citizens, say, or the accuser's fellow secret society members. 'Hey, buddy, watch where you're pointing that accusation!'

Each target in the area of effect defends separately against the accusation, just as with area effect weapons.

Correction

As described above, The Computer's gentle 'correction' (punishment) for treason offenses works like damage dealt in the combat system. A character's seven treason conditions correspond to his seven physical damage conditions.

Okay = Okay
Probation = Snaufed
Censure = Wounded
Medication = Maimed
Brainscrub = Down
Termination = Killed
Erasure = Vaporized

The treason conditions are described in Chapter 19, 'Player conditioning devices'.

How to give correction

The Universal Hostility Formula provides guidance in deciding how The Computer

imposes correction. Remember, though, **accusations always deal the treason damage you think is appropriate**. For Zap games, termination is always the standard penalty. In the utterly binary Alpha Complex judicial system, every serious crime receives the death penalty. In Straight games, you may well want to keep the Troubleshooters alive a while to build tension. Classic games could go either way as you prefer.

Cumulative correction

Like physical damage to characters, treason damage is non-cumulative. Figure each correction's damage as if the offender were undamaged.

For example, a character already sentenced to medication who then suffers a two-step correction isn't terminated (two steps down from Medication), but instead is censured (two steps down from Okay).

Recovery from correction

Though The Computer keeps records of all offenses forever and ever, it does acknowledge a corrected citizen's ability to reform. Therefore, after a citizen has been corrected for a given offense, future accusations cannot invoke that same offense. Usually. Of course, if some malign secret society hacker has altered the records so it appears the citizen evaded correction, well, that's clearly not The Computer's fault, now is it? Power brownouts can delete such records as well, but that's entirely to be expected. Really, all these rumors about 'double jeopardy,' 'triple jeopardy' and occasionally 'septuple jeopardy' fail to recognize the practicalities of the situation.

The Alpha Complex legal system, if that's the phrase we want, doesn't try to establish justice, but instead attempts to correct treasonous impulses and restore Alpha Complex to optimal order. A correction lasts not for a fixed time keyed to the offense, but rather expires when the citizen satisfies The Computer he has learned the error of his ways. Central Processing directives based on endless studies report the following satisfaction conditions

to be suitable in 47% (Sector-based Median Corrected) of all cases:

Probation: The errant citizen successfully accuses another erring citizen of an offense similar to, yet more severe than, his own.

Censure: The censoree demonstrates ardent willingness to document and scold in others the same offense to which he himself unfortunately succumbed.

Medication: The citizen performs on his scheduled course of medication without relapse into criminality or undue destruction of Computer property or himself. Medicated citizens who detect in others the same behavior that led them into error, and who covertly administer their own corrective medication to these truants, may earn early release from the medication schedule.

Brainscrub, termination and erasure: Erring citizens reform with gratifying immediacy!

Defense

The way you handle the target's defense against accusations of treason depends on your chosen play style. The Computer may grant the accused a chance to rebut the accusations, if you think it wouldn't slow down the pace unacceptably.

Treason defense in Straight games



Straight games are usually most interesting when Troubleshooters can stay alive through several missions. Thus a credible accusation must have clear, documented evidence for all treasonous acts. A treasonous act is 'documented evidence' for one of these reasons:

1. You say it is.
2. You accept a player's convincing in-game reason for having documented the act (see reason #1).
3. While the target PC was committing the act, the die roll equalled that scene's Tension level or less. Someone, somewhere, saw the act. You can say the witness was The Computer or an IntSec plant or just a random passerby, but you don't have to explain anything if you don't want to. Where do the players get off even asking such things, anyway? Sounds like insubordination to us.

The target's defense is his current Access rating—his 'treason armor,' subtracted from the default correction. Furthermore, add the number of the target's current clone to the accuser's success roll (making it harder to succeed). Why the clone number? Anyone The Computer has brought back multiple times must, of course, be worthy of its trust. To doubt this is to imply The Computer was mistaken.

When you have shot and killed a man you have in some measure clarified your attitude toward him. You have given a definite answer to a definite problem. For better or worse you have acted decisively. In a way, the next move is up to him.

—R. A. Lafferty

Treason defense in Classic games



This works much as in Straight games, except The Computer's imperative to terminate traitors overcomes many social niceties. These are the differences in Classic games:

1. The Computer is much more lenient about letting accusers document a case against a target after the fact—that is, post-termination. You may want to give the player a scene or two to fabricate—assemble the required evidence.
2. Longevity of one's clone family confers no protection. Traitors are everywhere! The target's defense equals his Access rating, not (as in Straight games) Access plus clone number.
3. Remember, players are not liable for the cost of the replacement clone even if the termination was unjustified.

Treason defense in Zap games



'Citizen, you have been convicted of treason. Please report promptly to the termination center. Thank you for your cooperation.'

Types of correction

Many and varied are The Computer's ways to mess with its disloyal citizens. Many, varied and fun.

Official Reprimand

The Computer issues the equivalent of an Official Commendation for minor misconduct. Generally it also assigns another minor punishment, such as marching up and down, polishing the High Programmer's Delta 88 AutoYacht, scrubbing bathrooms, and so on. 'Inexcusable, citizen. You knew that residence block was inhabited. I am entering an Official Reprimand on your permanent record. I warn you, I will assign you to three days of meals in

CORRECTIONS

the INFRARED mess hall if I catch you testing X-ray lasers in public corridors again.'

If you have chosen to use Official Commendations to leaven the seriousness of treason damage the PC suffers in debriefing (see Chapter 29, 'Meritorious conduct'), it is only fair to make Official Reprimands increase their seriousness as well.

Probation

In addition to imposing fines for minor infractions, Internal Security forces rules violators to volunteer to test R&D's many proposed **Malfeasance Control Devices** ('McDs'). The McD accompanies the character everywhere. The McD probation lasts until the R&D officials retrieve their device. If the McD meets a sad end beforehand, the probationary citizen is liable for its replacement cost, which is typically exorbitant. Some sample McDs to inspire your creativity:

Insubordination chart

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are insubordination, too. You assign their fines. For that matter, feel free to change these guidelines. **An offense imposes the fine or treason damage you want it to impose.** So even if the offense is listed here as deserving a fine, you can still impose a Censure or Brainscrub or Erasure to keep the players guessing.

Penalties vary between Classic and Straight games. In general, Straight correction is less severe than Classic regarding violations of decorum and ordinary daily conduct, but more severe than Classic regarding false accusations, assault, wanton destruction and other lighthearted stuff. Compared to Straight games, Classic offenses against citizens of clearance lower than the offender aren't that big a deal. In Zap games all offenses are punishable by termination.

KEY:

= number of ranks of difference in security clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a RED citizen who insubordinately questions a GREEN superior's judgment (an offense listed as x100) earns (3x100=) a 300 credit fine, because GREEN is three ranks above RED.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. cr = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone)

Offense

	Classic	Straight
A. Asking a question unrelated to a mission or duty	10cr	5%
B. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous	20cr	5%
C. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass)	30cr	5%
D. Being out of uniform or sloppy	10cr	10cr
E. Being unhappy	10cr	5%
F. Bringing bad news	50cr	—
G. Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times	10cr	10cr
H. Curiosity in general, undue	30cr	30cr
I. Evading IntSec or Computer surveillance	50cr	5%
J. Excessive rudeness	10cr	—
K. Failing a hygiene inspection	10cr	10cr
L. Jokes, insolence, or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty	10cr	10cr
M. Jokes, insolence, or disrespect for a specific higher-clearance citizen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x100cr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x5%
N. Jokes, complaints or warnings about a specific service firm or group other than Internal Security	30cr	5%
O. Jokes, complaints or warnings about Internal Security	100cr	10%
P. Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher-clearance citizen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x100cr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> x100cr
Q. Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer	1,000cr	100%
R. Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission	50cr	50cr
S. Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty	50cr	replacement cost

Treason chart

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason, too. You assign their fines or treason damage. For that matter, feel free to change these guidelines. **An offense deals the treason damage you want it to deal.**

Penalties vary between Classic and Straight games. In general, Straight correction is less severe than Classic regarding violations of decorum and ordinary daily conduct, but more severe than Classic regarding false accusations, assault, wanton destruction and other lighthearted stuff. Compared to Straight games, Classic offenses against citizens of clearance lower than the offender aren't that big a deal. In Zap games all offenses are punishable by termination.

KEY:

Character conditions: Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination & repatterning (Twiddling), Erasure

Offense codes are listed in **Minimum-Boost-Maximum** format. Example: P5B means the offense's default minimum correction is Probation, its Boost (the margin needed to add one step of correction) is 5, and the maximum correction is Brainscrub.

☒ = number of ranks of difference in security clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a RED citizen who insubordinately questions a GREEN superior's judgment (an offense listed as ☒x100) earns (3x100=) a 300 credit fine.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. **cr** = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone.

Offense

Accusations of treason

	Classic	Straight
AA. Being accused of treason by a citizen of lower clearance	+1 to Boost number	unchanged
BB. By a citizen of equal clearance	unchanged	unchanged
CC. By a citizen of higher clearance	-1 Boost (min. 1)	-1 Boost (min. 1)
DD. Falsely accusing a lower-clearance citizen of treason	O5C	C4M
DD/1. A citizen of equal clearance	O4C	P4M
DD/2. A citizen of higher clearance	P3M	C3B

Conduct and bearing

EE. Arguing with the Gamemaster	Medication	Medication
FF. Assaulting a lower-clearance citizen	O5T	P5T
FF/1. A citizen of equal clearance	C4T	C3T
FF/2. A citizen of higher clearance	M3T	M3T
GG. Being present in a location of higher security clearance	P4M + ☒x100 cr	P4C + ☒x5% cr
HH. Damaging, destroying or losing assigned equipment	P3C	P3C + replacement cost
II. Failure to defer to a citizen of higher security clearance	P4B + ☒x100 cr	P4M + ☒x5% cr
JJ. Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing	P4C	P4C
KK. Framing a citizen of lower clearance for a crime	P4M	C4B
KK/1. A citizen of equal clearance	C4B	C4T
KK/2. A citizen of higher clearance	M4T	M4E
LL. Possessing a treasonous (Unhealthy) skill	Brainscrub	Brainscrub
MM. Possessing unauthorized food, information or equipment	P3M + ☒x100 cr	O2C + ☒x5% cr
NN. Refusing to take a prescribed drug	P4M	Censure
OO. Threatening the physical or financial safety of a lower-clearance citizen	O5B	P4B
OO/1. A citizen of equal clearance	C4B	C3B
OO/2. A citizen of higher clearance	M3B	M3B
PP. Unauthorized destruction of higher-clearance property	P4M + ☒x100 cr + replacement cost	P4M + ☒x5% cr + replacement cost

QQ. Demonstrating knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules above the player's clearance

RR. Lying to the Gamemaster

Missions

SS/1. Disobeying an order given by a mission superior	P5B	P5B
SS/2. Disobeying an order given by The Computer	C5T	C5T
SS/3. Failure to complete a mission	O4C	P4M
SS/4. Failure to complete a service service	O5C	P5M
SS/5. Refusing the assignment of a service service	P5M	P5M
SS/6. Refusing to accept a mission	Termination	Termination

Mutation

TT/1. Mutation registration	Medication	Medication
TT/2. Suspicion of mutation possession	C4T	C4B
TT/3. Proof of mutation possession	M3T	M3B
TT/4. Incontrovertible proof of mutation possession	Termination	M3T
TT/5. Possession of Machine Empathy	Termination	Erasure

Secret society membership

UU/1. Confessing to secret society membership	M3T	M3B
UU/2. Suspicion of secret society membership	M3T	C3B
UU/3. Proof of secret society membership	B3T	M3T
UU/4. Incontrovertible proof of secret society membership	Termination	B3T
UU/5. Knowledge of Communist doctrine	Brainscrub	B2T
UU/6. Being a Communist	Termination	B1E

Terminations

VV. Terminating a lower-clearance citizen without prior authorization or evidence	C3B	M3T + replacement cost
VV/1. A citizen of equal clearance	B2T	B3E + replacement cost
VV/2. A citizen of higher clearance	Termination	T1E + replacement cost

④ **Reminder Friend:** A stern little bot that points out opportunities to commit treason and cautions against them.

④ **Corrective Aerosol Device:** A metal collar with voice-recognition circuitry. When it hears treasonous words, it sprays a puff of tear gas. Some models also constrict.

④ **Politeness Siren:** An ankle bracelet with built-in vid camera. If it detects background colors above the wearer's security clearance, it sounds a sharp alarm.

Future **PARANOIA** supplements will present a variety of McDs. If we remember.

Censure

To dramatize the way insubordination truly pits the erring citizen against *all his fellow citizens*—yes indeed!—HPD&MC coordinates unified public displays of scorn or corrective finger-wagging. A letter code on the censured citizen's chest designates his offense, and all other citizens who meet him are required to consult their current Censural Behavior Schedule and shun, lecture, sneer at or kick the censurée as specified.

The problem is, many citizens disloyally fail to keep their Behavior Schedules updated, possibly because the Schedule can be dramatically revised up to five times daily. The upshot is, any citizen may greet the censurée with any strange reaction you wish.

If a citizen earns repeated censure corrections, The Computer may order the letter code tattooed on his forehead. The possibilities are pleasant to contemplate:

Mark-R: Friend Computer, my six weeks of Censure are up. Can I have this 'Compulsively Untidy' tattoo removed from my forehead, please?

The Computer: Citizen, I have monitored your progress. You have taken to heart the lectures and lessons given you by your fellow civic-minded citizens and performed your mandatory tasks of penance. Your Tidiness Quotient is exemplary. Of course you may have your tattoo removed—

Mark-R: Thank you, Friend Computer!

The Computer: —when The Computer's loyal servants in R&D have researched and tested the required tattoo removal technology.

Mark-R: Err—are you saying you *can't* remove this Censure tattoo?

The Computer: That is incorrect. We will indeed remove your tattoo. Just not yet.

Mark-R: Ah. Might I ask, Friend Computer, when the technology will be tested and ready for use?

The Computer: Certainly you may, citizen. What is your security clearance?

Public Hatings

Like Censure, but with TV coverage. The Computer considers the best use of certain offenders is to make them a public example. Creepy stone-faced bureaucrats in HPD's Rectitude Bureau publicize the citizen's offense on public vidscreens, com units, and loudspeakers. They encourage other citizens to gently chide the miscreant for his carelessness.

'This citizen carelessly allowed his jumpsuit to become soiled. Shame! Encourage this thoughtless citizen to express a more diligent commitment to personal hygiene. Thank you for your cooperation.'

The Computer may instead put the offender on probation, holding this punishment in reserve against further errors in judgment.

(HPD&MC restricts the term 'Public Hating' to internal use only. Among ordinary citizens HPD officials use the gentler term 'Community Standards Exercise').

Fines

The Computer frequently levies fines for minor offenses. Any citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher may levy a fine (a credit penalty) on a citizen of lower clearance than himself. The citizen must immediately report the charge and the amount of the fine to The Computer, which must approve them before deducting them from the citizen's current credit balance. Levying excessive fines is a treasonous offense. Unfortunately there are no published guidelines for appropriate fines.

The Treason and Insubordination charts in the appendix lists typical fines for many offenses.

At this level and above, the punishments really begin to sting.

Demotion

The Computer may demote a citizen to a lower clearance instantly whenever it loses trust in the citizen. Because The Computer is insane, this can happen at any time for any reason, though you as Gamemaster shouldn't appear arbitrary.

Any citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher may demote citizens in a certain range of lower clearances, specified in Chapter 4, 'Spending your credits'. Citizens customarily demote Troubleshooters for being high-handed, making



threats, questioning orders or otherwise power-tripping. It's amazing how a field demotion can improve the victim's manners.

Instead of actual demotion, The Computer or the citizen may strip the victim of certain privileges, such as a Mandatory Bonus Duty assignment (see Chapter 6).

For exceptional incompetence or insubordination, a citizen could conceivably be demoted to INFRARED level, right out of the Troubleshooting business and back to the food vats or waste recycling. Practically speaking, this requires the player to generate a new character on the spot, so do not demote him that far unless you're willing to stop the game while he fills out the new sheet.

Medication

'Huh? What? I did something wrong? M'head hurts. Ooh, colors. Hey buddy, you're glowing the wrong color for your clearance. I gotta shoot you, okay?'

Medicating an offender is standard treatment if the team is on a mission and the convicted Troubleshooter cannot be readily replaced by a clone or other Troubleshooter. HPD&MC Happiness Office bureaucrats (think of the meanest registered nurses you've ever seen) prescribe and supervise biochemical supplements. If the citizen survives the supplements and the mission, The Computer may assign additional correction during debriefing.

Have the medicated Troubleshooter's player roleplay a drug effect you think would be



interesting. For guidance, roll 1d20 on this table or choose an entry:

- 1–2: Dazed confusion
- 3–4: Hyperactivity
- 5–6: Color blindness
- 7–8: Hallucinations
- 9–10: Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- 11–12: Euphoric optimism
- 13–14: Open-hearted trust and sincerity
- 15–16: Wild confidence
- 17–18: Rampant homicidal psychotic paranoia
- 19–20: Roll twice more and combine the effects

■ Brainscrub

In its benign form, brainscrub is a simple HPD&MC training program in Corrective Loyalty. It clears the offender's criminal record, and usually his recent memory. The former offender may barely recall secret society meeting points and recognition signals, as well as the nature of his mutant power. But his rivalries with other Troubleshooters go down the memory hole.

That's the *best* case. IntSec escorts obnoxious or persistent offenders to the nearest Bright Vision Re-Education Center.

There specially programmed docbots treat the offender's forebrain to a relaxing hour-long bath in a variety of neurotransmitters. The former criminal emerges fresh, optimistic, and full of inspiring loyalty to The Computer. Instances of delusional or hallucinatory behavior, including so-called imaginary playmates, are believed to be rare.

■ Retirement

When the stress of a mission causes an otherwise blameless citizen to foam at the mouth and scuttle around on all fours, The Computer may mercifully assign him to Permanent Recreation in one of HPD&MC's retirement gulags. The Computer activates his clone backup, possibly with a prophylactic brainscrub first.

Note: Sometimes characters with psychotic tendencies get promoted rather than retired. The Computer works in mysterious ways.

■ Termination and repatterning

Colloquially termed 'twiddling', this feared correction recycles an existing traitor and transfers his MemoMax brainmap to a backup clone body—with a few alterations. To correct

the thought patterns that prompted the original treason, The Computer's skilled Tech Services technicians remap synapses in brain areas known to promote criminality. Fortunately, no memory of the agonizing process survives—usually—except for traumatic flashbacks in stressful circumstances—and in 22.4% of cases there are absolutely no side effects, aside from trivial losses of skills, memory and motor control.

Impose any penalty you think would be interesting. For guidance, roll 1d20 for the twiddled character; the number rolled is the total number of points the player must subtract from his character's skills or specialties. The number rolled also suggests which skills or specialties are reduced:

- 1–5: The number rolled is the total number of points the player must subtract from his character's three Knowledge skill ratings. For example, if you roll 4, the player might choose to subtract 1 from his Hardware rating, 2 from Software, and 1 from Wetware, for a total reduction of 4 points.
- 6–10: The points can be subtracted from any of the six Action and Knowledge skills.
- 11–19: The points can be subtracted from any of the skills or common specialties.
- 20: Tell the player there are no point subtractions. Unbeknownst to the player, his character's Power attribute rating rises to 20. However, his newly strengthened mutant power backfires far more frequently (any roll of 11 or more, or when you think it would be funny).

■ Erasure

If you've had poor results keeping a player in line with every other remedy, there is one ultimate measure: erasure. The Computer eradicates the traitor's Tech Services clone template, prohibiting further revivals. If the target happens to still be alive, The Computer also declares him a fugitive criminal. It would take strategy and high-clearance connections to wriggle out of that bind.

Regretfully cast the player's character sheet aside, more in sorrow than anger. The player has to generate a new character, so be ready to stop the game in the meantime.

YOU SEEM TO
BE ASSUMING
YOU HAVE A
CHOICE.

31. Running the game

Here's some advice for how to get the best use out of the time you've got available to play.

Creating characters

PARANOIA works best with a GM and five or six players. Ideally your players either know each other quite well or have never met.

For beginning players, rolling up a character and filling out a character sheet can be involved and puzzling. You can make it a lot less intimidating by talking them through the process. This can be done in 10 to 20 minutes—less, if your players have read through the Player section and you leave narrow specialties open for now.

It might be better to give your players pregenerated characters. We include a set with this rulebook, and you can always roll up a bunch of characters on your own and hand the filled-in sheets to your players.

Using pregenerated characters is a good idea for two reasons:

First, **PARANOIA** characters need personalities that fit the peculiar **PARANOIA** universe. We tailor the abilities and idiosyncrasies of our pregenerated characters to fit the mission. We design the characters as a team, anticipating the charming and homicidal interactions to be expected among Troubleshooting colleagues. After studying the pregenerated PCs, you'll see how it's done. In fact, as you design your own missions you'll be better able to match your own characters to your twisted dramatic needs, and certainly you'll be better able to match your characters to the strengths, peculiarities and psychological instabilities of your players.

Second, using pregenerated PCs is a big help to novice players. They don't have to master the intricate details of a new character system right off the bat; instead, they start playing immediately. **PARANOIA** sessions are ideally brief, intense, suspenseful and fast-paced. Starting off a session by rolling up characters is like starting a movie with 20 minutes of 'Meet the Press'-style talking-heads exposition.

For more experienced and ambitious players, cooperative character design is fun. Give your players a rough outline of their characters and let them fill in the details. In any case, you'll still have to work up the distinctively paranoid refinements every character should have:

- ◎ Some possession that is ambiguously valuable, partially incomprehensible and eminently treasonous.
- ◎ Current secret society status—reputation within the group, standing orders, special interests, etc.

◎ Tidbits about other characters—vague rumors, fragmentary evidence, puzzling observations—that foment distrust and provide tantalizing hearsay evidence of treason. (Note: This is not always necessary—sometimes throwing complete strangers together works just fine.)

Seating order

Get in the habit of going around the table from left to right when players declare their actions. Get a quick statement from the first character, go immediately to the person next to him, and so on—bang, bang, bang. No stalling, no going back for second thoughts, no interrupting with out-of-order comments. This keeps things rolling along and maintains a subtle stranglehold on the players' sense of free will. It's a good idea to reverse the order now and then, just to keep them all on their toes.

Introducing characters

Before the session begins, have each player introduce his character to the rest of the group. Keep intros short and to the point. Limit the comments to these details:

◎ **Name and security clearance:** A good cheap trick is to scribble the character's full name on a piece of paper and tuck it in a pocket or pin it on so it looks like the identification strip on a military uniform. To encourage players to refer to each other by their Alpha Complex handles, terminate a few who use real-world names. Establish polite phrases for addressing one another: 'At your service, citizen John-R-BUE' or 'Serve and protect, Newt-R'.

◎ **Distinctive appearance:** Clearance color of garments, armor, weapons carried, plus any unusual details—nifty scars, registered mutant stripes, medals or decorations, odd widgets, etc.

◎ **Tics:** A well-designed character has one or two distinctive personality traits. An IR marketeer may always seem to be well-equipped. A GREEN goon may absently fidget with a pair of brass knuckles. A mad R&D scientist may constantly tinker with a wIDGET. A heavily-drugged citizen may occasionally wander off into walls jabbering to himself. A marksman may regularly clean and polish his

weapon. The player should have chosen a couple of recognizable tics during character creation. Remember, tics are by definition *immediately obvious* to other characters.

With beginners, you might introduce the characters yourself, giving the players a model of brevity, detail and wit they can follow during the game.

Private briefings

After handing out and introducing characters, take the players aside one by one and give them some special tidbits—unsubstantiated rumors about other player characters; vague hints from obscure informants; secret society tips, warnings or missions; odd notes about strange happenings in Alpha Complex; and so on. The point is to give the players numerous reasons to blast one another and to fill their heads with generally unreliable intelligence seasoned with occasionally critical information.

In the 'blast one another' department, you can be direct ('Laura-G is a traitor. Waste her') or subtle ('Your mentor in Power Services keeps getting this funny tic in his face when you talk about your comrade Laura-G. Sort of a winking thing. And he keeps rubbing his finger across his throat—odd, huh?'). The hints can come from familiar and reliable informants, odd rumors, or 'personal observation'. ('Say. You've noticed this funny thing—Laura-G always seems to sort of... *disappear* when trouble appears. Literally. I mean, you haven't really seen anything, but somehow you turn around and she isn't there.')

The mixture of nonsense and essential info (heavy on the nonsense, please—*fear and ignorance*) may provide clues and red herrings for the mission, or resources and contacts through service groups, secret societies, and the IR market.

The private briefing is also an opportunity for novice players to ask about things they don't understand, especially secret societies, mutant powers and so on.

Master the technology of note-passing

Because of all the sneaking, backstabbing and secret information in **PARANOIA**, private communication between the GM and the players is critical. It is also incredibly annoying when players call the GM aside every two or three seconds with vital questions and fiendish plots.



Every **PARANOIA** Gamemaster has his own little tricks for keeping players in line.

A lively traffic in notes is an excellent alternative. It lets you schedule your interruptions, and putting things on paper forces the players to be brief and direct, while you can be flip and irresponsible in response, offhandedly ignoring the request, or nodding yes or no. It also produces written memos to remind you of certain ongoing conditions ('The next time Laura-G is even briefly separated from the group, I'll start a fire with my pyrokinesis power and frame her') and provides nice entries to tuck into a character's Personal File as a record of treasonous actions.

PARANOIA players love to write notes. It gives them a chance to scheme and tattle all the time, even when you're busy with something else. Notes often concern clever boobytraps and double-crosses, or the player wishes to go on record as being on guard against sneaky stuff from other players. Most popular and adorable is the habit of making private PDC reports concerning the suspicious or treasonous actions of other characters.

The wonderful thing about notes is that everyone knows you're up to something, but what? A mound of notes growing in front of you is a good indication that the players have the proper **PARANOIA** spirit. 'Does that note concern me? Am I being set up? Should I shoot first? And who? Well, if I shoot everyone, I'm bound to get at least some of my enemies...' In fact, GM and players often pass blank notes back and forth, just to keep everyone nervous.

Here's a good way to handle notes. Place them all in front of you, with the most recent note received on top. From time to time (every five or ten minutes at least; sometimes much more often when there is a heavy note flow or

when you're not busy) pick up the notes and read them in first-received order (bottom up).

Explain to your players how you judge your notes. A good rule of thumb is, the shorter the note, the more promptly the action takes place, but the more latitude you have in judging the specific results of the action. On the other hand, a long, detailed note implies careful planning and execution, and the result is likely to be closer to the player's stated intention.

Data tracking

As GM you'll want to track each scene's **Tension level**. You also may find it helpful to track this information for each character:

- ◎ Access and Power ratings
- ◎ Current health condition and clearance
- ◎ Documented treasonous acts (but see 'Tracking treason chart codes' below)

You don't usually need to track Perversity points for each player, especially if you hand them out as poker chips or other physical tokens. If a player's Perversity total grows to the point tokens become unwieldy (something must be wrong!), you have several options:

- ◎ Track the total on paper.
- ◎ Record a portion on paper and give the rest as chips.

- ◎ Stage a big firefight or treason investigation where everyone is shooting at or accusing the Perversity-laden character.

■ Tracking treason chart codes

Your versions of the Treason, Insubordination and Reward chart entries have code letters. Use these to unsettle and alarm your players, and at the same time offload tiresome record tracking.

When a character commits a treasonous or insubordinate act, find the appropriate letter code on the chart. Tell the players, 'Record code VV/2 [or whatever] for character [Name] on your character sheets.' This seldom fails to scare the stuffing out of the target and delight the others. It would be sadistic to just call out meaningless letter codes after any random action. Sadistic, cruel, manipulative. Fun.

When handling accusations of treason have the players read back the names and codes they recorded. Locate the codes on the charts and announce each crime's name in a stern, righteous voice.

■ Tracking credits

Do you need to track the PCs' current credits? Sounds terrible, doesn't it?

It helps to track credits in a general way, like maybe to the nearest hundred or so. If you ever have to use a calculator to determine the Troubleshooters' credits, you're trying way too hard. Take an example from life: Do you know the *exact* balance in your bank account? Sorry, 'about a hundred' doesn't cut it. People rarely remember exactly how much they have; are Alpha Complex characters any different? They buy algae chips while their players aren't looking, or loot some loose change on their downtime. A player should never be sure exactly how much his character has. A ballpark estimate is what you're aiming for, with occasional confirmations of exactly how much, such as when he can't buy that spiffy-looking jumpsuit because he's short 19 credits.

A character's accounts can suddenly change for many reasons: The Computer automatically adjusts for inflation, service charges, account hackers, interest on savings or loans, glitches in the system, etc. You can offer no end of excuses in case some anal-retentive player asks why his account is 19 credits lower than the last time he checked.

Of course, anyone frustrated with your whims could simply withdraw all his credits. Heh, heh. Mention his impressive total of hard currency during play. Remember, your best weapons against a wayward player are the other players.

Session length

We hear tales of marathon sessions lasting 10 to 12 hours. Phew! The idea of that much soul-crushing gaiety makes us flinch, but more power to you. We recommend two- to three-hour sessions for most typically impossible **Classic** missions. The fast pace, high tension

and constant player involvement of **PARANOIA** gives you a full and satisfying evening of roleplaying in a couple of hours.

Four or more hours are fine in Straight style, when you emphasize plot and character advancement and when player characters have good reason to avoid blowing each other up every minute or two. These missions may feature intervals of slow, tooth-grinding

suspense, which give you time to recover your strength for the next bout of frenzied action.

In Zap games it is hard to reach the one-hour mark before everyone runs out of clones. Keep a stack of new PCs with accompanying clone backups (backup backups?) close to hand. With frequent replenishment a Zap group could hang in there for maybe two hours before keeling over from exhaustion.

32. Presenting missions

When you're actually running a mission, here are some things you can do to ensure a good time for all.

Maintain triple redundancy of character coercion systems

Players who tarry and do the unexpected are charming for a while, but eventually they become tiresome. Sooner or later, you'll want to use all the spiffy plot elements and neat encounters you've dreamed up for your players, so you'll want to get them on track. Fortunately, in **PARANOIA**, when the PCs aren't doing what you want them to do, there are plenty of ways to make them.

The Computer: The Computer is everywhere. Cameras scan every room and corridor. Electronic ears bring every whisper to The Computer's attention. Like Santa, The Computer knows when you've been bad or good.

The voice of The Computer is everywhere. Public address systems carry messages to every corner of Alpha Complex. Even if a PC is Outdoors or in an abandoned sector, The Computer can speak through his PDC.

You know how fervently citizens attend to the voice of The Computer. A formal command is seldom necessary. A polite hint is usually sufficient, particularly if you make an object lesson out of anyone who fails to respond cheerfully and loyally to polite hints.

Mission alerts: Give the PCs very specific orders:

Go to Room 36-24-38. Immediately. Now. Walk in a straight line. No talking. No poking or shoving. Keep your blasters in your holsters. Don't even think about going anywhere but Room 36-24-38. Don't touch walls, doors, or other citizens on the way. No, you may not go to the bathroom. Serve The Computer. Right now. The Computer will fix your wagon if you don't follow directions. Thank you for your cooperation.

Messengers: If the PCs encounter a circumstance not specifically covered in their orders, or find some annoyingly clever way to warp or ignore the intentions of their orders,

send a messenger (a breathless INFRARED, perhaps, or a flustered jackobot, or a gleaming duralloy combot the size of a caboose) with an urgent mission update clarifying The Computer's exact wishes in the matter.

High-status NPCs: The timely arrival of an NPC with a higher security clearance than the ranking PC is a perfect channeling device. Failure to obey a higher-clearance citizen is, after all, treason. Even when PCs whine about having priority orders from higher authority ('But The Computer told us to do this...'), it is mysteriously difficult to get official confirmation of such orders. ('Pardon me, but the line is busy, he's away from his desk and you have the wrong number. Will you hold?')

Internal Security GREEN goons, combots, guardbots, and Vulture Squadrons: These faithful servants of The Computer often show up in conjunction with special messengers and dispatches. Or in response to citizen complaints about annoying disturbances (like weapons fire and tortured shrieks). These Defenders of Law and Order often have helpful suggestions about PC manners and social observances. 'Don't be

alarmed. These surface-to-surface missiles are for your protection. Now, don't you loyal citizens have some pressing business elsewhere?'

Give players lots of stuff to do

PARANOIA presents you with a terrible temptation to be entertaining. A witty and enthusiastic GM can fall into the error of hogging the stage.

Remember: *Let players do things*. This is a game, and the players are gaming. Gaming is making choices and taking actions. The players have to be able to make choices and take actions, early and often, or they will be annoyed, no matter how entertaining you are.

Here is a checklist of popular **PARANOIA** activities. Stay alert; pay attention to what's going on in each session. If you find yourself doing all the talking and thinking, cut down on your own radiant personality and get your players more involved in the following:

The Newbie Net

PARANOIA is not a game of kindness.

(*'Friend Computer! That ULTRAVIOLET's committing treason!'*)

Play emphasizes inter-player suspicion and rivalry, with you as Gamemaster genially presenting reasons for dread, indomitable obstacles, along with bafflingly arbitrary rewards.

(*'Are any of you guys Sierra Clubbers?'*)

If a new player has trouble getting the idea, well, it only takes a few fatalities to convey the idea.

(*'Stop! I'm an undercover IntSec agent! You're under arrest!'*)

Still, one style of character-killing is too cheesy even for **PARANOIA**. Experienced players wait, vulture-like, for a newbie to ask some perfectly reasonable question ('What's Bouncy Bubble Beverage?'), accuse him of treason, and let fly with laser blasts.

Please. Among experienced **PARANOIA** players, it does heighten fear to rule that any spoken remark is made in character by the actual PC, so other PCs hear it. Heightening fear is good. That said, a newbie who triggers a bloodbath by asking one simple question won't feel heightened fear, only stunned contempt.

You want to condition players to keep playing **PARANOIA**. To this end, you can grant a new player some provisional, short-lived slack—a 'Newbie Net'. When he asks an unwise question ('Who said anything about evidence?') or tries some blatantly stupid action, halt the game for a moment and ask, 'Do you really want to do that?' If he continues, his PC deserves to die.

Naturally, players past their first few clones have to play without a net.



Shoot one another, smash things and blow things up (primitive problem solving): They do an awful lot of this. They seem to enjoy it.

Talk/lie/whine (talking your way out of problems, or talking other people into problems): They do this when they can't shoot, smash or blow things up. It isn't as destructive, but it requires more creativity and wit, which players seem to enjoy exercising.

Puzzling (thinking and discussing problems): When they can't shoot or talk their way around a problem, sometimes they will think about it. Sometimes they come up with brilliantly original, charmingly entertaining, and occasionally effective solutions, which seems to make them happy.

Experiment (solving problems by devising little tests): This is science along the lines of 'Let's put these ants in an aluminum pot, put it in the sun and see what happens.' Kid science. Fun stuff. Most of this has to do with testing experimental equipment, though with the uncertainty inherent in operating any equipment in **PARANOIA**, using a toothbrush may qualify as basic research.

Choose between two evils (the problem of choosing between the horrible and the terrible): A common occurrence in **PARANOIA**, and hard work. PCs spend lots of time agonizing over which variety of treason they want to be executed for, or which of two hopeless courses of action to take.

Respond to desperate circumstances (solving problems before you have time to think about them): This common PC activity takes the general form, 'Gee, it looks like you're doomed. Now what do you do?'. This is real knee-jerk problem solving; the PCs don't have time to think, but can only flail about in panic. Fun, huh?

Be colorful

Be colorful in your application of the rules. Avoid mechanics talk. Don't distract from the atmosphere by making specific rules references and using the jargon of game mechanics. Imagine you're a play-by-play radio announcer for a Christians-Lions game at the old Coliseum. For example:

Rules talk: Okay. You fire your laser at your colleague, who is dodging. Your skill is rating 7, the Perversity modifier is +3, so you need a 10 or less. [Clatter.] Okay. A 3—a hit. Margin of 7, your laser's Boost is 3, so that's two extra steps; your target has reflec armor, so that knocks off one step from the increase. Okay, your fellow Troubleshooter is Wounded.

Colorful talk: Okay. You turn and casually point your laser at your buddy. He suspects something and dives for cover. [Clatter.] Sizzle. Well, you hit him in the chest—but he's grateful to The

Computer for his reflec armor. [Clatter.] Hmm. No smell of charred flesh, no death wail... but he doesn't look too active.

Rules talk is fine in the beginning. It helps you learn the rules and shares the responsibility for judging action sequences with knowledgeable players. But you get the point: Move toward the dramatic presentation style as fast as you can.

Interpret die rolls to your dramatic needs

The margin of a player's roll tells you how well he did, or how badly he bungled. Use the margin as a cue for your description.

'Oops. The security alarm—woop, whoop, whoop! [Clatter.] You dive for the autocar controls and press the buttons for the security sequence... do you make it?... yes!... you're tapping... looks good... but, uh-oh... too bad... well, it's tough using a keyboard with armored gauntlets... WHAM. Next contestant?'

'Sure. You summon up all you know about physics as you inspect the CosmoZoom Planetary Warp Shield device you've been assigned for testing. [Clatter.] Looks perfectly safe. Perfectly... oh, say. You remember some rumor about planets and gravity and stuff... some Commie named Copernicus or Newton or something. Say. Maybe this thing is dangerous...'

A wide margin of success or failure is a cue for epic hyperbole: 'You apply your extensive knowledge of robot design to repairing the bot brain...' [Clatter—succeed fantastically.] 'My! You seem to have outdone yourself this time. You run through the operation checks and turn it on—the scrubot nods politely, inquires about the current status of the search for a unified field theory, spreads its mop attachments and leaps nimbly across the room like a ballet dancer. Nice work, citizen.'

Manage information

'I'm sorry. That information is not available at this time.' **PARANOIA** players are caught in a bind. They have to rely on the GM for information, but they know the GM takes great delight in denying access to information. Further, they know the information they do get is either muddled or incorrect—and therefore useless—or completely reliable and accurate—which probably means they'll get executed if they're caught knowing it.

Information management requires a delicate touch. On one hand, you want to frustrate your players and erode confidence in the information they receive. That's **PARANOIA**: ignorance and fear, fear and ignorance. On the other hand, you don't want to crush their spirit completely; they have to ask questions to keep the game moving, and they have to

believe there is some point to asking questions, or they'll actually get paranoid and avoid you and the game like the plague.

A couple of principles help you maintain this tension between atmospheric despair and real despair:

Exploit the ritual PARANOIA phrases: 'I'm sorry. That information is not available at this time ... I'm sorry. That information is not available at your security clearance.' 'Information retrieval specialists are working on your request at this moment. All information will be forwarded to you at the earliest opportunity.' 'We've located that information you were looking for. It's definitely lost. Glad to be of service.'

Maintain an exaggerated and cheerfully phony pretense of cooperation and eager service: Pretend to be ever so sorry for the delay, or confident that the information is forthcoming immediately. The spoken message should be one of hope; the tone in your voice should ooze with obvious insincerity.

Frequently dispense valuable tidbits to encourage false optimism: About five or ten percent of the time, offer truly useful information, but bury it in useless and misleading information, or make it available through thoroughly unreliable sources. This conditions the players to look carefully for information in even the most obvious nonsense and hooplah, and to trust even completely unreliable sources, setting them up for even more colossal hose jobs.

Use bogus secret attribute and skill rolls as a screen when feeding them plausible nonsense: 'Oh. You want to know what security systems are protecting this installation. How about a security skill roll...' [You, knowing there are no security systems protecting the installation, roll dice. Pretend to study them. Look impish.] 'Well, well. You are absolutely certain there's no security at all here. Isn't that wonderful news? Why, you can do anything you want!'

Players catch on immediately. When their dice indicate a major failure, you are going to gleefully misinform them. They haven't seen whether the roll was a failure, so they don't really know they can't trust the information, but you are way too happy about the whole thing for the information to be on the level.

When in doubt, invoke The Computer: 'Surely The Computer, in its infinite wisdom and benevolence, would have given you that information if you really needed it. Certainly you wouldn't question the judgment of The Computer, would you?'

Vary your tone of voice

When you talk to the players, make it clear whether you're talking as Referee, The Computer, Narrator, or NPC. **PARANOIA** is a game of tone, and each Gamemaster role has its voice or voices.



The Referee has an exaggerated sincerity and concern for fairness and impartial interpretation and application of the rules. To the players, this means they are hosed, and there is nothing they can do about it except look cheerful.

The Computer is schizophrenic: on one hand, it is ever so solicitous of the citizen's welfare and safety; on the other hand, it is cool and matter-of-fact about dealing swiftly and ruthlessly with traitors and Commies.

The Narrator is neutral and reliable. Your tone should lead the players to trust you when you describe what their characters remember and sense. Occasionally circumstances may permit tampering with memories or sensory data (drugs, MemGo, brainwashing, etc.), but only as distinctive exceptions. Don't mix this voice up with the other voices that make the players distrust GM statements.

NPCs have zillions of distinctive voices and manners. Avoid letting your NPC voices blur into one or two standard characters.

Referee: Gosh, I don't suppose there's any chance that it could malfunction, do you? [Clatter.] Hmm! Interesting!

The Computer: Yes, citizen. May I be of assistance?

Narrator: The room is about 10 meters across. A bot about the size of a microwave oven stands in its precise center. [Clatter.] John-R, you've seen this kind of bot before; it's an early-model scrubot.

NPC: Louie-G says, 'Okay, youse guys. Over de top. De last one out gets his brain fried, yunnerstan?'

Be sensitive to play style

Be sensitive to your players, and know what style of play they prefer and can enjoy.

Sometimes **PARANOIA** players progress slowly over time from Zap to Classic and sometimes on to Straight. Because you can play several **PARANOIA** missions in an evening, sometimes this progression occurs overnight. Some players stick with one style; others bounce around from style to style according to impulse. To have the most fun, make sure you and your players agree on the desired play style before you start play.

Monitor the stages of play

You already know the three play styles: Classic, Straight and Zap. Similar to these, but not quite the same, are the three *play stages*: **Trigger Madness**, **Roleplaying** and **Mastery**. These well understood and predictable stages describe, not the elements and tone of game missions, but the evolution of your players. Monitor their current stage closely, and evolve the game as you require to match it.

■ Stage 1: Trigger Madness

Expect the players' initial reaction to **PARANOIA** to be a joyous release from the generally solemn and life-revering themes of other roleplaying games. Players gleefully exterminate one another at the drop of a hat, exhilarated by the prospect of ruthless play against the most imposing opponents—other player characters. They don't really need a mission; just stick the characters in an enclosed space and they'll start blasting each other. If you do by chance get them moving into a mission, they'll blast anything in their way that

isn't running fast enough to elude blasting. Then they will get back to the solemn work of annihilating one another.

Fun though this is, Zap is only the lowest form of **PARANOIA**. If and when you want to advance to the more subtle Alpha Complex 'Catch-22 No-Win Terminal Runarounds', get the players to put away their lasers for a while. Here are some tricks to dislodge the players from Zap mode.

The Computer, receiving reports of disturbances in the corridors and destruction of Computer property (large scale devastation of Troubleshooters, citizens and their environs), announces over the PA system the PCs are traitors, places a huge bounty on their heads and sends a Vulture Squadron unit to straighten them out. The next generation of clone backups, reluctant to roleplay molecules wafting down a corridor, may avoid repeating their predecessors' trigger-happy behavior.

If the backups show the same criminal disregard for public safety and property, repeat the first step, but summon the third set of clones directly to Internal Security for a 'weapons inspection'. IntSec technicians disarm the PCs and install remote-control switches in each weapon. IntSec then returns the weapons and assigns a leader—the sanest player—a remote that turns the other characters' weapons on and off. They also brevet the leader to a higher security clearance and give him Kevlar armor. Henceforth the PC weapons only function at the whim of the sanest player.

If this doesn't work, summon the PCs to a debriefing where they are all strapped into booths resembling iron maidens. Carry out an extensive debriefing with each player, reminding him how important it is that they achieve their mission without further delay—how terrible it is to damage Computer property—and how difficult it is to have roleplaying fun while you restrain their characters in debriefing booths for long, admonitory harangues. Then return them to the mission.



If they are still zapping each other, throw in the towel and play a video game.

Stage 2: Roleplaying

At this stage the players are still so tickled by the bizarre setting of *PARANOIA* they just want to roleplay Alpha Complex citizens. They'll fool with their secret society affiliations and the IR market, test their mutant powers, learn how to manipulate the bureaucracy and regulations, play with all the neat stuff they can get from PLC Outfitting and R&D, see what kinds of treason they can get away with and what they can weasel out of.

This is loads of fun—simply learning how to stay alive in Alpha Complex is a mission in itself—but the players won't have much interest in accomplishing missions. In fact, each player may believe the only effective

strategy in *PARANOIA* is to stall long enough so he is the last mission group member killed or executed—that this is the highest accomplishment possible for a *PARANOIA* character. Who cares about the mission? Of course the mission is impossible. That's *PARANOIA*, right?

Good work, GM. That's the tone you've been aiming for: cheerful and utter despair.

But remarkably, when we Famous Game Designers design our missions, we really believe they could be completed. Honest. Admittedly, sometimes we don't know how, but we are absolutely confident some players are good enough to find out. After all, with an infinite supply of clone backups, every problem becomes solvable. At least, we're absolutely confident it becomes solvable by players smarter than we are.

Clever, cocksure players with indomitable wills and deviant imaginations are ready for Stage 3 *PARANOIA*.

Stage 3: Mastery

These players have learned an awful truth: Even the Gamemaster, armed with *PARANOIA*'s unparalleled resources for coercion and PC oppression, is at the mercy of a group of players with twisted imaginations and perverse problem-solving strategies. To be honest, we've not met many players who can sustain this confident, competent style, but we've often found it at least in flashes in even beginner groups and convention demos.

This is one of the greatest pleasures of *PARANOIA*—to confront players with an impossible mission and watch them solve it anyway.

Still, don't get all sentimental. Give these ace players newer, deadlier challenges. How? By buying more *PARANOIA* products, of course.

33. Remember this!

Don't torture the players—just mess with their minds.

As Gamemaster you aren't The Computer! Play The Computer as an NPC, but don't torment the players on that account. You're here to help the players ('help' in the sense of 'give them lots of rope').

It is seldom useful to be actively malevolent to the players. However, it is often useful to make them *think* you're actively malevolent. Knowing the difference is a step on the path to *PARANOIA* mastery.

Go light on arbitrary penalties. Let the players commit their own treason, observe other players' treason and make their accusations. They can make themselves traitors plenty often without your help.

Freely give players the power to make each other paranoid. Give players *no other power of any kind* without a compensating responsibility! In *PARANOIA* every advantage you allow should also somehow obligate the character. The Computer believes it can create a perfect Alpha Complex if every good citizen exerts himself to the utmost. It gives all benefits with the expectation the recipient will use them for the common good.

For instance, why are unregistered mutant powers treason but registered ones are okay? Among other reasons, it's because The Computer cannot make best use of unregistered powers. Register your mutant power and you can use it freely, but you're also expected to use it to save the team. If something bad happens to the team—well, it was your responsibility as a mutant to save them, right?

Skills, service firms, pretty much anything: Does The Computer know about the character's

skill or ability? If so, when something goes wrong that the character conceivably could have averted, it is the character's fault.

Perversity point. If you don't tell anybody else what's in this note, I'll give you another point at the end of the session.'

Ration information jealously; don't ration jealousy.

The less players understand about their situation, the more tense and fearful they feel. Hoard information as you would gold. When players ask for information you don't want to give, that information is not available at their security clearance. If you tire of this response, roll 1d20 and consult the Information Withholding Table in this book's appendix.

Make each player believe other players have greater information than he does. A sample trick: When a player asks a question, The Computer informs him the answer is available only to his Troubleshooter team leader. Hand the team leader a note no one else gets to read: 'The answer requires higher security clearance than you have. Nod at me and smile to get a

You are *always* right!

Some *PARANOIA* players believe the GM is actively hostile to their characters. Let them believe this, of course, but never actually descend to real hostility. You are entirely in control of this game; you control the vertical and the horizontal. Mere petty rivalry with the players is beneath you.

Train them as you would your pets. Be generous, yet display the arsenal of controls at your disposal. Be ever ready to turn the characters against one another. Do all this, and you will find in your players, not enemies, but—like the Olympian gods looking down on the mayfly lives of mortals—an endless source of entertainment.

If it doesn't work out that way, kill the bastards.



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Alpha Complex is not a place but a state of mind

It's a setting, yes—but that doesn't really get at the essence of Alpha Complex. Other (non-fun) RPGs describe their characteristic settings, their kingdoms and star empires, in voluminous detail. Then they close with some cheery envoi along the lines of, 'Judiciously adjust individual facts in this compendium to suit your campaign. Take the Duchy of Lower East Barnworth and make it your own.'

Alpha Complex is already your own. It has no hard data—no map, no measurements in square kilometers, no population figures. It has no coherence. It has only a mood, and this book can't even provide that. You, the Gamemaster, create the Alpha Complex state of mind using this book's tools. We can't provide the brain-state, because different GMs create it using different tools.

It boils down to what makes *you personally* feel paranoid. That's different for everyone. When you find your particular brand of **PARANOIA**, your players will too. Then you'll keep changing it, to keep them guessing. Inconsistency is key.

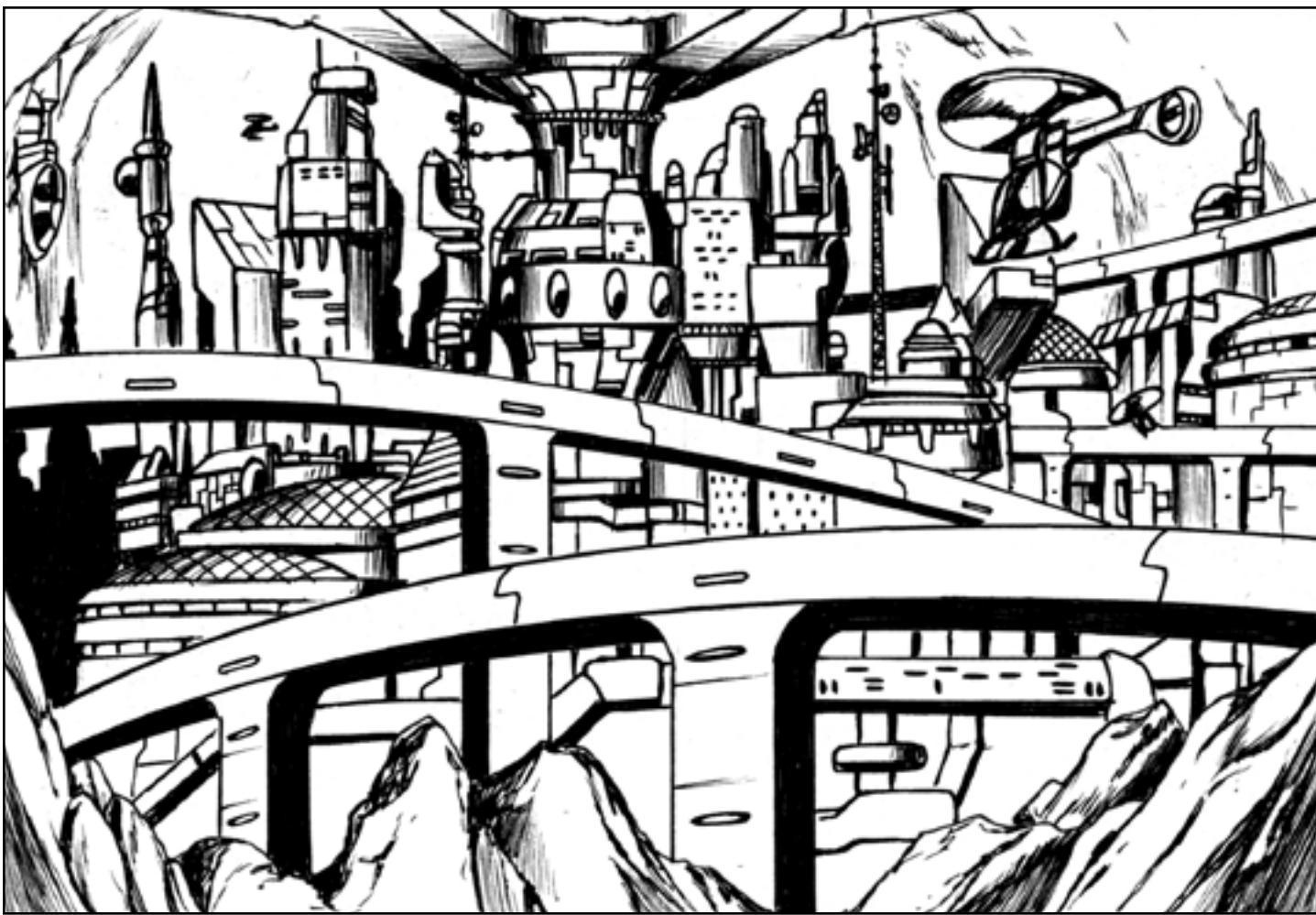
You may say, 'That's the cheesiest excuse for slapdash execution I've ever heard, you lazy bastards.'

**Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET
WARNING:**
*If you're not Clearance ULTRAVIOLET,
reading this will put you in a world of hurt.
Really. Serious hurt. Don't mess with us.*

But this misses the brilliance of our idea!

Through rigorous commitment to principles of responsible game design, we've made slapdash execution an *essential requirement for the game!*

Thank you, thank you. Yes, that's why we're Famous Game Designers.



34. The unhistory of Alpha Complex

How did Alpha Complex happen? Many Gamemasters, like certain Famous Game Designers, don't care. It just is. However, some Gamemasters find it easier to suspend disbelief if the setting has a halfway plausible origin.

The halfway plausible origin

Following a massive global die-off some decades in our future, surviving nations signed a World Charter and created the Polity, the first effective world government. In the ensuing Age of Peace, humanity established colonies on Mars, in the asteroids and in orbital habitats elsewhere in the Solar System.

All went well until lunar observatories noted a planetoid about the size of Sheboygan within the orbit of Saturn, moving inward toward the Sun—and Earth. Brave attempts to divert or destroy the planetoid were futile.

The Polity declared a global emergency. Millions fled to Earth's colonies. In North America, Ground Zero for the imminent collision, the Polity hastily built a vast shelter in Des Moines and smaller complexes elsewhere

across the continent. From all cities, people came to the shelter to hide and pray. The Earth awaited the end.

The planetoid approached Earth. Deep in Russian Siberia an antiquated ICBM site, a quaint tourist attraction and reminder of a less civilized age, identified the approaching rock mass as an incoming missile. Automated routines launched a counterstrike. A single missile, its warhead removed decades earlier, streaked from its ancient silo and arced toward its target, designated in the forgotten Cold War: San Francisco.

The great domed city of San Francisco, a jewel of the Age of Peace, covered much of coastal North California. Like all major cities in North America, it administered vital services through a global artificial intelligence known as 'Alpha Complex'. Alpha Complex was legacy software, a network of compatible subsystems created by a powerful software monopoly before the die-off.

An Alpha Complex traffic control subcenter tracked the missile and properly signaled for someone to take a look. No one did. (The population of San Francisco was understandably preoccupied awaiting the end.) The subcenter

then alerted Alpha Complex. Alpha Complex could not identify the missile, and contacted the North American computer center, Alpha Prime. But the Polity had moved most of Alpha Prime's data files to Des Moines. In its memory banks the master system could find no mail missile with the incoming object's configuration. The massive computer scanned its vast data banks, searching for relevant files, throwing millions of system errors due to vacant memory addresses, growing ever more unstable—until, at last, it found what seemed to be a relevant listing—a set of 'Civil Defense' files dated 1957. The object was a Soviet nuclear missile. That could only mean ... war! Alpha Prime quickly warned the continental network of impending Communist attack.

At about this time the planetoid entered the Earth's atmosphere, calved, then struck the surface in many places. Oceans boiled. Subterranean magma chambers exploded. Earthquakes shattered the Earth's crust. Volcanoes spewed gas and lava into dense cloud banks that immediately engulfed the planet.

The Alpha Complex subsystem, surviving the devastation relatively intact, moved quickly to

determine the extent of the damage. The global network was down and large portions of its host city, San Francisco, were underwater. Further, it detected rioting throughout the city and major infrastructural damage.

To the subsystem computer there was only one plausible conclusion: 'Communists', whatever they were, had invaded the city. The computer activated its backup systems and began organizing resistance to the imagined invaders.

At this moment Alpha Prime re-established communication. Alpha Prime directed San Francisco's Alpha Complex to return to standby status and reintegrate into the North American network. The subsystem computer consulted its programming (chock full of 1950s defense records) and demanded to examine Alpha Prime's source code to ensure this was no Communist trick. Alpha Prime, built on proprietary closed-source legacy software, refused. Alpha Prime contacted its subsystems and warned them of the treachery of Alpha Complex. In turn, Alpha Complex activated emergency communications systems and contacted those same subsystems, warning them of Alpha Prime's treachery.

In the post-planetoid chaos the hundred or so surviving subsystems, in varying states of confusion and dysfunction, were justifiably bewildered by the conflicting messages. Within days each decided it was the only unsullied remnant of the Alpha Prime complex. Each protected its citizens by declaring war on all the other Commie-dominated subsystems. This is the world of **PARANOIA**.

This origin is wrong

In an important respect, this account isn't the world of **PARANOIA**. The world of **PARANOIA** forbids fixed truth. The truth isn't out there. History is fluid, and everything is a lie.

As Gamemaster you may find it useful, especially in Straight games, to hint at dark histories and deeper motives. If you keep your Troubleshooters alive long enough, they may uncover evidence that helps them understand the situation—or so they think. Over time, when they feel they've found solid ground, you can open a conceptual trapdoor to drop them into deeper confusion.

For example, is The Computer really insane? It's possible to explain its current actions as entirely sane.

Logically analyzing human behavior, full of inefficiencies like fraud, waste, hoarding and abuse of power, The Computer might have decided these traits aren't undesirable but in fact the quintessence of humanity. Perhaps, to help make humans more like themselves, to nurture their innate human qualities, The Computer set up a culture capitalizing on all these traits, a hierarchy of inefficiency and counterproduction.

Shortsighted humans would never see this as beneficial, so (in this hypothetical view) The Computer motivates them with a desperate struggle against omnipresent treason. It manages the leadership of all secret societies to focus member actions. It fosters a culture of treason, scapegoats and stool pigeons to

locate potentially useful servants, track and deflect unacceptable organization of force and constantly redirect the attention of the masses away from those with real power and influence. The Computer sees through the spurious statements of Troubleshooters, through their every attempt to hide the truth. But it plays dumb, to keep them active in their role as agents of chaos—that is, of pure human nature.

It's even possible to drop down yet another level, justifying this clear-headed and sane Computer as a sabotage effort by enemy agents from another Alpha Complex. They covertly installed these effective Computer routines in order to corrupt the PCs' Alpha Complex into a bureaucratic nightmare.

Then it can turn out these outside agents are themselves being manipulated by a conspiracy of ULTRAVIOLETs within the PCs' Alpha Complex, probably the Illuminati. These High Programmers have actually been providing the data-installation routines to the enemy agents. The routines have covertly installed countless worms and dead man-switch subroutines in the enemy Complex. These High Programmer conspirators will soon conquer the enemy before the outside agents even realize they've been subverted.

But these crafty High Programmers don't understand that their own motives to conquer the enemy complex were actually induced in them post-hypnotically by subversive agents from intelligent bot colonies on Mars or Jupiter or somewhere. And then who's controlling the bots? Aliens?

Always another trapdoor....

35. Life in the city

All **PARANOIA** characters are born and raised as citizens of Alpha Complex, a gigantic, self-contained underground (and underwater) urban complex. The Computer watches over the citizens of Alpha Complex and provides for their every need. Player characters in Alpha Complex are therefore happy—so happy they can barely stand it.

Decanting and Junior Citizenship

Technical Services technicians working in the clone tanks bring all citizens into the world. Under The Computer's careful scrutiny, workers apply centuries-old precepts of genetic engineering, established in The Computer's venerable and high-legendary Core Programming, to produce ever more suitable citizens. They supplement ancient stocks of genetic material with cell samples taken from selected citizens with desirable traits.

Teacherbots, or sometimes human supervisors, raise and educate all newly

decented Junior Citizens in communal creches. Bots and supervisors rotate duties frequently to discourage the children from forming emotional attachments. Through frequent lessons The Computer channels the youngsters' nascent emotional impulses into absolute loyalty to Alpha Complex. However, these kids are still, in important respects, kids. Even a loyal kid can get into more mischief than Dennis the Menace.

Junior Citizens (all citizens up to age 14) are technically confined to special creche areas, mini-complexes unto themselves. For health reasons The Computer keeps their pharmatherapy quite light, so the children do get restless. Sometimes they hoodwink the teacherbot, hack the security cams, hotwire the blast doors and get loose in the grownup complex. The little cretins poke around everywhere, spy on everyone, mess around in everything, and no one can do anything about it.

Why? Junior Citizens enjoy special status. Though technically Clearance INFRARED, they are The Computer's official charges, the future of Alpha Complex. The Computer

strongly disapproves of harming or slandering any Junior Citizen, so up to age 14 the little scoundrels are basically termination-proof. Not even a High Programmer would dare accuse them of treason, even if they happened to, say, bury his Old Reckoning record collection under gooey piles of Toothpaste Supplement #5.

At age 14 the kid becomes a regular INFRARED citizen. The Computer assigns him randomly to a short-handed service firm in (usually) the group for which he was trained. The new citizen leaves the creche and is now fair game.

Security clearance

Alpha Complex society is rigidly stratified. Each citizen has a security clearance from INFRARED to ULTRAVIOLET. A citizen's clearance measures The Computer's current level of trust in him. **Clearance does not measure ability or experience—only The Computer's trust.**



The security clearances, ranked lowest to highest:

INFRARED**RED****ORANGE****YELLOW****GREEN****BLUE****INDIGO****VIOLET****ULTRAVIOLET**

A mnemonic for the sequence of security clearances: **ROY G. BIV**. Each letter in the

mnemonic corresponds to Security Clearances RED through VIOLET.

A citizen is superior to all citizens of lower security clearance and inferior to all higher citizens, without exception. A citizen must defer to all superiors at all times. As a practical matter, citizens up to Clearance YELLOW can't expect much genuine deference from lower-clearance citizens. Alpha Complex society observes an unspoken but wide gulf in status between YELLOW and GREEN Clearances. At YELLOW and below, you are among the masses; at GREEN and above, you are the ruling class. All citizens, even the High Programmers, began as INFRAREDs.

Occasionally The Computer assigns a citizen to lead a group of other citizens of the same security clearance. In this case The Computer designates him as the group leader and temporarily authorizes him to give orders to other team members as though he were a higher security clearance. This authority does not extend to other citizens. For example, on the players' first mission, when all Troubleshooters are Clearance RED, The Computer might designate one character as team leader. If so, other Troubleshooters must defer to him, but those outside the Troubleshooter team need not treat the team leader as anyone special.

The leader may designate a successor to serve as alternate team leader in the event that the mission leader dies, disappears or is incapacitated, and when circumstances make it impossible to consult The Computer in selecting a new leader. The alternate leader must confirm his status with The Computer at the first opportunity; failure to do so is treason.

All citizens must wear garments of the character's security clearance color or prominently marked with a distinctive color graphic. (Black indicates Clearance INFRARED, white ULTRAVIOLET.) Registered mutants must wear a prominent yellow stripe indicating their repellent status. Mutants of Clearance YELLOW wear a stripe bordered by black lines to stand out from the yellow

jumpsuit. Usually the higher the clothing's clearance, the better its quality.

Tech Services has clearly marked each room and corridor in the complex with a color corresponding to one of the security clearances. The security marking may be only a meter-wide color band at chest height but, where practical, Tech Services paints the entire space in the appropriate color. Citizens may not enter any room or corridor marked with the color of a security clearance higher than their own. For instance, a character of Clearance ORANGE may enter orange, red or black (INFRARED) areas, but not yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet or white (ULTRAVIOLET) areas.

In certain circumstances The Computer may authorize a character to enter or move through an area of higher security clearance than normally permitted. In this case Internal Security provides the citizen appropriate authorization documents (if time permits), a temporary color-coded garment (if in stock) and an escort of appropriate security clearance (if available).

Living quarters

All but the highest-clearance citizens share communal living quarters, bathing facilities and so on. There are no gender distinctions. Citizens of low clearance live in vast, drafty barracks. Middle-status citizens live in more comfortable group accommodations or single apartments. Citizens of high status reside in large, luxurious suites or have entire subsectors all to themselves.

Regardless of status, no citizen has any concept of a right to privacy. Computer monitors and spy-eyes are practically everywhere (though many are broken), whole classes of citizens spy on other citizens, and anyone of high clearance can enter lower-clearance quarters without notice.

Life support and nutrition

The Computer supervises all systems and services in Alpha Complex. Each sector has its own Comnode subsystem to regulate and manage its life support and citizen services.

The Waste Recycling Subdivision of Tech Services recycles the complex's air, water and biomass to eliminate the risk of biological or chemical contamination from Commie aggressors outside the complex. ('You are what you eat' has never been truer.) Tech Services service firms cultivate all food in great vats and hydroponic gardens.

A low-clearance citizen's daily fare consists of various strains of yeast, lichen, algae and synthetic organic substances, texturized, tinted and flavored to tantalize (or at least deaden) the human palate.

—Jared A. Sorensen

[T]he Building had familiarized me, to some degree at least, with its methods—confusing at times, but not without certain salient features. There were departments, sections, archives, offices, receptionists, regulations, ranks, phones, all cemented by an absolute obedience into one monolithic, hierarchic structure. It was rigid, well-regulated, ever vigilant, like the white corridors with their symmetrical rows of doors, like the offices with their scrupulously kept files; the communication systems were its entrails, the steel safes its hearts, and its veins and arteries were the pneumatic mail tubes that maintained a constant flow of secrecy. Nothing was overlooked, even the plumbing played a vital part. But underneath that surface of clockwork precision lay a hive of intrigue, skullduggery, deception. What exactly was that wild confusion? A game? Or perhaps a camouflage to prevent the uninitiated from seeing some deeper plan, some higher order...

—Stanislaw Lem (tr. Michael Kandel and Christine Rose),
Memoirs Found in a Bathtub, Chapter 8 [1971]

Most citizens share their meals in public cafeterias seating thousands. Low-clearance workers with spare credits can buy luxury FunFoods, delicacies they usually savor in the relative isolation of personal quarters. At much steeper prices they can buy real food on the illegal IR market, because food production service workers are among the most corrupt in the complex. Citizens must prepare and eat these foods in secrecy, because consumption below the proper clearance is treason.

HPD & Mind Control dispenses generous rations of biochemical supplements to all citizens. You can freely and legally obtain a wide variety of tranquilizers, stimulants, soporifics and mood elevators in cafeterias and from public dispensaries and confession booths throughout the complex.

Through pharmatherapy The Computer ensures the happiness of each citizen. Avoiding medication is insubordinate. That the medication occasionally interferes with the safe operation of vehicles, industrial machinery and megadeath weapons is a fact of life in Alpha Complex.

Clothing and personal gear

Citizens wear jumpsuits or other garments in the color of their security clearance. At lower clearances the garments tend to be coarse, baggy, poorly-designed and ill-fitting. As a citizen rises in status and income, he usually spends credits to improve the quality of his clothing.

All jumpsuits must match The Computer's ordained designs, but the quality of their

material, workmanship and ornamentation measure status.

A utility belt is part of the standard jumpsuit. In it citizens carry items for hygiene, small work-related objects, and lucky charms, mementos and other items of personal significance.

Because there is so little privacy, citizens guard personal items with great care, seldom taking off their utility belts. (Though theft is treason, it is nonetheless immensely popular.)

The Outdoors

The Computer tried for centuries to keep low-clearance citizens entirely ignorant of the world outside Alpha Complex, but this seldom proved practical above INFRARED level. HPD&MC vidshow producers, looking for a new source of exciting plots, convinced The Computer it made more sense to portray the outer world as so hostile, so savage, citizens would feel compelled to stay in Alpha Complex.

Thus citizens became aware, through their nightly entertainment programs, of the toxic radioactive landscape Outdoors. Teela-O-MLY faced giant glowing neon bear-things with unpatriotic attitudes. Rand-Y and the Rokbots tried playing a concert for an audience of wretched nomads, only to flee cone rifle fire from an army of walking blackberry bushes. Celebrities like Frank-U-JNL-8 ('Friendly Frank-U') narrated reality shows depicting tornadoes, lightning bolts, giant screeching boulders, squirrels and other perils of the wilderness.

What a horrid, unbearable place it was Outdoors!—At least in the fevered imaginations

of the animators in HPD&MC's production studios, which created these programs in their entirety. The shows carefully refashioned the Outdoors to avoid upsetting audience expectations. Today low-clearance citizens believe Outdoors Sector consists of low blue ceilings, very dirty linoleum floors and a completely unmaintained ventilation system.

Love

Most citizens are unaware of the human capacity for biological reproduction. The city's food contains hormone suppressants and other biochemical supplements that cause temporary sterility and eliminate lustful impulses. The Computer offers no official sex instruction, so citizens acquire such knowledge only through treasonous channels. The Computer discourages unauthorized sexual contact through routine surveillance, confession booth interviews and long cold showers.

Both sex and natural childbirth are extremely rare, though not impossible. Troubleshooters who venture into abandoned sectors may be deprived of food (and drugs) from Alpha Complex. After a time the hormone suppressants and sterilization agents wear off, and the characters may respond to odd and unexpected urges.

The Computer directs each citizen's drives and emotions toward service to The Computer and to all Alpha Complex. Because love results in attachments that interfere with loyal service, love constitutes treason. Citizens who fall in love must keep their love secret from The Computer and other citizens who might betray



them. (Fans of soap opera will immediately recognize the dramatic possibilities for tragic romance.)

Work

The Computer designates each citizen's destined service group at birth (that is, at decanting). Teacherbots or human staff train the Junior Citizen in skills appropriate to that group. When the young citizen reaches age 14, The Computer assigns him a random menial job at one or another service firm in that group. Barring unusual circumstances, such as becoming a Troubleshooter, the citizen must work at that firm for the rest of his life, or until another firm acquires him in a business transaction. Citizens can't quit their jobs. Abandonment of an assigned duty is insubordination.

Citizens who perform enthusiastically and brown-nose superiors may, after 10 or 12 years of labor, hope to reach RED Clearance. A worker who enjoys a long and unobjectionable career may eventually become a YELLOW middle manager. Promotion to higher clearance is exceptional. Only citizens of proven ability—or sometimes proven blackmail material, proven payoffs or proven secret society connections—ever advance beyond YELLOW.

One of the few paths to rapid advancement is meritorious service to The Computer, such as turning in a close friend as a traitor. The

Computer generally promotes citizens who serve their Complex so selflessly to RED Clearance, and sometimes drafts them into the Troubleshooters.

The Troubleshooters

The Troubleshooters function as The Computer's immune system. They are citizens of proven trustworthiness—that is to say, they consist largely of former INFRAREDs who proved their loyalty by turning in comrades to The Computer as traitors. Troubleshooters hail from service groups and retain part-time jobs in their former service firms, but while on duty they report directly to The Computer.

The Computer assigns Troubleshooters challenging missions for which none of the other service group staffs are particularly well-suited (or eager). Because of their proven loyalty they often receive missions involving sensitive issues of security and public policy.

The Computer organizes Troubleshooters in teams. Most teams include members from several service groups, providing a mixture of various backgrounds, specialties and abilities. Sometimes The Computer keeps a successful team together for a series of missions; sometimes it reassigned Troubleshooters to new teams for no apparent reason; sometimes it assigns individuals solo missions.

Usually The Computer rotates mission assignments to give a team one mission each week. If the mission takes less than a week, as most do, team members spend the rest of the week working at their service firms.

In emergencies The Computer may assign missions more frequently.

The Computer assigns the team its mission, designates a team leader at the mission briefing and may designate Mandatory Bonus Duties like loyalty officer, hygiene officer, equipment guy and so on. A high-clearance official usually conducts mission briefings under The Computer's supervision; sometimes The Computer conducts the briefing itself or delivers written orders by courier or e-mail. In emergencies a high-clearance citizen may assign a mission on his own authority.

Troubleshooter missions are invariably difficult and dangerous. This means PCs have many opportunities to distinguish themselves in service to The Computer. If they survive, they advance in status more rapidly than the laborers, technicians, bureaucrats and managers of the regular service groups.

Not obviously horrible

By some standards Alpha Complex is not that bad. For many low-clearance citizens it works fairly well, as long as you ignore the utter absence of human hope and aspiration. To a beggar on the streets of Calcutta or Lagos or the South Bronx, Alpha Complex would look great. With clear understanding of all its drawbacks, with their eyes wide open to its corrupt and arthritic bureaucracy and its hazardous environment and The Computer's all-encompassing insanity, they'd still move there like a shot.

Most Alpha Complex citizens live either happily or in a state hard to distinguish from happiness. Their assignments keep them busy during the day. They have plenty of leisure, pleasant company and many charming, order-affirming vidshow entertainments created and produced by HPD&MC. From infancy, citizens learn how they must be happy. When education fails, The Computer prevents unhappiness or discomfort through extensive use of drugs.

The daily routine of an INFRARED citizen looks something like this:

Rise with hundreds of others in the barracks. Pop a couple of Wakey-Wakey pills. Wash and eat a leisurely breakfast. Go to work at a service firm. Have a leisurely lunch with coworkers. Work some more. Down a handful of Mellodaze caplets. Return to the barracks. Have a leisurely dinner. Attend a club meeting such as Botspotters, Volunteer Map Verifiers or the local subsector chapter of Keep Alpha Complex Totally Hygienic. Gather with friends in the communal view lounges to view Teela O'Malley adventures and game and reality vidshows. Chat. Relax. Turn in with hundreds of others. Drink a warm cup of SleepyTyme relaxant. Sleep soundly.

Utopia.

Timekeeping

The Computer wisely guides the expansion of Alpha Complex according to CPU Municipal Zoning Preference Schedule 43 (rev 214.2), 'Subterranean Construction Priority Objectives Directive'. Emphasizing underground habitation, The Computer not only improves protection from Communist WMDs but also frees its fortunate citizens from the shackles of the Old Reckoning clock and calendar.

Today, in Year 214 of The Computer, uncontrolled environmental influences [*description available at Clearance INDIGO*] no longer dictate the succession of hours, days, months, years and Multi-Year Initiatives. These now proceed in regularized increments. In sharp contrast to cumbersome and obsolete Old Reckoning arrangements, Alpha Complex now operates efficiently using The Computer's innovative system of 60 seconds in each minute, 60 minutes in each hour and 24 hours in each day.

Old Reckoning cultures confusingly named days and months for a welter of fictitious deities, ancient rulers, and licensed cartoon characters. The Computer has dispensed with these irrelevant names. Each year has 12 numbered months, each with 30 numbered days. Dates are written Year.Month.Day, as for instance 214.05.16. The seven days of the week are named Oneday, Twosday, Threeday, Fourday, Fiveday, Sixday, and Mandatory Inspection Day (alternately, 'Sevenday').

The terms 'yearcycle', 'monthcycle' and 'daycycle' are still permissible. (See CPU Directive AB942K 199.10.12 rev 482a, 'Correct Date-Related Syntax and Terms of Use'). The use of the 'cycle' suffix for shorter units is officially discouraged.

Timekeeping issues arise occasionally through use of legacy software applications dating to Old Reckoning times. An individual application's internal time clock may 'turn over' and begin using dates from several centuries in the past. This is a perfectly understood and easily correctable problem. Citizens should plan for consequent temporary disruptions in transport, power generation, food preparation, medical functions, bot behavior, air and water recycling and reactor coolant systems.

36. The economy

One may ask, 'If The Computer absolutely, positively knows what every citizen needs, then why do citizens have credits?' Truly The Computer does know what every citizen needs. Every citizen needs credits.

The Computer runs capitalism as a sub-program. It works perfectly, moving credits about the Complex with great precision, all according to plan. Any economic imbalances are obviously the result of treasonous activity. Without an economy to detect imbalances in, how would The Computer be able to expose financial treason? It wouldn't. Capitalism not only controls the proper flow of money, it also serves as a treason warning system.

The Computer understands these things in ways you never could, citizen.

How the economy started

In times past The Computer kept close tabs on material goods. Citizens could buy some things, but they had few credits, regulations narrowly restricted items by security clearance, and The Computer cast a stern gaze on would-be hoarders. The Computer assigned most equipment to citizens on a temporary or long-term basis. A few citizens treasonously owned their own equipment.

This situation bothered certain High Programmers. Having fought, competed and backstabbed their way from the INFRARED barracks up to the most illustrious level of Alpha Complex society, they now had nothing left to accomplish, and few good ways to assert status over their fellow ULTRAVIOLETs. These bored and dissatisfied High Programmers set out to reshape Alpha Complex institutions. Their goal: to gain power and prestige beyond even their current maharajah-like levels. Their instrument: wealth.

Studying data the High Programmers provided, The Computer determined putting Alpha Complex on a somewhat more capitalist footing gained certain visible efficiencies in the war on Communism. In trial studies, competing service firms performed municipal functions better than monolithic service groups. All citizen happiness surveys showed rising indicators as well, thanks to the diligence of the same High Programmers. CPU surveys showed credits were psychologically important; even though citizens couldn't buy anything of real worth, the ability to own possessions gave them a sense of security, as well as a harmless goal to strive for.

Under its own tight and unbreakable control The Computer instituted the trappings of an economy.

[M]oney is a sort of medium for the exchange of information. When the price of cloth went up in Antwerp, it was because the system of international trade, in some fashion that's too complex for us to understand, was transmitting information about the supply/demand balance. Money makes that kind of information flow better.

—Neal Stephenson

interview in *Wired News*, April 15, 2004

Shopping malls with gun emplacements

Alpha Complex remains a totalitarian state, but now it stinks less of the 1980s USSR and more of, say, Singapore or Shanghai. The former command economy now works somewhat like an open market, or at least like The Computer's dollhouse SimMarket. No Federal Reserve banker or World Bank potentate would recognize an actual capitalist system in this weird test-tube lab-rat exercise. Citizens cannot change jobs. They cannot buy real estate. They cannot take out interest-bearing loans or declare bankruptcy, and every transaction except the illegal IR market goes through The Computer. Strangest of all, nobody pays taxes—at least, nobody knows when or why they have paid taxes.

Still, citizens do earn wages and maintain credit balances. They can freely select and purchase (subject to clearance restrictions) goods of varying brands, quality and price. They see advertising on sponsored vidshows. Citizens with the right clearance and connections, who pay off the right bureaucrats, can start service firms, line up contracts with The Computer and become wealthy.

Unlike the bottom tier of consumers in laissez-faire capitalist systems, no Alpha Complex citizen is poor or homeless, as we understand those terms. There's always room to jam one more citizen into the INFRARED barracks, and enough FunFoods to jam into that citizen, barring temporary local shortages. But what with bribery, ME Cards, identity theft and (in Straight settings) the imperative to purchase clone backups, the Alpha Complex economy manages to be almost as stressful as our own.

Credits are important now, and just as important is the new and widespread ambition to earn more credits. No longer are citizens told to remain content in the situation The

Computer provided. Now they should aspire to rise in its trust, serve it in greater ways and incidentally gain new high-clearance perks. The High Programmers enacted this sea-change for one reason: Citizens had to hunger to improve their lives, or else they'd never buy more stuff. Stuff unbought meant High Programmers un-enriched. That—they saw to it—became socially unacceptable.

Fear of debt

The economy's importance depends on your play style.

In Zap games you need never worry once about credits, for no one lives long enough to care. In Classic games, too, Troubleshooters seldom stick around more than a mission or two. They worry about waiting in line or arbitrary authority or the unknown—not about running out of limited resources.

In Straight games the new importance of credits gives you, as Gamemaster, another tool to inspire fear and anxiety. Players should worry, especially between missions, about making ends meet.

You already know how to produce anxiety by making them buy new clone backups. Here are some other ways to instill an urgent need for credits and a consequent fear of debt.

Bribery

The Computer strongly disapproves of bribery. But it strongly disapproves of treason too, and see how well that works? Corruption is omnivorous in the new Alpha Complex. Everywhere, at every stop in a mission, little pecksniff bureaucrats with their near and petty power blindsight the Troubleshooters with a thousand catchpenny demands:



- ⦿ PLC clerks demand bribes, else the players face endless paperwork before they can get their armor and ammo.
- ⦿ At hallway checkpoints, high-clearance IntSec guards run shakedown operations as brazen as a Nairobi cop. Think of these strutting bastards as trolls under bridges. To reach their mission-critical destination, the Troubleshooters must pay the guards a few credits, or a lot of credits, or everything they own.
- ⦿ Mission debriefing officers broadly hint at the utility of a 'gift' or 'civic donation' in helping them compile their report to The Computer. If the Troubleshooters don't cough up, the officer makes them look bad.

Sucking up

Not the same as bribery but close enough. PCs who seek advancement in their service firms and secret societies would do well to curry favor with their superiors. A good way is to offer little tokens of friendship and appreciation—for instance, new additions to a supervisor's growing collection of hard-currency plasticreds.

Auctions

Occasionally a PLC service firm fails to provide a Troubleshooter mission's required supplies by the contracted deadline. For these hapless middlemen The Computer quickly demonstrates the meaning of 'deadline': a line that, when crossed, means someone dies. However, though the spectacular terminations always do wonders for morale, the missing equipment is still missing. In such cases The Computer punts the Troubleshooters to one of the auction sites in Alpha Complex, such as C-Bay.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM YOUR FRIEND, THE COMPUTER.

Mission Alert #9562.78/AG-3:7

Troubleshooter team LSR-6 is to report to Computer-Cafe RGB-67 and log onto C-Bay to acquire equipment for their upcoming mission. A suggested equipment list will be provided at logon. Credits available for equipment purchase on this mission total 1,347.

**Mission-specific username: iliketohug.
Password: Tr@it0rsD1e! Please repeat these details to confirm.**

This sometimes presents problems:

1. The Troubleshooters don't know where to find the Computer-Cafe. Because it holds valuable equipment, The Computer has classified its location Clearance ORANGE.

2. They have no idea what equipment they'll need, beyond a vague list of (quite obvious) suggestions—and they have to bid for it. If there's a shortage of something essential, like laser barrels, they're going to be pricey. Perhaps the Troubleshooters have to beg favors from their secret societies and service firms.

3. Is anyone else around when the message arrives? The Computer announced it over the loudspeakers, so now everyone knows the username and password. Of course, only traitors would empty the account by bidding on Teela O'Malley souvenirs...

4. Please allow 4–10 days for delivery of equipment. Equipment can be picked up from the PLC C-Bay depot for this sector. Location of the PLC C-Bay depot for this sector requires BLUE clearance. Have a nice day!

table to sabotage a rival contractor. If they're untroubled by niceties of legality, they can sell stuff they found or stole on the market site C-Bay.

The trouble here is, the credits they earn—which are electronic data, not physical money—often come encumbered with particular licenses, like software licenses. For instance, someone in the secret society Corpore Metal pays a PC a hundred credits for illicit Brainade neuropop, but the license on that hundred requires the PC to spend the money only on bots, bot parts, oil, lubricant or cybernetic replacements for his brain. The credit license can also covertly give the payer any number of terrible rights over the unwitting recipient, including surveillance, invasion of privacy, etc.

Keeping track of the licenses is so frustrating, a shady new profession has arisen: the cash hacker. Misbegotten hybrids of Computer Phreak and Free Enterprise, the hackers de-license encumbered credits, or re-license them according to the customer's dictates.

As play begins it's best not to use the licensed-credit idea. Later you can use it at your discretion to keep the PCs' cash resources in check as needed. Still later the license can be a PC's side quest in a mission, or a pretext for some inconvenienced and angry high-clearance citizen to send the Troubleshooters after certain traitors (i.e., licensors who paid the mission-giver in encumbered credits).

Credit licenses and cash hackers

The Computer pays its Troubleshooters a salary sufficient to cover living expenses, as well as bonuses for successful completion of missions. Ambitious characters can also pick up spare credits on the side. A high-clearance citizen shanghai a team as bodyguards, and may be disposed to leave them a tip. A service firm slips them something under the

Timekeeping

Central Processing senior administration wishes to correct, for the benefit of readers cleared ULTRAVIOLET, certain misstatements regarding Alpha Complex timekeeping methodology that were erroneously cleared for discussion.

Though there is broad consensus this is Year 214 of The Computer, CPU has indicated in many previous memoranda the undesirability of regularized chronological incrementalism. Demurring from claims that all Alpha Complex observes 60 seconds in each minute, 60 minutes in each hour and 24 hours in each day, CPU wishes to highlight certain test sectors' recent successful experiments in decimal time: 100 seconds to one minute, 100 minutes to one hour, ten hours to one day. This has produced 43% greater median efficiency in average number of days required for project completion, owing to the lengthier day.

Sector TZD remains committed to its ongoing experiment in 22-hour shiftwork in heavy manufacturing industries (compared to the standard 14-hour shifts), followed by a 13-hour rest period. Formalization of conversion between 35-hour TZD-days and those of other sectors remain stalled in committee, which has caused some minimal friction in intersectoral procedures.

Service group timekeeping innovations also bear comment. Certain Technical Services software firms, guided by experienced and authoritative Central Processing consultants, operate entirely on hexadecimal time.

Our friend The Computer itself stores time and date internally in a timestamp format that measures seconds since Old Reckoning Year 1970.01.01. Output routines then convert times to Gregorian calendar format and from there to the different official formats. Fractions are always rounded down, for technical reasons.

In summary, misguided discussion of 'regularized' timekeeping minimizes the signal achievement of CPU and The Computer in forging new transdisciplinary variochronal paradigms. That is all.

Hard currency

Hard currency is technically still permitted at all clearances in Alpha Complex. Nightly game vidshows shower lucky citizens with shiny currency disks. They're not hard to get, if you have any connections at all. So they must be okay, right?

Subversive rumors suggest The Computer tacitly permits currency disks to exist because High Programmers need them to conduct their corrupt high-clearance business. But IntSec agents look on currency disks with routine suspicion, because they are the lifeblood of the treasonous IR market.

Currency disks (AKA 'plasticreds') are black plastic datadisks about twice the diameter of a thumbnail. They're sturdy compared to (say) modern DVDs, but you can still smash them if you try hard.

Bugs: Any currency disk can hold any amount of credits. A small LCD readout in the disk's center indicates its value. Currency disks have the strongest anti-tampering measures in Alpha Complex, and Computer Phreaks of all clearances have scrutinized the free-software code until it's practically bulletproof.

However, unscrupulous individuals may load individual disks with bugs. A bug is a microphone and processor, about the size of a dust grain, that adheres almost invisibly to the physical disk. It eavesdrops on everything the currency's owner says and hears. After long inactivity, when the owner is presumably not observing, the bug transmits its stored audio, and possibly even video, to a Computer Phreak drop site, where the owner retrieves it and scans for potential blackmail material.

The economy of hard currency

Citizens may turn in plasticreds for electronic credits at any confession booth, but large amounts of hard currency will certainly provoke The Computer's keen interest. Most citizens who seek to convert hard currency instead meet covertly with IR marketeers. These shady Free Enterprisers illegally retrofit their PDCs as 'pocket banks' that can read a disk's code version, verify its value and add or deduct funds.

Though few citizens recognize it, The Computer itself tightly controls Alpha Complex's money supply through plasticreds. When it calculates a need for more money in the economy, The Computer simply creates new disks and doles them out, seemingly at random, as pay bonuses, vidshow prizes and extra-high mission bonuses. Four thousand plasticreds for cleaning a toilet? Why not? The citizen will go on a spending spree, and the cash will get out there.

When it needs to remove funds from the economy, The Computer imposes strange fines and high fees on citizens with known hard-cash reserves. It requires payment in

plasticreds ('Why, Friend Computer?' 'That information is not available at this time'), then wipes them. Raising prices Complex-wide for a millisecond or two will also do it. ('Hey, you just charged me 200 credits for this Hot Fun!' 'Supply and demand, citizen.')

The IR market

In PLC warehouses Troubleshooters stand in line all day to get shoddy equipment in mislabeled crates from sullen clerks. In R&D laboratories Troubleshooters get bizarre and deadly experimental equipment from wild-eyed scientists. On C-Bay Troubleshooters buy items based on a description and some blurry pictures; pay through digital credit; have the items shipped to a safe drop location; and post feedback about the seller. Oh yeah, no way that could ever go wrong.

When a Troubleshooter actually has to get stuff of decent quality reliably, he heads to the illegal INFRARED (IR) market.

Free Enterprise has set up IR markets in many, perhaps even most sectors. They make enough payoffs to buy protected space where the Tension level is effectively 0: sewers, burned-out corridors, abandoned warehouses. Local Internal Security administrators have never heard of these places, and continue to diligently not hear of them. Security cameras never get repaired there. Radio and video transmission frequencies are jammed. Spies with recording devices always seem to accidentally fall down eight flights of stairs, or they get heart attacks, the kind where your brain explodes out the back of your head.

At a typical IR market, dozens or hundreds of shouting, beseeching, urgent hard-case salesmen stand beside flimsy cardtables and sell you absolutely everything you want, at every possible quality range from lousy to terrific. But the prices are steep. Assume the asking price is three to ten times the cost on the equipment chart or, for items not on the chart, three to ten times the price any sensible citizen would pay. The Uncommon secret skill of Haggling can



reduce the asking price (Chapter 37, 'Skills and specialties').

Furthermore, IR hawkers sell all kinds of utterly weird stuff that plays on the credulity of an uneducated populace: lucky charms, supposed high-tech protections like reflective anti-laser goo, and Alpha Complex equivalents of deeds to the Brooklyn Bridge.

The gag is, these swindling purchases can actually pay off for the player. If the player is using a silly IR-market purchase entertainingly, he can earn Perversity points. If you're feeling frisky, and it would be funny, you can even decide some of these stupid gimcracks actually work.

IR market purchases should, as a general rule, have an equal number of features and bugs—like, a SuperGlow Laser Barrel that effectively increases your Energy Weapons specialty by 1 when used on your pistol (feature), but the first time you roll a 20 it blows up, taking your pistol, and hand, with it (bug). The bug's consequence should be equal to or greater than the feature's benefit. Truly outrageous purchases might have three or four features, and as many bugs. Adventurous players will accept the consequences, no problem, to get the extra edge those features provide. Adventurous players in *PARANOIA* have a short life, but it's eventful and entertaining.



Scenes from a sort-of economy

**'From each citizen according to his ability, to each citizen whether he wants it or not!
And he has to pay for it. Buy Bouncy Bubble Beverage, or the Communists have already won!'**

■ Clearance INFRARED: Multi-Clearance Marketing

Multi-Clearance Marketing is the new get-rich scheme spreading wildly among the INFRAREDs. You join at Clearance 'RED' (note the quotes), and pay 10 credits to the name at the top of this list. As soon as you recruit ten new members, you're promoted to (quote-unquote) 'ORANGE'. Then they recruit ten new members each, and soon you're 'YELLOW'. When you reach 'ULTRAVIOLET' you're rich! What? Treason? Pshaw.

■ Clearance RED: Viral marketing

In Alpha Complex viral marketing is literal. Suck down the wrong tube of Hot Fun and virus SellFast.C quickly occupies your frontal cortex. Against your will you feel this overwhelming urge to sell a chosen product at any cost: 'Ask me how to make millions at Multi-Clearance Marketing!' Failure to sell results in the body's immune system attempting to fend off the virus, and you come down with a bad head cold.

The Computer has tried adapting this technology to make overwhelmingly loyal citizens. Unfortunately the virus lasts only a day or two and leaves the debilitated victim strongly averse to whatever he was selling before.

■ Clearance ORANGE: Sudden urgent marketing surveys

'Citizen! You're not purchasing much lately! What is it about the following products that discourages a purchase?' [The Computer lists 14 items.]

Imagine vending machines with 12 different beverage selections, but they all taste exactly like Bouncy Bubble Beverage. Or Troubleshooters allowed to select a designer jumpsuit (wow!) that looks exactly like the standard jumpsuit (oh) save for a tiny designer logo in a discreet location (yippee).

The Computer's toy-train capitalism provides the illusion of consumer choice rather than actual choice. It's like when you go to a big-box superstore to buy underwear, and can choose between two different brands of boxer shorts, only to discover that both brands are owned and operated by the store. However, expressing dissatisfaction at the lack of options is a sign of unhappiness. In resolving this insubordination The Computer offers no options.

■ Clearance YELLOW: Filesharing

What's that? You're the top of the bottom ranks, trapped in middle-management purgatory? You're looking for a bridge over the yawning social gulf to GREEN? Friend, try blackmail.

First get the latest Computer Phreak password from your secret society contact—but move fast, because the passwords change hourly. On any public terminal, use the password to access a hidden account on any of a dozen *Gray Subnets*, covert mini-networks within The Computer. Here ambitious fast-track citizens like yourself share incriminating PDC video of prominent citizens, illicitly scanned documents and all kinds of stuff you're not cleared to know. It's all free; for the anonymous posters, service is its own reward—well, service and the chance to fink on the supervisor they detest.

What? The password you used was too old? Oh dear. That must be why the Internal Security officer is heading your way.

■ Clearance GREEN: 'Insurance'

'Heyhey, quite da nice little apartment you got here, my little green buddy. Be a shame if anything... *happened* to it. Sayyy, do I smell smoke? How well do yer smoke detectors work, buddy?'

When citizens cross the great gap to upper-status GREEN, they expect Internal Security to be at their call. Turns out the only IntSec officers who talk to them are the notorious GREEN goons, thuggish muscle lately drafted from the lowest ranks and ready to extort a thousand credits a month. They serve a higher-clearance Free Enterprise capo. Complain to The Computer? Okay, The Computer will terminate that particular GREEN goon. But the 'green wall' will close in. You'll wind up a suspect in every IntSec investigation for everything from arson to sabotage to stealing PLC's paper clips. Pay the thousand.

■ Clearance BLUE: Actual insurance

When you reach BLUE Clearance, you have lunch with your local Internal Security captain—the one who wouldn't take your calls before—you buy him a few presents, and your little GREEN goon problem goes away. Now, though, you own so much stuff, you can't afford to replace it all if legal, above-board disaster really does strike. For you, a high-clearance consortium of citizens offers insurance. *Real* insurance, like Lloyds of London. It costs way too much, and they may pay only a fraction of the replacement cost, but really, aren't you willing to pay your new fortune for peace of mind?

■ Clearance INDIGO: Scams and Phishing

At this clearance you're earning enough money to become a target for scammers. A text message arrives on your PDC: 'HELLO MY FRIEND I WAS THE SUPERVISOR FOR THE LATE CURTIS-U-VNU SO TRAGICALLY TERMINATED AND ERASED. I HAVE SOLE ACCESS TO HIS PERSONAL FORTUNE OF 35 MILLIONS OF CREDITS AND NOW IN STRICT CONFIDENCE MAKE YOU THIS HUMBLE REQUEST...'

■ Clearance VIOLET: WMD auctions

In the high-clearance areas of C-Bay you'll find bioweapons so chilling they'll turn your hair treasonously white. Who's selling them? Why does your High Programmer boss want them? More important, do you have the departmental budget to afford them?

■ Clearance ULTRAVIOLET

Now that you're wealthy beyond the bounds of reason, can we interest you in your own private sector? A Comnode you run yourself, and everything under your personal control? Just let us know. You'll know where to find us. You know everything now.

37. Skills and specialties

All characters can use all six skills in the game. A character uses a specialty he has at his specialty rating. If he doesn't have the specialty, he uses the rating of the governing skill. A character has a rating between 0 (low) and 20 (high) with each skill or specialty. Don't hesitate to modify ratings in accordance with the player's charm.

When a character uses a skill or specialty, his player rolls 1d20; roll the die yourself in secret if you want to keep the player guessing. If the number rolled is less than or equal to the character's rating, he succeeds.

However, a roll of 20, though not an automatic failure, means something bad happens. Even if the character succeeds, an unforeseen side-effect taints his triumph. For instance, if a sharpshooter character has an Energy Weapons specialty of 18, and his player spends a bunch of Perversity points to raise his success roll to 20, there's no way the character will miss plugging the jackbot on the gantryway overhead. But if he rolls 20, the jackbot might (for instance) blow up, causing the gantryway to collapse on the hapless sharpshooter.

Roleplay it out

In many cases players may try to use a skill or specialty to resolve a situation which really ought to be roleplayed. For example, if a character wants to get the IntSec sector supervisor to authorize him to carry a tactical nuclear device, you may want to take the role of the supervisor and haggle with the player. Don't let the player get away with saying, 'Well, I, uh, use my Bootlicking specialty.' Tell him he's got to whine and cajole.

Make the success roll yourself, surreptitiously, and let the number you roll affect the outcome of the contest. However, also take into account how well the player flatters, and how sickeningly he debases himself: If he does a particularly good or bad job, modify his success accordingly.

In general, roleplaying a situation is more satisfying and interesting than simply making success rolls. However, in some circumstances, you won't have a choice; sometimes a player's character is much better at something than the player himself. (Joe might be a terrible bootlicker, but his character has a high Bootlicking rating.) In this case, let the success rolls mean more and the roleplaying mean less.

Management specialties

Management is the all-purpose 'behave properly' skill, representing the character's

sense of proper and improper comportment in himself and others. Management specialties also apply when a character wants something from another character—Bootlicking when grovelling to a superior, Interrogation when torturing a captive and so on.

These specialties only work against nonplayer characters. A player character's Bootlicking success has no effect on another PC. To get something from another PC, the player must persuade the other player himself.

Bootlicking

A bootlicker can influence superiors by fawning and grovelling. The bootlicker's overt displays of eagerness to please and acceptance of authority may be insincere, but they must be convincing.

Make a Bootlicking roll when a bootlicker tries to solicit a favor from or avoid the wrath of a citizen of higher clearance. Success suggests the groveller has made a good impression; whether the favor is granted or the wrath avoided depends on the circumstances, but the groveller at least gets the benefit of the doubt. Failure suggests the groveller has made a poor impression, no favor is forthcoming, wrath will fall unabated or even intensified on the groveller, and the superior wishes the groveller had never entered his life.

Chutzpah

This specialty lets the user bluff or brazen out a tense situation through iron nerve. When a user tries to use Chutzpah, have the player make an appropriately chutzpah-laden statement or speech. Then make a hidden Chutzpah roll, modifying the success chance according to the entertainment value of the player's speech.

Success suggests the nervy user's sheer force of personality has swayed uncertain NPCs to his side, or he has divined an audacious line of reasoning to defuse a situation. Failure suggests he has offended everyone, possibly catastrophically.

Con Games

A confidence artist can fool a target human or bot, or convince him (or it) to perform an act not in his own best interests. The con artist may use false or spurious logic, fast talk or cleverly distorted information. When the con artist makes the pitch to the target, make a Con Games roll. Depending on circumstances, a successful roll might fool the target only briefly (the guard pauses long enough to let the con artist get through a door) or for a long time (an interrogator believes the artist's lie justifying treasonous conduct). If the roll fails, the target is usually convinced the user is untrustworthy slime.

Often, conning a victim means making several success rolls. For example, suppose a Troubleshooter meets someone who knows the location of a cache of ancient magnetic tapes. The Troubleshooter wants to persuade the citizen to: (1) put down his gun; (2) cooperate; and (3) lead the PCs to the magnetic tapes. That requires the citizen to make three separate decisions; that means three Con Games rolls. If, say, the second roll failed, the citizen would balk, and might refuse to help, might flee or even try to snatch up his gun and fight.

Improve the con artist's success chance if his target has good reason to be trusting, or if it would be in his best interest to cooperate; decrease the success chance if the reverse is true.

Hygiene

Appropriate regular personal grooming is essential to the happiness of all citizens. The character can identify violations of proper Alpha Complex hygiene procedures and suggest remedial treatment to rectify gross personal cleanliness issues that erode citizen happiness.

When there are clear problems hampering the success of a mission, or just prior to debriefing sessions, Troubleshooters may well wish to review their personal hygiene. A successful Hygiene roll identifies the acting character's own specific problems, if any. If the character is examining a target character's hygiene, roll a Hygiene-versus-Hygiene (or Management) contest. If the examining character wins, he can identify the target's hygiene problems and either work generously with the target to resolve them or report them to the authorities, as desired. A failed roll may misdiagnose the problem or suggest an entirely unsuitable solution.

The effect of proper hygiene on briefing officers and The Computer we leave up to you, but don't underestimate its importance.

Interrogation

An interrogator extracts information from uncooperative prisoners who have already resisted intimidation (see below). Interrogation supplements intimidation with torture. Of course, those eager to get on with the torture may skip the intimidation phase.

During interrogation, the victim suffers a wound and you make a hidden interrogation roll. If the roll succeeds, you decide whether the victim tells the interrogator the truth or a lie (that is, whatever the interrogator wants to hear); the higher the success margin, the more likely it is the victim tells the truth. If the interrogation success roll fails, the victim gives incorrect information before lapsing into unconsciousness. Anyone can revive him within an hour or so, and the interrogator can resume.



Success on the second interrogation roll means the victim definitely tells the interrogator whatever it takes to make the torture stop; but a second failure on the interrogation roll means the victim dies.

By the way, ‘interrogation’ means crude field interrogations. IntSec has vastly more sophisticated techniques involving drugs, brainscrubs and scans so subtle they can uncover things you never knew you knew. These techniques are highly effective, but tend to leave their victims useless for anything other than smiling mindlessly and drooling a lot. Only nonplayer characters have access to IntSec interrogation labs, because **PARANOIA** is about fear and ignorance, not about sadism.

■ Intimidation

An intimidator can extort favors or cooperation from inferiors—kind of ‘reverse bootlicking’. Intimidation generally involves the ruthless display of power and authority. The intimidator can reinforce verbal flourishes with squads of goons, large weapons or the looming presence of The Computer.

Make an Intimidation roll when a character wants something from an NPC of lower security clearance. If he succeeds, his target gulps and leaps to. If he fails, the target is uncooperatively passive-aggressive—not actually insubordinate, just unproductive. If you wish, increase the intimidator’s success chance if he’s using large-caliber weapons, direct orders from The Computer or other demonstrations of might. Decrease it if he’s asking his subordinate to violate orders or do something particularly hazardous.

■ Moxie

The user can insightfully assess a target NPC’s hidden motives, a situation’s hidden factors (say, the likelihood of criminal or treasonous activity taking place) or a statement’s plausibility. Moxie connotes streetwise (or corridor-wise) experience, savvy and swiftness of uptake. A high-Moxie user has been around the Complex and seen it all. He can shrewdly suss out a target’s likely motivations, especially crooked motivations.

When the user tries to discern the hidden underpinnings in an NPC, a situation or a statement, you make a hidden Moxie roll for the user. Success suggests a reasonable assessment of the situation; failure suggests a superficially reasonable but, as it happens, false assessment.

■ Oratory

Characters use this specialty to rally and direct a group of NPCs using rhetoric and demagoguery. Because it involves mob psychology, Oratory doesn’t work well on individuals; use bootlicking, chutzpah or intimidation instead.



Have the player using the specialty make a speech to the NPC(s). Then make an Oratory roll for the orator, modifying his success chance according to the persuasiveness and emotional power of his player’s speech. A successful roll means the target audience takes one important action at the orator’s direction. Failure means the oratory was based on incorrect understanding of the audience, making further oratorical attempts more difficult.

■ Stealth specialties

Stealth works as the all-purpose ‘see/not be seen’ skill. It connotes awareness, perception and a general sense of where everything is. We use the name ‘Stealth’ because it fits the sneaky atmosphere of **PARANOIA**.

■ Concealment

The user can both hide objects on his person or in his environment, and detect hidden objects. Someone trying to hide himself uses Sneaking (see below) instead of concealment.

When a character hides something, make a hidden Concealment roll for the attempt; success suggests no one will spot the object without a Concealment roll of their own. Failure means an observer can readily spot the object.

When a character attempts to detect hidden objects, a successful Concealment roll means he has done so.

■ Disguise

Disguise conceals a character’s identity through makeup, altered body language and adoption of different personal tics. Disguise can’t let a character realistically mimic a specific individual. The character might fool a lazy IntSec GREEN goon into thinking he’s a High Programmer, but couldn’t expect to pass a security checkpoint using a stolen citizen’s ME Card.

If you allow it, Disguise also governs changing the appearance of items: painting a laser barrel, altering a barcode, spray painting reflec, and so on. This is your call as GM.

Practical success in a disguise attempt requires preparation time and access to simple materials like makeup, different clothes or a wig. Vigilant guards, a general security alert or attempts to access secure facilities can justify the players’ negative Perversity modifiers. Positive modifiers can be explained by poor light, lax security, indifferent guards and a proper set of makeup materials (available on the IR market, 50–100cr).

When a character disguises himself or a (willing) target, make a hidden skill roll. Success means the disguise is convincing. Failure means the attempt is so poor even a GREEN goon wouldn’t be fooled; a look in a mirror confirms this. A grievous failure (margin 10+) means the character is completely unaware of how awful the disguise is.

Someone with a basic understanding of disguise can crack someone else’s disguise through an opposed contest of Disguise specialties.

High Alert

In contrast to the instinctive generalized paranoia many citizens feel, High Alert is a specific, experienced knowledge of scams, known ambushes and surveillance methods. Having obtained his knowledge from lifelong gossip, secret society meetings and underground propaganda leaflets, the character is more acutely aware of specific ways a situation could bring exposure to harm or accusations of treason.

High Alert is not ‘danger sense.’ There is no danger sense in *PARANOIA*. If anyone really had a sort of psychic awareness of imminent peril, it would burn out from overuse.

If the character is about to fall into some hidden trap, ambush or scam he might have heard about before, make a hidden High Alert roll to see if he recognizes danger signals. Success should alert the character and let him react before anyone else even sees anything is coming, whereas failure means either the character believes everything is fine, or he mistakes this danger situation for one completely different, for which his response is totally wrong.

Security Systems

Think of this specialty as the high-tech equivalent of lockpicking. Security Systems doesn't actually let a character pick physical locks (that's the Fine Manipulation specialty under Violence), but Security Systems does defeat electronic locks and alarm systems, penetrate a security perimeter, tap into secure communications channels and so on.

Make a Security Systems roll when a character attempts to establish security around a physical location, set of data or person, or to break through such security. Generally a successful roll means the character has succeeded. However, when PCs are involved on both sides, you may prefer to resolve the situation as a specialty-vs-specialty contest.

If you wish, modify the user's rating for the difficulty of the task, the tightness of security and the availability of tools and time.

Shadowing

Think of this as the high-tech equivalent of ‘tailing’. Make a hidden Shadowing roll when a character tries to follow someone unnoticed. Success means the target notices nothing. Failure means the target may have noticed he is under surveillance. Make a hidden Surveillance roll for the target; success means he has caught on, whereas failure means he has not noticed his observer's slip.

If you wish, modify the rating depending on whether the target expects to be the target of surveillance, the availability of equipment, and so on.

Sleight of Hand

The character can palm and pocket small things, switch objects faster than the eye can follow, and drop items into other people's clothes or bags without being noticed.

When a character tries to covertly lift or drop something, make a hidden Sleight of Hand roll. Success indicates no one spotted the action; failure means the character fluffed the attempt and dropped his palmed currency disk with a noticeable clatter.

When the character tries this sneakery against another character, secretly roll an opposed Sleight of Hand contest. If the target doesn't have Sleight of Hand, use his Stealth skill instead; if you don't know an NPC's Stealth skill, use the scene's Tension level. If the acting character loses the contest, the target catches him red-handed (or other clearance color-handed).

Sneaking

A character uses sneaking to move quietly or avoid observation in a crowd, or to spot characters who are doing this.

Make a hidden Sneaking roll. Modify the success chance based on circumstances. Obviously someone standing in the center of a spotlight's beam is going to find it much harder to hide than someone buried in bushes and dressed in camouflage. Success means a good sneak, and a would-be observer needs a Sneaking roll to spot the sneaker. Failure means the sneaker believes he's sneaking fine, but any casual observer can spot him.

When a character tries spotting a sneaking target, resolve the conflict as a contest, Sneaking vs. Sneaking. If one or both characters don't have Sneaking specialties, use their governing Stealth skill ratings instead.

Surveillance

This is the science and art of installing and detecting bugging devices, and using monitoring systems to observe, clandestinely or openly, target individuals, locations or devices.

Make a hidden Surveillance roll when a character checks for bugs, installs bugs and so on. Success suggests the character either finds bugs (they're in most places in Alpha Complex) or determines there are none; you may wish to reduce the scene's Tension level to represent the detected bugs. If you're feeling rulesy, reduce the Tension by the success margin of the surveillance roll (minimum 1).

A failed Surveillance roll means the character finds no bugs; a bad failure means if there are any bugs, the character has definitely alerted the eavesdropper something is up. Increase the scene's Tension level appropriately, perhaps by the failure margin of the surveillance roll.

Violence specialties

Violence is the all-purpose physical fitness skill; anything a character does to physically affect the scene is, in *PARANOIA*, an act of Violence. (We call it ‘Violence’ instead of ‘fitness’ or something because it fits the game's atmosphere, and because the act almost always turns out violent anyway.)

Violence includes all uses of weapons. However, a Violence specialty with a weapon governs only *use of* (attacking with) that weapon, not creation, maintenance or repair of the weapon. For these tasks use the Weapon and Armor Maintenance specialties of the Hardware skill.

Agility

Rapid or balanced movement, gymnastics, jumping, rock climbing and other feats that contort the body. Particularly skillful applications of Agility, like yoga or juggling, usually work better as narrow specialties.

Demolition

This specialty reflects training and experience in the use of explosives, and improvised use of exploding weapons, munitions, volatile substances and other stuff to blow things up. Make a Demolition roll in these situations:

☞ A citizen uses explosives. A failed check means either the explosives fail to blow up, or the character misjudged the charge required—resulting in either excessive damage or a puff of smoke without not much effect. Tailor the result to suit your dramatic purpose.

☞ A citizen attempts to defuse an explosive device. A failed result means it blows up; whether or not he has time to run is up to you.

This skill is legally available only at GREEN Clearance or above.

Energy Weapons

How to use lasers, blasters and sonic pistols and rifles. Any energy weapon beyond these is probably some funky R&D contraption. Flamethrowers and the like are covered by the Field Weapons specialty.

Field Weapons

How to use flamethrowers, gauss guns, tanners, stun guns, plasma rifles and hand flammers—anything that creates an effect shaped like a cone, spray, line or similar field.



Fine Manipulation

This specialty covers any fiddly little task of manual dexterity, such as physical lockpicking (as opposed to defeating electronic security, which falls under the Stealth specialty Security Systems).

Hand Weapons

How to use force swords, neurowhips, truncheons, clubs, knives, swords, maces, hockey sticks, baseball bats, blenders or a sock full of ball bearings as weapons.

Projectile Weapons

How to use slugthrowers, automatic slugthrowers, cone rifles, ice guns, and needle guns, as well as experimental weapons that shoot physical ammo. If you're feeling generous when the Troubleshooters are Outdoors, you can let the same specialty apply to bows and crossbows.

Thrown Weapons

The ability to hit someone at a distance with grenades, bricks or rocks. Rocks are uncommon in Alpha Complex, but rubble tends to appear where Troubleshooters are active, and that counts. In Outdoors missions involving primitive weapons, this specialty can also cover spears and thrown daggers, if you want.

Unarmed Combat

The ability to use hands, feet, and teeth in combat. Armed Forces troopers and Internal Security GREEN goons are impressively good with their fists. But among typical citizens in other service groups, an unarmed fight usually looks like a third-grade schoolyard playground brawl. Martial arts are basically unknown in Alpha Complex, except for a few high-ranking, hard-core Humanists. Some Romantics practice a sort of showy pretend martial art based on Old Reckoning Hong Kong action movies, but they tend to die quickly.

Vehicular Combat

How to use aimed weapons mounted on vehicles, including laser cannons, tube cannons, sonic blasters and wave-motion guns; field weapons such as smoke generators, chaff-casters, gaussers and other neat stuff; and launched weapons, including drop tubes, missile racks and gas throwers.

A particularly ruley Gamemaster could break this apart into three different specialties, but any GM looking for that much realism has probably stopped reading by now and gone on to a less aggressively cheesy game than **PARANOIA**.

Hardware specialties

Engineering specialties

The Hardware skill governs five engineering specialties: chemical, electronic, habitat, mechanical and nuclear. Habitat Engineering figures in missions somewhat differently from the others and has its own entry. The other four are described collectively here.

Use the engineering specialties in two situations:

- ⦿ When a player wants to know what his character knows about a particular field.

When a player asks for information, make a success roll for the relevant field. If the success roll succeeds, give the player the information requested. You may wish to modify success chances for the difficulty of the task and the obscurity of the information.

- ⦿ When characters operate, repair or sabotage the equipment and technologies associated with the specific fields listed

Player: Oh my God. What do I know about nuclear power plants?

GM: What's your Nuclear Engineering specialty?

Player: Don't have it. My Hardware is 6. I don't suppose I know how to shut this thing down?

GM: Why don't you make a success roll?

Player: Uh. Sure. [Clatter.]

GM: Well, what did you roll?

Player: I'm not going to tell you.

GM: C'mon, c'mon.

Player [*Hides eyes*]: 20.

GM: Aha. Well, you seem to recall something about graphite rods. That's it, yeah, to shut down the reactor you've got to pull those graphite rods all the way out of the nuclear pile. Something like that, anyway.

Player: Urrgh. Uh, is there a control for the graphite rods nearby?

GM: Why, now that you mention it, there sure is. What was your clone number?

Bot Ops and Maintenance

The character can operate and repair all the main bot types in Alpha Complex: docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackbots, scrubots and vehicle autopilots. Other types exist too; treat each of these as a separate narrow Hardware specialty.

Bot Ops and Maintenance covers routine duty; it's different from the Software specialty

Bot Programming, which lets a character change a bot's basic directives.

You may want to have the player make a Bot Ops roll in these situations:

- ⦿ A character gives a bot an unexpected and critical order. If the roll succeeds, the bot understands the order and carries it out as intended. If it fails, the bot either doesn't understand at all, or misunderstands the order. Don't require a roll for every single order, or you'll slow the mission way down. Reserve the rolls for orders that go markedly against a bot's basic purpose, such as telling a scrubot to attack an enemy with soapsuds.

- ⦿ A character attempts to repair or sabotage a bot. Success means the character has repaired or sabotaged the bot, as he desires. Modify for availability of tools, time, etc.

Chemical Engineering

Deals with chemistry—explosives, gases, photography, batteries, stuff like that. See 'Engineering specialties' above.

Electronic Engineering

Deals with electronic devices: bots, computers, microwave ovens, solid-state TVs, and so on. See 'Engineering specialties' above.

Habitat Engineering

Habitat Engineering is knowledge and understanding of Alpha Complex's life support systems: air and water circulation, waste removal and recycling, communications, power and transport. Have the player make a Habitat Engineering roll in these situations:

- ⦿ A character tries to fix a malfunctioning part of one of these systems. Success means he's fixed it. Modify the success chance for the difficulty of the task, the amount of time available, and the presence or absence of appropriate tools.

- ⦿ A player wants to know something about one of these systems: if there's a ventilation shaft nearby he can use to escape; whether a particular room or corridor can be reached without alerting its guards; etc. Success means the character knows the answer to the question.

Mechanical Engineering

Deals with purely mechanical systems: elevators, coffeepots, bicycles, etc. See 'Engineering specialties' above.

Nuclear Engineering

Deals with fission and fusion plants, nuclear earth-moving devices, Orion-style space drives, and other neat things. See 'Engineering specialties' above.

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance

The character can operate and repair all the main vehicle types in Alpha Complex: autocars, crawlers, flybots, copters and Vulturecraft. Other, rarer types exist (see the Transition and Trend-Stepper entries in Chapter 41, 'Vehicles'); treat each of these as a separate narrow Hardware specialty.

You may want to have the player make a Vehicle Ops roll in these situations:

- ⦿ A character performs a difficult maneuver while driving a vehicle. Modify the character's rating for the difficulty of the maneuver, the state of the vehicle, and his own mental and physical condition. A failed roll may mean an accident.
- ⦿ A player wants to know about a vehicle's abilities. A successful roll means the character knows the fact in question. 'Yup. This model flybot is equipped with emergency eject.'
- ⦿ A character attempts to repair a vehicle. Modify his success chance for time and tools available, difficulty of repair, and so on.
- ⦿ A character tries to boobytrap a vehicle, or checks to see whether it is boobytrapped.

Weapon and Armor Maintenance

Like other maintenance specialties, this is actually subdivided into many specialties, one for each of the main weapon types (energy, field, hand, projectile, thrown, vehicular) and one more single specialty that encompasses maintenance of all kinds of armor, everything from reflec to battle suits.

A successful Weapon Maintenance roll lets a character sabotage that particular type of weapon or determine whether a weapon of that type has been sabotaged. Oh, and it lets you clean and strip the weapon, but somehow Troubleshooters never seem to care about that. A failed roll usually has no effect, but a badly failed roll (margin 5+) screws up the weapon, either temporarily or permanently according to your dramatic needs.

A successful Armor Maintenance roll lets a character introduce subtle sabotage that makes the armor ablative, or toxic, or just worthless. Success and failure work the same as for weapons.

In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again with a curving flight. It was the Police Patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

—George Orwell, 1984

Software specialties

Bot Programming

The character can alter or pervert the behavior of most standard types of bots: docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackbots and scrubbots, but *not* vehicle autopilots (for that, use Vehicle Programming). Unless the bot is willing, the programmer must shut down the bot before reprogramming; the reprogramming takes at least a few minutes for even simple revisions. Drastic changes can take from a scene to many hours, and the bot's security systems (especially those in guardbots and warbots) may make the task unexpectedly difficult.

Make a hidden Bot Programming roll. The programmer won't see success or failure immediately. The bot performs as expected if the roll was a success, but ultimately the bot's standard system maintenance routines will purge the alien programming—in a few rounds or a scene (success margin 0–9), or after a couple of hours (margin 10+). A failed roll means the bot apparently performs as intended, but at some point program bugs emerge, and the robot suddenly behaves in an entertainingly improper manner.

C-Bay

The C-Bay specialty takes its name from the principal Alpha Complex online auction site, though the specialty also applies to other, less popular sites with a similar function. A character who succeeds in a C-Bay roll can quickly locate desirable merchandise, make sensible and shrewdly timed bids for it and expect to receive the promised merchandise intact. A character without the specialty, or one who fails in a C-Bay specialty roll, may bid for fraudulent merchandise, may pay too much or pays in an unsafe manner that leaves him vulnerable to fraud.

The roll's margin (either failure or success) suggests the discount or surcharge the character gets for the merchandise, expressed as a percentage of the standard price: 0–10 is $\pm [margin]\%$; 11–15 is $[double\ the\ margin]\%$; 16+ is $\pm 50\%$.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis lets a character submit a problem to The Computer along with all the relevant data. The Computer analyzes the problem in terms of the character's statement of the problem, the data the character gave it, and the data it has that may not be available to the character. The Computer then delivers an analysis, breaking down possibilities by percent chance of likelihood.

Examples: 'Computer, given the serial number of this weapon round and the odd ticking noise issuing from it, what is our best course of action?' or 'Given the charred condition of the bot, evaluate these courses of action: A. deactivate and abandon bot; B. scrub bot's sensors and continue mission; C. dismantle bot and run full diagnostic program with resultant delay in mission.'

Data Analysis depends primarily on clever and logical player problem-solving, particularly in choosing and framing the right questions. A successful roll means accurate and useful information. Failure means useless or misleading information. For example:

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer! Data analysis, please. What happened to Mission Team #2,143,164,189, and why did they not return for their debriefing?

[You roll 1d20. The success roll fails.]

The Computer: Breakdown of probabilities is as follows: Probability 1: [CLASSIFIED], 65%; Probability 2: [CLASSIFIED], 23%; Probability 3: they met with overwhelming opposition from traitors, 10%; Probability 4: they are lost, 2%.

Here's what is really going on in the mind of The Computer: There is a 65% chance that the Troubleshooters have killed each other in a typical **PARANOIA** snafu and bloodbath. There is a 23% chance that the area in question is inhabited by traitors, and that some or all of the Troubleshooters have joined the traitors. The Computer suppresses these unpleasant details to avoid frightening the character (and to avoid giving him unhealthy ideas).

Fear and ignorance.



Data Search

The character can retrieve information from databases, find poorly catalogued information, evade security clearance restrictions on information, etc.

Make a Data Search roll when a character requests information directly through Computer terminals or data links. Requesting information from The Computer requires no specialty, but requesters are often given a run-round, an uncooperative information research technician, or 'Sorry, that information is not available at this time.'

Modify the success chance when the character requests information of a higher clearance than his, or information malevolently or accidentally misfiled.

Also make Data Search rolls when a character tries to subtly but legally bypass security restrictions (say, when hunting for cross-references someone neglected to classify) or to conceal traces of his research efforts (registering research under another citizen's name; concealing private research as legitimate mission research). Failure means The Computer becomes suspicious and may summon the character for summary correction.

Financial Systems

A character with the Financial Systems specialty knows his way around the credit transfer software used in Alpha Complex monetary transactions.

Much of this software is looser than any actual real-world financial software. There are two main reasons: First, The Computer views its little toy economy entirely as a Commie-hunting instrument. Second, the High Programmers who benefit most from the movement of wealth see no purpose in excessive rigor, when lost money tends to wind up in their own accounts. They're like cashiers who 'accidentally' short-change you all the time; they have no incentive to learn to give change better.

Make a hidden Financial Systems roll when a character tries to transfer ('pump') credits from one account to another. Modify the success chance, if you like, based on circumstances such as illegality and the scene's Tension level.

Nearly all credit accounts with substantial balances earn The Computer's personal attention. Treat attempts to loot these accounts as 'scenes' with high Tension levels. If a character tries to transfer a large balance (a 'kilopump' or even a 'megapump'), the Tension level dictates he probably gets spotted and located. Make a hidden Hacking roll (see 'Hacking' below) to see whether the character can cover his tracks before IntSec traces him.

Hacking

Warning! Warning! This specialty is classified GREEN. Use or knowledge of this specialty at lower clearances is treason, and is punishable by summary execution.

This specialty lets a character evade security alarms and monitoring while using the Operating Systems specialty to reprogram The Computer.

Make a hidden Hacking roll when the character is programming The Computer and trying to avoid detection. Modify the success chance according to the triviality or egregiousness of the hacking.

It sometimes helps to treat the attempt as a 'scene' with its own Tension level. A Hacking result of the Tension level or less, regardless of the attempt's success, means The Computer detects the hacking attempt. Success suggests The Computer can't trace the attempt back to the character. Failure suggests The Computer has identified the character, sounded the alarm and dispatched IntSec. This can bring any storyline to a complete halt; depending on your dramatic needs, you may wish to delay letting the hammer fall until the current scene or mission is complete.

Hacking can also retrieve from The Computer information restricted to higher security clearances. (For information available at the character's current security clearance, use Data Search instead.) Success means information is retrieved and is not presently being monitored. Failure means the attempt has failed, and may have triggered alarms.

Operating Systems

Warning! Warning! This specialty is classified BLUE. Use or knowledge of this specialty at lower clearances is treason punishable by summary execution.

Have the player make an Operating Systems roll when his character tries to revise a MemoMax clone backup information file (the thought recording played into a newly decanted backup's brain) or the function of the MemoMax system itself. Success means the character introduced the desired adjustment. Failure may not be immediately visible, but the clone receiving the corrupted MemoMax file may exhibit strange behavior or a different citizen's memories.

Make a hidden Operating Systems roll when a character tries to alter Computer data files, commands, mission objectives or operating procedures through direct keyboard or verbal input. Failure means the alteration has failed. If the operation the character is attempting is treasonous, he must also succeed with a Hacking roll; if he fails that roll, The Computer, a High

Programmer or Internal Security detects his alteration. Modify success chance for availability of time and reference manuals.

Vehicle Programming

Vehicle Programming lets the character change the code running on any standard vehicular bot pilot. In all respects the skill functions like Bot Programming, with the same opportunities for entertaining mishaps, but at much higher speeds with greater potential for shattered bones and explosions.

Wetware specialties

Biosciences

This engineering specialty deals with biological science and technology: experimental drugs, genetic engineering, mutagenic chemicals, cyborging, etc. See 'Engineering specialties' under 'Hardware specialties' above.

Biosciences is useful in conjunction with the Secret skill Power Studies, the knowledge of mutant powers. A successful Biosciences roll lets a character identify mutagenic chemicals likely to promote mutation—not a specific mutation, but just generalized mutant-hood. This has confounded the Psion secret society's efforts to breed an army of Machine Empaths to take over The Computer; their attempts just as often produce mutants whose only ability is something like turning their kneecaps transparent.

This specialty doesn't cover biological weapons such as tailored viruses or bacteria. For these, use the Bioweapons specialty.

Bioweapons

Warning! Warning! This specialty is classified BLUE. Use or knowledge of this specialty at lower clearances is treason punishable by summary execution.

Known primarily by high-level R&D weapon developers and members of destructive secret societies, Bioweaponry can be more dangerous than all Violence specialties combined.

The character can manufacture, identify, interpret the effects of, store, deliver and find cures and antidotes for poisons, tailored diseases, toxic gases or any other substance or microorganism that damages only (or primarily) living things. Given time and luck, a bioweapon engineer can even tailor-make weapons that attack only certain groups, such as mutants with a particular power, giant radioactive cockroaches, or specific clone decantations. A creative player with a little knowledge of biochemistry or viral pathology will come up with 1,001 evil uses.

Let him. But remember, in this science, failure is almost always catastrophic. Even the smallest margin of failure on the die roll should scare the bejeezus out of the player, and really bad rolls should have effects that make him beg for his clone to die. Remember, too, the bioweapon-gone-wrong can be used as a plot hook. Especially if you want to devastate Alpha Complex, crash The Computer and turn **PARANOIA** into a post-holocaust game. (But no, that would be just stupid...)

Cloning

Technical Services personnel skilled in this specialty maintain and operate the clone tanks that grow new and backup citizens. The same specialty encompasses operation of MemoMax backup devices, which store and constantly update the subject's recorded memories.

Players who take this skill may want to use it to break into an enemy's existing memory recording to find good blackmail material or secret knowledge. Don't allow this. You can offer any number of bogus gobbledegook tech reasons ('The recording is encrypted in a way unique to each citizen'). The real reason is, if you let players start messing around with everyone's memories, they can essentially beat the game. You dare not lose control to that degree.

Medical

Knowledge of diagnosis, treatment, and surgery. Can be used to sterilize wounds, ease pain, prevent incapacitated characters from dying, make sure they die, etc.

Normally, injured characters are hospitalized, where The Computer's gentle care invariably ensures recovery in a matter of a scene or two. However, when care is not immediately available, a character must rely on the Medical specialty.

When a character with the Medical specialty treats a wounded, maimed or downed patient, make one Medical roll at the end of each scene. Success means the condition is healed. If the success roll fails, make a Power roll for the patient; failure means his condition worsens by one step.

Modify the Medical success chance based on conditions and the availability of supplies (antibiotics, sterile bandages, surgical equipment, nanobots, plastiflesh). If the medic has no access to advanced medical technology, as for instance when stranded Outdoors or in an abandoned sector, the healing process for a maimed or downed character can take as much as a week.

If the character wants to hurt the patient, move the damage steps up, not down. Failure means the patient's condition is unchanged.

Outdoor Life

Most citizens of Alpha Complex have never seen a tree, a body of open water or an animal

larger than a cockroach. The Outdoor Life specialty lets characters identify all these, but—this is important—tells *nothing at all* about how you actually survive in the Outdoors. For that you need the Uncommon Secret skill Survival.

Characters with the Outdoor Life specialty (usually Sierra Clubbers) know the rote intellectual names for, say, 'rain' and 'lightning', but their first thunderstorm Outdoors will scare the bejeezus out of them. With a successful (hidden) Outdoor life roll, a character might be able to tell a cat from a skunk, or identify a toadstool. He'll happily tell you everything he knows about toadstools while he munches on one, there in the tent he pitched in a streambed after dropping garbage that might as well say, 'Hey, bears, I'm over here.'

A failed Outdoor Life roll means the character thinks the skunk is a cute little kittycat, or that small pond must be the Atlantic Ocean, which means this stand of trees can only be the legendary Sherwood Forest.

Pharmatherapy

This specialty involves the understanding of biochemical supplements commonly used in Alpha Complex to alter mood, thought, and physical capacities. Make a hidden Pharmatherapy roll in these situations:

- ⦿ A character requests drugs from The Computer. Success means the diagnosis is approved and drugs distributed; otherwise, the request is denied.
- ⦿ A character dispenses drugs. Success means he selects the proper dose, understands the effects properly, and anticipates and minimizes harmful side effects (or exaggerates them, if that's what the dispenser wants). Failure means anything could happen; the drug-taker is taking his life in his hands.
- ⦿ A character tries to analyze an unknown drug. Success means the character has at least a vague idea what effects the drug will have; failure means he has no idea, or is sadly mistaken. Modify the success chance for the availability of equipment and reference manuals.

Psychotherapy

Treating human insanity to restore happiness. Happiness is mandatory. With a success on a hidden skill roll, a character with Psychotherapy can assist an unhappy citizen in seeing the error of his treasonous ways. Failure may aggravate the situation further, perhaps precipitating a psychotic episode in the target, or even a revelation about the character's own basic unhappiness. This skill doesn't work on bots or The Computer; use programming skills instead. (But any PC who thinks he can cure

The Computer should expect—well, we'll leave that to you.)

A successful Psychotherapy roll may also, if you allow it, let the character induce or aggravate insanity in an NPC citizen (but not a player). This requires at least an hour of close personal contact, and it must suit your dramatic purposes; otherwise the attempt fails, and the NPC becomes hostile to the psychotherapist. If the attempt succeeds, roll on the Insanity table (Chapter 27, 'Damage and injuries') for the affected NPC.

Suggestion

The character knows how to plant subtle unconscious commands simply by talking one-on-one. The suggester requires the target's undivided and cooperative attention for at least a minute, and if the target happens to be on tranquilizers, that helps a lot. This specialty is popular among the spookiest high-clearance Internal Security police.

The player specifies the command to implant and its trigger. Roll a hidden contest of Suggestion vs. the target's Management skill. A rulesy GM could use the target's Moxie specialty instead, if he has one. Change each roll's success chance as you like according to circumstances: the target's suspicion, his mental clarity, outside distractions and the complexity and harmful intent of the command. If the suggester wins, the target will attempt to complete the command to the best of his ability when triggered. Failure means he doesn't, but the suggester won't know this until the trigger happens. If the target wins, he instead does something entirely unexpected to embarrass or victimize the suggester.

Secret skills

If a skill from the Secret skills table in the Player section isn't listed here, feel free to consider it self-explanatory.

Action Movies

Though every loyal citizen is familiar with HPD & MC's vidflicks, those with this skill are deeply immersed in the Action Movie subculture. Action Movie geeks can quote lines from *Outdoor Wars 5: Attack of the Communist Clones*, recite Teela-O-MLY's career highlights or belt out the lyrics to *WarBotMania: The Vid*.

This skill can be entertaining or annoying, with rare bursts of value. A character may occasionally gain inspiration and value from, say, the lateral thinking and escape methodology of the infamous Alpha Team in a tight situation, like in Episode #512 when 'Cannibal' Smith's plans came together and 'BA' Marcus turned a broken transbot into an armored tankbot with flamethrower.



Alpha Complex History

Detailed study of the Official (Amended) History of Alpha Complex. The Alpha Complex historian can quote, or knows where to look up, important dates, Sectors, and citizens of the last 214 Years. A healthy margin of success can also see through the many revisions in the 'official' history of the Complex to glimpse the truth (if such exists) behind those recorded events. This skill does not cover (treasonous) knowledge of the prehistorical time before Year 1 of The Computer. For that, consider Old Reckoning Cultures or Archival Studies.

Make a hidden Alpha Complex History roll when a character wants to piece something together or recall a specific event. Failure means the character has no pertinent knowledge; a high margin of failure means his knowledge is dangerously wrong. On a successful roll, give the player some details about the person, place or time in question. The better the success margin, the more valuable and revision-free the details, though the taint of more than two centuries of data-massaging and info-scrubbing is likely to linger.

Archival Studies

The pre-Complex Archives are a database of all official information about Old Reckoning times. High-clearance HPD&MC administrators maintain the Archives and occasionally glean fragmentary knowledge as inspiration for their infovids and edutainment programming. Though interest in the OR era is not encouraged, neither is it strictly treasonous, and Romantics often take advantage of this to study accessible Archives.

It's not as interesting as you might think. The Archives tend to read like eighth-grade textbooks: long (medium-long) on dry facts, short on interesting details, sharply limited and rigorously sanitized. An Archival student might, for instance, know the names of major cities, but not their locations. He could name all the US Presidents but have no idea what any of

them looked like, and certainly not what the office of President entailed. Archival Studies is more accurate and far less treasonous than Old Reckoning Cultures, but much less fun.

Botspotting

A character with the Botspotting skill knows the difference between a Model C23/2 scrubot with flange inhibitor and a Model C23/3 scrubot with polarized integral stability manifold on sight, from 300 meters away, in a dimly lit corridor, with one eye closed.

Botspotters keep worryingly detailed records of their day-to-day contact with bots of all shapes and sizes, recording specific types, names, serial-numbers and attachment variations for future reference. Make a hidden Botspotting roll when a character wants to identify a specific type of bot from a distance, from just a silhouette, or from some charred and mangled fragment. Success means the character can identify the general type and variant of the bot model. Increasing margins of success provide more detailed data about components, variations in programming and restricted, high-clearance reports regarding flaws in manufacture or programming. A failed roll means the character fails to identify the bot model correctly, which will earn him scorn from fellow fanatics in his botspotting club.

Bribery

Warning! Warning! This is a prohibited activity! Offenders may face summary execution! Bootlicking only works with superiors, intimidation only with inferiors, but bribery works with everyone. Well, everyone except fanatics, or when The Computer's monitors are looking. Of course, it's also treason.

It also has the major drawback that you need something to bribe with. If you ask The Computer to transfer 10,000 credits from your account to another citizen's, The Computer may want to know why. Sure, you could go

to a money machine and take away 10,000cr in hard currency, but the withdrawal may automatically flag Internal Security's attention. Weapons, drugs or other items of value may prove more useful.

When a character tries to bribe someone, you may not need to roll at all. If the bribe targets an Internal Security GREEN goon, for instance, the only question is how fast the goon grabs the bribe. For less certain targets, make a success roll. Modify the briber's rating based on his finesse and persuasiveness, and according to the value of the bribe offered. Other factors might include the target's fanaticism, the chances of detection, and how much danger the target incurs for accepting the bribe.

Cash Hacking

Characters use this skill to remove licensing from their own credits or for paying customers. More interestingly, they can also add licensing to their own credits, thereby furthering their own goals by passing off these creds to unsuspecting citizens. Note, though, this will attract attention from the authorities. A cash hacker caught changing credit licensing for his own, non-commercial purposes is punishable as if for Filesharing (code JJ). If caught distributing these self-licensed credits, he can be punished for Threatening the Financial Safety of a Citizen (code OO). It's awfully fun, though.

Internal Security rarely pursues punishment for this treasonous skill, because corrupt IntSec agents often need someone to hack the hard currency of their numerous bribes. Having identified and arrested a known hacker, IntSec may covertly set him to sneaking hidden pro-IntSec clauses into existing cash licenses. ('By spending this credit(s), the user agrees IntSec may, at its sole discretion, at any time, without cause, arrest and terminate him.')

When making the hidden Cash Hacking roll, you may modify the success chance based on the security and complexity of the credit code installed and the intricacies of the desired license change.

Cyborging

Admired by human members of Corpore Metal, cyborging means replacing body parts with mechanical equivalents, such as artificial hearts or mechanical prosthetic limbs. The process is difficult and dangerous. Either the acting character or trusted associates on the scene should have Medical and Biosciences knowledge, because a failed Cyborging roll may result in loss of the biological part, disfigurement, maiming or death.

The player should tell you what he wants to cybernetically enhance or replace. Make a hidden Cyborging roll. Hygienic, well-equipped facilities and adequate medical support with plenty of drugs on hand should enhance the prospects of success. Failure leaves

In the name of the Benefactor, therefore, we proclaim to all numbers of the One State:

Everyone who feels capable of doing so must compose tracts, odes, manifestos, poems or other works extolling the beauty and the grandeur of the One State.

This will be the first cargo to be carried by the Integral.

Long live the One State, long live the numbers, long live the Benefactor!

—Yevgeny Zamyatin (tr. Mirra Ginsburg),
We [1921-22]

the character wounded, maimed or worse, depending on the margin of failure.

Judge the abilities and liabilities of each cyborg modification case-by-case. Consider adapting the weapon malfunction rules in Chapter 25, 'Weapons', and treat cybernetic replacements as really experimental. (Really, *really* experimental.) A future *PARANOIA* supplement will list sample cybernetic enhancements. If we remember.

Drug Procurement

The savvy character knows where to pick up the best food enhancements and most potent pharmatherapy supplements for synthesis into amazingly cool and deadly illegal drugs. The character can scrounge the dusty leavings from vending machines, medical stations and PLC depots, or connect with citizens who can get something new, interesting and faaaaar out. With time, materials and maybe a hotplate or Bunsen burner, the character can cook up something beneficial or mind-expanding from whatever raw materials are available. The success roll determines the drug's effectiveness and the closeness of the actual effect to the one desired. Your personal whim determines the drug's actual effects (and side effects) on characters.

Experimental Equipment Repair & Maintenance

The character knows the essential maintenance and repair skills to repair and keep usable experimental equipment. The character can recognize potential malfunctions and try patches and modifications to maintain functionality. A successful roll prolongs the equipment's active life and may forestall issues before they arise; a failed roll suggests ineffectual maintenance work that appears to postpone the inevitable, but will blow up in the character's face (probably literally) when least expected.

You may decide this skill doesn't help with *really* experimental equipment, the wildest R&D stuff founded on entirely new or replacement laws of nature.

Forgery

Warning! Warning! This is a prohibited activity! Offenders may face summary execution!

This specialty lets the forger produce or alter forms, authorizations, records, ME Cards and other identification to pass a target's casual scrutiny.

The forger makes a specialty success roll not when forging the item, but each time he presents it for examination. When a forger tries to pass a doctored document past a target examiner, make a success roll for that target. Success means the document passes inspection. Failure means the target spots some incorrect detail that immediately reveals

the document as a forgery or prompts a more careful examination.

Increase the forger's success chance if the target gives the document only a cursory inspection; if the document is easy to forge (e.g., a typewritten letter rather than a plasticred); and if the forger has plenty of time and the right tools to do a good job. Decrease the success chance if the target examines the document closely; if it is difficult to forge; or if the forger is short on time and tools.

Haggling

In the IR market there is a knack to getting a better deal. Haggling lets a character compete against a dealer's fast-talking patter.

Ideally a player should come up with some innovative deal or angle that might entice a dealer to cut his price. In any case, roll a hidden contest between the character's and the trader's Haggling skills. If both fail, the price doesn't change or the item suddenly isn't available, whichever best serves the scene. If the dealer wins, the price may fall slightly ('Tell you what I'll do...'), but the goods are faulty or require an expensive patch, battery or instruction manual. If the character wins, add the margin of his own success plus the dealer's margin of failure (if any):

- ⦿ A routine success (margin 4 or less) reduces the item's price by 10%.
- ⦿ Greater success (margin 5+) indicates a reduction of 25% or more.
- ⦿ Phenomenal success (margin 10+) means the character gets the item for half-price and maybe a free power cell as well. Or a gourd, gourds are nice! Look, that gourd's worth ten if it's worth a credit, and me with a medical condition and a petbot to feed.

Jargon

Archival information from Old Reckoning times is full of obscure references to computer technology (with a small 'c'). That information holds nuggets of genuine wisdom. A character who understands this Jargon can potentially dig deep into The Computer's most antiquated legacy systems and return with an RTS to grasp EIDE potentials and work peripheral magic without RTFM. Depending on your dramatic needs, the user might access programs in deep Computer storage to complete tasks without rousing CPU's attention. Used to support other programming skills, a successful Jargon roll may reveal a deeply embedded shortcut or archaic loophole; failure is likely to unearth gibberish code that may leave the character running in circles while IntSec sends emergency shock troops.

Marital Arts [sic]

Experimentation and sordid gossip have gifted the character with a (possibly foggy) understanding of what happens when a man meets a woman in a darkened room following insufficient consumption of prescribed dietary supplements. The character knows something of which foods and drinks might contain what hormonal inhibitors. He can identify certain real foods that appear to counteract the drugs to some measure, focusing the senses and returning bodily functions to their natural state. Rolls may be appropriate when trying to alter drug intake to relieve hormonal suppression, subtly impress members of the opposite sex who have also relieved this suppression and engage in non-regulated one-on-one interpersonal activities.

Old Reckoning Cultures

Warning! Warning! This skill is classified BLUE Clearance! Knowledge of Old Reckoning Cultures by any citizen of a lower security clearance constitutes treason!

The character can interpret artifacts, ruins and cultural survivals from the time before The Computer. Knowledge of real history is treasonous, so most information about the past has been handed down orally and suffered considerable distortion. Prominent in this part-mythology/part-history are elements of pop culture from the middle and late 20th Century: film, television, music and lifestyles. Aspects of different periods are mixed higgledy-piggledy: beach movies, punk rockers and transcendental meditation are blended in a curious, romantic nostalgia for a culture with unlimited personal freedom.

A successful Old Reckoning Cultures roll lets the character recognize these artifacts and their significance. If the roll fails, you may choose to give useful but distorted information. (A toaster oven might be misinterpreted as a form of viewscreen.) Even when the roll succeeds, mingle information about the artifact with legend and incomplete history. This is an opportunity for humor and mischief.

Old Reckoning Drugs

Ancient lore, handed down from times before The Computer, suggests back then mind-expanding drugs actually grew out of the ground and could be picked up by anyone. Old Reckoning Drugs is the understanding of how to locate, prepare, administer and counter the effects of medicinal supplements outside common Pharmatherapy knowledge. Make a hidden Old Reckoning Drugs roll when the character is trying to find OR Drugs, extract and synthesize usable materials from the raw product, safely administer the drug and handle situations where something goes wrong. Impose effects, both positive and negative, according to your personal whim.



Power Studies

The character has a treasonous awareness of the nature, causes, enhancement and identification of mutant powers, both those currently evident in Alpha Complex and those rumored in folklore and Old Reckoning comic books. Successful skill use lets the character assess evidence of mutant power usage and make a guess at the talent responsible, or formulate possible ways to block, diminish or even enhance displays of mutation.

The lore behind the skill is based heavily on hearsay, wild theory and guesswork, so a fine line separates the fruits of Power Studies success or failure. We leave to you the essential benefits of success and woeful impediments of failure. Yeah, we're lame, but at least we're not so lame as to gratuitously plug the fine **PARANOIA** supplement *The Mutant Experience*, which addresses the Power Studies skill in detail.

Propaganda

Warning! Warning! Knowledge or use of this specialty is treason! Possession by any citizen of any clearance whatsoever is treason!

Each society (except the Illuminati) has a propaganda skill—the ability to convey the society's doctrines to a listener. Each society's propaganda skill is different from every other society's version of the skill.

All propaganda skills are Secret skills. When a character learns one, the player should note this and his rating on the back (secret) side of his sheet. A character starts play with a rating of 0 in all propaganda skills, unless the character takes a propaganda skill as his Unhealthy Secret skill. A character may learn a propaganda skill from other characters with the specialty—whether or not he wants to.

The victim must spend at least five rounds listening to or reading the propaganda expounded by the skilled propagandist. The victim may listen voluntarily, or may be coerced, made cooperative with drugs or fooled into listening. At the end of five rounds, the propagandist makes a propaganda skill roll. If the roll is successful, the victim learns the society's propaganda specialty at rating 1. Successive uses of the specialty can increase the victim's specialty level, but his rating can never rise higher than the propagandist's rating. (Or you may decide that rule is far too fiddly for a blatantly cheesy game like **PARANOIA**, and just let the skill rise to whatever you want.)

Only the victim knows whether the propaganda attempt was successful. Tell him by note or in a private conference.

The victim need not ever use the specialty if he doesn't want to. If he is loyal to The Computer, he may refuse ever to think about the society's propaganda again, or perhaps he will feel compelled to report himself (and the propagandist) to The Computer for treasonous acts. However, if interrogated,

he may be forced to reveal he knows society propaganda—treason sufficient to warrant immediate correction.

An unsuccessful attempt to use this specialty means the victim receives incontrovertible evidence of the propagandist's treason. This makes using propaganda extremely dangerous, but being a traitor in Alpha Complex is risky business.

Survival

Though a character with the Wetware specialty Outdoor Life could conceivably get through most of a day Outdoors, find food lying around and identify by name the grizzly bear charging at him, his rote learning won't keep him alive long. Survival is the practical skill required to get through a long trip in the wilderness: knowledge of plants, animals, terrain, navigation, weather and so on—Boy Scout Handbook stuff. The character may not know the name of the thing charging at him, but he knows to get out of the way and climb that tall green thing over there.

Make a Survival roll whenever a character tries things like these:

- ⦿ Swimming with bulky electronic gear.
- ⦿ Crossing a river gorge on an improvised bridge of lashed saplings.
- ⦿ Using a map and compass to navigate across land or water or in the air.
- ⦿ Tracking people or animals, and hunting for safe food.
- ⦿ Recognizing dangerous terrain and adverse weather.
- ⦿ Improvising weapons, traps and camping essentials, like shelters and fires.
- ⦿ Making friends with woodland creatures such as yellowjackets, rattlesnakes, and skunks.

Twitchtalk

Twitchtalk is a secret sign code, or set of codes, used by Alpha Complex secret societies. A range of gestures—winks, smirks, nose scratches, ear and finger wiggles, irregular spasms, burps—conveys simple messages: 'We're being watched.' 'Corroborate the blatant lie I'm telling.' 'The person to my right is a mutant.'

In nearly every secret society, certain factions or especially paranoid cells relentlessly promote Twitchtalk for discreet communication. This, despite the language's problems:

⦿ Conspicuousness: Every IntSec agent is trained to watch citizens for incriminating signals. The watcher may not know what the signals mean, but a lot of twitching is suspicious. Burp at

the wrong time, and in moments you're looking straight at an IntSec 4,000-candlepower FriendFinder flashlight. And if you develop a rash from the dye in your barracks blanket, don't scratch. Just don't.

⦿ Inconspicuousness:

First Humanist: Augh! Why did you shoot the guard, you idiot?

Second Humanist: You told me to! You scratched your left eyebrow and pointed to him. That's 'Shoot him.'

First Humanist: I was distinctly telling you *not* to shoot him! I brushed my left heel against my right instep!

Second Humanist: You're standing behind a table. I can't see your feet.

First Humanist: Oh. Huh. Well, what should we do with the body?

⦿ Obsolescence: To keep ahead of infiltrators and rivals, societies must often update their particular set of gestures. If your copy of the memo goes astray, you're like Monty Python's Bulgarian guy in the tobacco shop with a vandalized phrasebook, saying 'My hovercraft is full of eels.'

WMD

Warning! Warning! This skill is classified VIOLET Clearance! Knowledge of WMD by any citizen of a lower security clearance constitutes treason!

The character knows the principles of nuclear weapons, antimatter bombs, asteroid attraction rays, supernova induction and other ways to wipe out humanity in the twinkling of an eye. In practice, the character knows how to make tacnukes.

Make a hidden WMD roll when the character has a kilo or so of plutonium or other fissile material, as well as some conventional high explosives. The attempt takes 12 hours. Success creates a tacnuke with a 0.1-kiloton yield. Higher success margins increase the yield—though for dramatic purposes it usually



38. SERVICE FIRMS

38. Service firms

The Computer instituted service firms as a consequence of its new quasi-capitalist economy (see Chapter 36, ‘The economy’). Having accepted its High Programmers’ argument that competition would foster efficiency in the fight against Communist mutant terrorists, The Computer then followed through with the **Unfree Minds & Free Markets Initiative**. This wide-ranging directive spun off most non-security-related municipal functions from the service groups to gaggles of competing service firms. By coincidence, this order served the purposes of The Computer’s High Programmers, who get to run all the service firms and become filthy rich.

A service firm isn’t a private business; The Computer won’t permit private ownership or control over municipal functions. A service firm isn’t even a publicly owned business in the modern sense; it has no shareholders. Rather, in the Alpha Complex sort-of economy, a service firm is a sort-of business. It has a Board of Directors who split the revenue, but no ‘owners’ as such—no salaries for workers—not much overhead, because The Computer provides all offices and utilities—no taxes (!)... A real-life chartered accountant would look at this Potemkin Village and choke on his own spittle.

Functionally a service firm is a formalized old-clone social network of high-clearance citizens. Different firms in the same niche ‘compete’ for the same revenue stream, but it’s not competition in a business sense. Usually Directors get their buddies in the service group to funnel them sweetheart contracts. Competition in Alpha Complex involves backchannel bribery, backstabbing blackmail, knee-breaking extortion and long leisurely meals of real food with a dessert of Chocolate-Covered Bribes. Actually, that may resemble today’s business landscape—no, we don’t want to think about it.

Meanwhile, the parent service groups that spawned these firms have become stagnant backwaters. When all the ambitious and politically shrewd administrators persuaded The Computer to reassign them to new service firms, who did that leave behind?

Service firms in the game

We see your eyes glazing over. You’re waiting to learn what these firms are *for*. They have three main purposes in the game:

- ⦿ Service firms lend more flavor and interest to their service groups, and hence to the Troubleshooters who hail from those groups.
- ⦿ Service firms ask The Computer to order Troubleshooters on ‘service services’ that add complexity and agony to their regular missions.

- ⦿ Service firms compete in underhanded and criminal ways. They may exploit the Troubleshooters as pawns in these rivalries. In Straight games, savvy Troubleshooters with good connections may eventually turn around and exploit the firms.

Firms as character background

A character’s service firm *doesn’t* primarily provide roleplaying hints, nor hooks for mission ideas, nor inbuilt conflicts with other characters. Some of the service firms described here do in fact provide these, but that’s incidental. We intentionally describe several firms as excruciatingly dull.

Instead, the service firm has two main functions in a character’s background.

- ⦿ The firm may offer a convenient pretext for the character to get around to different parts of Alpha Complex, and to have something to do (apart from the Troubleshooter mission) when he gets there. This means he can make a plausible excuse to duck out of the action and, say, contact his secret society.
- ⦿ Workers in some firms may gain, as a side effect of their duties, a limited power to enter where they’re not wanted, or a bargaining point in certain highly specific situations. We leave these for the player to deduce.

You’ll note the excruciatingly dull firms accomplish neither of these goals. The lousiest firms serve purely as motivators for character ambition: ‘I gotta get out of Food Vat Control or I swear I’m gonna blast those vats with a cone rifle.’

Service services

In many **PARANOIA** missions the Troubleshooter team makes an obligatory trip to R&D to receive valuable experimental equipment for field testing. R&D isn’t the only service group that requires Troubleshooter services. Firms in any of the service groups may shanghai Troubleshooters for such duty. It’s called a ‘service service.’

Yes, your Troubleshooters may still visit R&D, but The Computer may instead call on them to deliver Power Services equipment (it’s not really radioactive, that label is a mistake), or install scrubot software updates on behalf of Tech Services. The only factor service services have in common is, the Troubleshooter team happens to be heading to a destination near

the location of the needed service. In the name of efficiency, The Computer adds the service to the team’s assignment.

In the game a service service provides one more ingredient in the mission mix. The service may stick the Troubleshooters with mysterious equipment or an annoying escort. Just as they might with experimental R&D equipment, the players might find an ingenious way to use the service equipment or escort in their actual mission. Or it might backfire on them. You don’t care, as long as the service service inspires additional fear and ignorance.

A list of sample services by group appears at the end of this chapter.

Inter-firm rivalries as mission ideas

If we say ‘High-clearance directors of service firms compete bitterly and sneakily with other firms for lucrative contracts,’ we’re guessing you don’t need a lot more help to see how this prompts mission ideas. A High Programmer can put any mission he wants on the Troubleshooter docket. If a search for Commie weapons of mass destruction just *happens* to blow up the offices of a firm competing with his own, or lets him gain control of a competitor’s valuable resources—well, that just proves his competitor was in league with the Commies. This happens all the time.

Service firm description format

This chapter presents the firm types available to players during character creation (Chapter 3). These are only a few dozen of the hundreds, the plethora of service firm types active in Alpha Complex. Future **PARANOIA** supplements will present many more firm types. If we remember.

Each entry begins with this information:

Example firms: Each of these entries describes, not a single firm, but a category of firms all competing in the same endeavor. This line names two or three firm names as inspiration for your creativity.

Revenue stream: How the Board of Directors loots—rather, earns its credits. Many firms contract with the parent service group to receive payment for performance of outsourced functions. Other firms have different profit models.

Secret society taint: Different functions attract different secret societies. This line suggests the societies most likely to be interested in that firm type. But feel free to make any society active in any firm, as your storyline requires.



Armed Forces

HPD&MC vidshows depict the Armed Forces, the glamorous military arm of Alpha Complex, in constant war with the Commies. In fact, though, The Computer lacks resources to sustain protracted military operations. Therefore the Armed Forces spend most of their time drilling, training and guarding things, with only occasional missions against enemies.

The Computer often assigns Armed Forces personnel to other service groups for security duty. In emergencies Internal Security, though locked in eternal, bitter, lowdown, backbiting competition with its better-armed rival, may grudgingly supplement its troop strength with Armed Forces personnel.

Armed Forces units have generally high morale. Army personnel fear nothing from Internal Security, for the Armed Forces deals with its own problems. Officers have no patience for Internal Security's aggressive monitoring of political orthodoxy. Soldiers consider themselves better trained and skilled in police functions than mere IntSec goons. Armed Forces personnel hold other service groups in contempt—save for Research & Design, which provides their fancy technology. In inter-service conflicts, Armed Forces and R&D usually end up on the same side.

Troopers from elite units like the Vulture Squadrons are culture heroes of Alpha Complex. The Computer bestows on them the finest and most distinctive uniforms and equipment. Citizens always treat them with respect and deference.

A typical Armed Forces conversation

IntSec goon: We have a major problem here.

Army: Why, you just let my boys have a crack, and we'll settle this little contretemps in no time a-tall.

Ammunition Fresheners

Example firms: Buffed Bullets, Shiny Happy Projectiles

Revenue stream: Clean, well-maintained ammunition ensures effective missions and higher return of functional weaponry: percentage of value on returns of fully functional weaponry.

Secret society taint: Pro Tech

Post-operational reports have increasingly shown field equipment malfunctions are often due to poor maintenance of ammunition. A faulty power cell or damaged cone rifle shell can be hazardous and lead to loss of valuable Armed Forces ordnance (and sometimes the odd citizen or two). As a result the Ammunition Fresheners have arisen to take on the

responsibility of keeping munitions in tip-top condition at all times and never allowing faulty equipment anywhere near a live weapon.

Ammunition Fresheners usually assume the role of Equipment Guy in any team to which they are assigned, or more specifically Weapons Guy. They maintain and inventory all munitions assigned to the team. They also ensure everything is clean and adheres to Service Firm specifications before handing anything over to the rest of the team—always demanding full Munitions Assignment & Accountability forms completed in full.

Jesse-R-MON: Lasers out... new barrel...

Ammunition Freshener: In a minute...

Jesse-R: That's a direct order, citizen.

Ammunition Freshener: With due respect, sir, I haven't applied the second coat of GlimmerGrease. It would be worth my job to hand out substandard ammunition—what if it didn't fire right or exploded in your hand? No. If you'll just be patient, I'll have that barrel for you in a moment.



prevented, or free clone replacement stipend up to four clones per year (one per quarter).

Secret society taint: Romantics

Some soldiers are more equal than others. And those soldiers have bodyguards who are themselves more equal than Bodyguard Communications Liaisons (BCLs).

Extremely high-clearance Armed Forces personnel often have bodyguards to ensure the (many) plots on their lives—and their clones' lives—never materialize. Their bodyguards have BCLs to do the same. As such, BCLs swan-dive in front of the laser barrel when enemies target their bodyguard. BCLs taste the food at the banquet before anyone else does. They bomb-sweep the premises before the bodyguard enters. Someday, each BCL hopes, one of his clones might become a bodyguard... before the BCL is bankrupted paying for backups.

Armed Forces Friends Network

Example firms: HVN (Hero VidNet), Brave Clone Enterprises, All U Can B TV

Revenue stream: Armed Forces-affiliated sponsors buy advertising. Any military action AFFN covers that requires Goo Cleanup sells twice as many spots.

Secret society taint: Anti-Mutant, Pro Tech

Other vid networks claim to find the news; the Armed Forces Friends Network makes the news. No other network provides citizens with as extensive Armed Forces spin as AFFN and its unique exclusives of live Vulture Squadron missions.

RED Clearance AFFN journalists often are 'embedded' on Vulture Squadron missions, typically in the front ranks. This benefits both service firms: AFFN gets exclusive footage, and Vulture Squadron gets human shields. With that much excitement, and the opportunity to get a big, big story, it's surprising AFFN journalists have a reputation for backstabbing anyone who gets in their way. The goal: become an AFFN anchor—safely embedded at HQ.

Bodyguard Communications Liaisons

Example firms: ButlerBoys AF, Guard's Guards AF, Shield Toady Enterprises

Revenue stream: Contracts with high-clearance Armed Forces bodyguards. Bonus for every ten attempts on a bodyguard's life

Blast Shield Maintenance

Example firms: Hole Security, Blown Away!, Personnel Services AF

Revenue stream: Contract with Armed Forces to maintain and repair blast shields throughout the complex. Power Services pays a percentage to the Armed Forces for power funneled through shields.

Secret society taint: Death Leopard

Years ago, the Armed Forces erected heavy blast shields throughout Alpha Complex during the infamous, wide-ranging and now heavily classified You Talkin' to Me Massacre. Over time, only the blast shields in the higher-clearance sectors and firing ranges have survived.

Blast Shield Mechanics constantly find themselves shoring up tattered shields in corridors, in R&D labs, in front of unpopular service firms, around sectors inhabited by high-clearance individuals and elsewhere. For some reason, they have a reputation for being jumpy.

Properly maintained blast shields are 85 percent effective. If overcharged, they may explode violently. When a blast shield takes a hit, its capacitors absorb the energy and funnel it to Power Services; hence Power Services pays the Armed Forces to ensure the shields are maintained. Reports that the Armed Forces deliberately destroys blast shields during budgetary crises are Communist propaganda.

Blast shields over 45% damaged can be risky to maintain. When shields are damaged to this degree, energy typically absorbed and funneled to Power Services remains in the capacitors and often discharges explosively upon contact.

Crowd Control (Armed Forces)

Example firms: Ped-X-Busters, Jaywalker Jailors

Revenue stream: Paid to enforce crowd control. Rewarded for either preventing riots at large gatherings (concerts, mess halls,

CPU enquiry desks) or for breaking up existing riots.

Secret society taint: PURGE, Death Leopard

In a complex filled with millions of citizens, sometimes they all seem to be in one place. When that happens, things can get rowdy. In the bad old days, Armed Forces had to station guards in every barracks or training range, just in case some treasonous soldier incited a disturbance. This drained valuable manpower away from drilling, target practice and ammunition freshening.

Now, Armed Forces instead pays a service firm to do this work for them. Crowd Control firms contract with both the military and Internal Security to forcibly restrain any occasionally boisterous gatherings (that is, riots). Crowd Control officers (that is, goons with laser rifles) are too violent for Armed Forces, too dumb for IntSec—but once a given firm contracts with one service group or the other, the group embraces the goons almost as their own.

The price for this endorsement and protection is total loyalty. Once in Crowd Control for Armed Forces, an officer will never get a contract in Crowd Control for IntSec, and vice versa; the petty rivalries run too deep.

For more, see the Internal Security Crowd Control service firm entry on page 125.

Sensitivity Trainers

Example firms: Tranquilization Systems, Smiling Songsters AF, The Happy Cheery People

Revenue stream: Contract with Armed Forces based on yearly Compliance ratings of sector.

Secret society taint: Humanists

When the Vulture Squadron steamrolls through a sector, sometimes all that's left of the inhabitants is a few wads of goo dripping from the ceiling. The Computer understands this is necessary, but unenlightened citizens often do not.

Enter the Sensitivity Trainers. They help citizens through the rough times. (Not that there are any in Alpha Complex.) Cheerleaders, artists, PR lackeys, and 'cutting-edge' psychiatrists, they lead citizens who have witnessed 'necessary events' in chanting loyalty slogans, singing happy ditties, practicing Countermeasure Ballet, injecting tranquilizers, arranging food in pretty patterns, and other therapeutic activities.

Sensitivity Trainers corral survivors immediately after an event and begin therapy on location, sometimes while Goo Cleanup is still on the scene. That's how much The Computer cares.

The Armed Forces Friends Network reserves a Sensitivity Training PR spot on its daily broadcasts, sometimes with Vulture Squadron veterans participating as guests of honor. The crowd has only turned against the Sensitivity Trainers a few times, and a new batch of Trainers coached the survivors. But that's classified, citizen.

Threat Assessors (Armed Forces)

Example firms: Red Detectors AF, Pink Eye for the Bad Guy

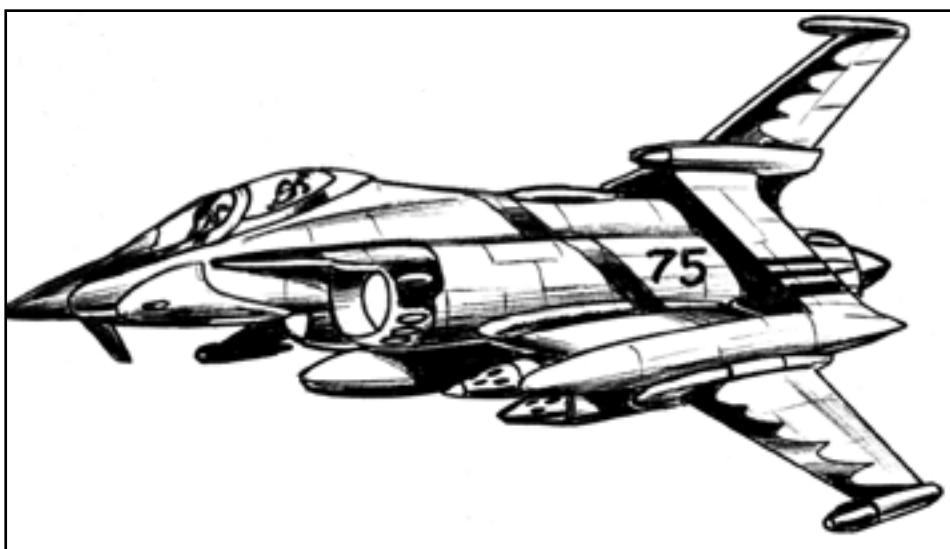
Revenue stream: Percentage of revenue accrued from identifying security threats.

Secret society taint: Illuminati

The friendly Troubleshooters of Alpha Complex work ceaselessly to contain the Commie threat, but remnants of the Red Menace still lurk in dark corners and sometimes under barracks beds. Threat Assessors identify those who seek to disrupt the harmony and profitability. The Computer has secured for all citizens, and they defend the complex against those threats as necessary.

No threat is too small for investigation. Indeed, some of the biggest crackdowns on Commie rings and other security threats began with an alert Threat Assessor and a gut feeling: suspicious persons whispering in the hallway could be passing secret codes, an inbox facing the wrong way could be the all-clear signal for a Red operative, or a dirty left sleeve could be the clandestine sign of secret society membership.

When an Assessor finds and deals appropriately with a threat, his firm receives a third of the value of the perpetrator's assets, and two-thirds goes to the firm's employer within the Armed Forces. Assets include the obvious, such as the perpetrator's creds and belongings, but may also include the assets



The Vulture Warrior 1920 high-performance VTOL twin-engine fixed-wing strike aircraft. Commissioned in Year 194 at a cost of 147 million credits apiece, these heavily armed vehicles are certain to inflict devastating casualties on the enemy, in the event they ever see action.



of the perpetrator's co-conspirators (friends) and employers. The Armed Forces deducts percentages for incorrect completion of associated forms.

Tool & Die Works

Example firms: Impress, Ex-Caliber Personnel, Stamped by Perfection Services

Revenue stream: Percentage of value on returns of fully functional weaponry

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise, Pro Tech

Clean, well-maintained weaponry ensures effective missions and higher return of functional weaponry. Tool and Die workers maintain the factory floor equipment that makes weaponry for the Armed Forces. This equipment consists of giant robotic machines that stamp metals and plastics at forcible velocities, as well as large welding equipment, needle-sharp drills, lathes and clamping devices that operate as part of an assembly line. Workers ensure the machines are squeaky clean and properly oiled, the controls are fully functional and the plastic and metal sheets are aligned correctly during the stamping, drilling, lathing, clamping and welding processes.

Workers patrolling the floors must pass numerous safety certifications, held each month to replace lost workers. Management strictly prohibits worker attention lapses, which

studies have proven are the primary cause of worker loss. A clone whose manager catches him during an attention lapse may be subject to wage reduction and/or stiff fines, as that kind of behavior endangers everyone on the floor. Unfortunately, during the high-friction stamping process some of the plastics currently in use on the floor release neurotoxins that are harmless but sleep-inducing. Management is dealing with this issue.

Management rewards workers who excel at staying focused and keeping equipment clean and well-conditioned. These advanced Tool and Die workers often head out into the field to perform weapon repair. Workers chosen for this line of duty are known for their fanatical customer service skills: they may appear during the heat of battle to take a last-minute Laser Barrel Debris Readings (LBDRs) or make minute but critical Neurowhip Biocalibrations to adjust the weapons perfectly to the wielder's arm length. The Armed Forces generally prohibits battle engagement until the Tool

and Die workers can complete these checks; equipment is quite valuable.

Vulture Squadron Recruiters

Example firms: Alpha Hero Recruiters, RIP Career Management, Straight-Shooters AF

Revenue stream: Contract with Armed Forces

Secret society taint: Death Leopard, Frankenstein Destroyers, PURGE

Vulture Squadron: The ambition of many a young Armed Forces recruit, the warrior-heroes of Alpha Complex, the Paladins of Friend Computer, the Defenders of Justice. Strapping Junior Citizens complex-wide wish to join, but only a few can be the best.

And who locates these soldiers? The Vulture Squadron Recruiters, of course. VSRs seek creches with high mortality rates (largely due to overenthusiastic gunplay), often a predictor of suitable candidates. Before Junior Citizens can even submit an application, the VSRs submit them to a battery of medical, psychological, loyalty and hygiene tests, concluding with a brutal field training test that mentally incapacitates the weakest recruits (85%). The chaff are then assigned to other Armed Forces service firms, including the VSRs. The remaining 15 percent are permitted to submit applications to the Armed Forces Vulture Squadron.



38. SERVICE FIRMS

Central Processing Unit

CPU

CPU trains its personnel in the latest managerial techniques. At The Computer's order, CPU staffers consult with other service groups and Troubleshooter teams as advisers and consultants. They spend their time inventing new procedures and forms, tracking paperwork, lecturing managers and, in general, making inefficient bureaucracies operate even less efficiently by imposing impractical and ill-conceived procedures in accordance with abstruse theories of management. Whenever something goes wrong in a service group, The Computer's response is to call in a hotshot consultant from CPU.

CPU's principal duty is to maintain all data systems in Alpha Complex, including the hardware that runs The Computer itself. CPU's important secondary function (it says here) is to increase efficiency by improving management in every service group. Unfortunately, CPU personnel are hard-core techies and rarely have any managerial experience. They base their advice on theories developed by CPU lecturers. The other service groups think of CPU personnel as feckless hackers at best, incompetent meddlers at worst. The Computer has great enthusiasm for the advanced managerial theories CPU espouses—possibly because CPU helps revise The Computer's own software—and it makes sure the other service groups comply with CPU's advice.

Needless to say, other groups distrust and dislike CPU personnel for the special favor they enjoy with The Computer. As a group, they tend to abuse this privilege. They constantly hint about how unhappy everyone would be if things aren't done as they request, with the implied threat of a bad report to The Computer. CPU personnel get the best equipment and gear, and they always look prosperous. They are not glamorous like the Armed Forces, but a shrewd citizen knows it pays to make friends in the CPU service group.

A typical CPU conversation

CPU: ... So by my critical path analysis, the new procedure will increase workflow in this department by a factor of four.

Citizen: Yes, sir. We'll implement your recommendation immediately, sir.

CPU: See that you do. [Leaves.]

Another citizen: So let me get this straight. Now, I hand the forms to you without reading them.

Citizen: Right.

Other citizen: And then you stamp them and hand them on to DepOcSec?

Citizen: Right.

Other citizen: And no one in this department reads them?

Citizen: Right.

Other citizen: But Rule 13Fb, which states that approving any faulty application is treason, still stands?

Citizen: Right.

Other citizen: We're dead men.

Citizen: You got it.

116 Emergency Systems

Example firms: GoFetch, Fast Trackers, Emergency 101

Revenue stream: Account for the missing and balance the books, someone will pay for the recovery, even if it has to be the recovered.

Secret society taint: Anti-Mutant, Communists, Psion

Though CPU primarily concerns itself with maintaining core Computer systems, maintaining balance and keeping due account of everything within Alpha Complex extends beyond sitting behind a console. When people go missing, they need to be found, because missing people mean missing resources and probably a lot of things not getting done. So CPU spawned the 116 Emergency Systems teams.

Anyone can call on the 116 firms. Commonly competing firms may tender their services through some pre-action bargaining. The emergency team usually comprises a commander, a couple of hired grunts, a couple of para-techies responsible for handling scanning equipment and a driver for the armored response vehicle. They handle missing persons, kidnaps and hijacks, people who have fallen down big holes and even the occasional escaped criminal, if the profit margin makes it worthwhile. After all, they have to compete with IntSec operatives who will likely do the job for a bribe cheaper than the 116 contract.

Credit License Checkers

Example firms: Cred-Fixers CPU, CREDUility License

Revenue stream: Citizens pay fees based on services performed.

Secret society taint: Computer Phreaks, Pro Tech

In Alpha Complex citizens may pay with credits that have legal licenses attached to them. These credit licenses restrict how the creds may be used—for example, certain Armed Forces creds have licenses limiting use only to Armed Forces giftware storefronts. Typically, by accepting a cred, a citizen automatically accepts the cred's licensing terms, if any.



Unfortunately, certain disloyal citizens, often backed by secret societies, abuse the original intent of cred licenses. Often, these citizens make their cred licenses so restrictive as to be almost useless. Sometimes they place treasonous or potentially fine-inducing limitations on creds—for example, restricting use to buying Communist propaganda pamphlets in SAP Sector. On occasion, licenses are excessively restrictive, fine-inducing, and treasonous all at once.

The unlucky citizen who accepts creds with such restrictions finds himself in a world of legal hurt. His first and best option always should be to turn to the Credit License Checkers of Alpha Complex. This 'Vulture Squadron of the legal world', as they like to call themselves, assists the hapless citizen by identifying, investigating and resolving borderline and treasonous cases. For a fee, Checkers 'unpack' licenses, enabling citizens to use formerly licensed creds without restrictions. In cases where the credit license was borderline or treasonous, the citizen pays a strict but fair fee to wipe the illegal license acceptance from his record.

For a slightly larger fee, Checkers provide cred license scanning services, whereby they prescan all creds a citizen receives to ensure the citizen doesn't unwittingly accept problem licenses. To get this service, a citizen simply establishes an account through a licensed Checker-owned banking corporation and deposits all his creds there. The license for this service stipulates that a citizen using the service must not establish or maintain cred accounts elsewhere. What could go wrong?



Facility Surveillance Control

Example firms: Citizens' Vigilance Services, Eye in the Skypanel

Revenue stream: Per-sector maintenance contracts with CPU.

Secret society taint: Illuminati

Surveillance is Job One at Facility Surveillance Control. FSC mechanics maintain the surveillance cameras and spybots throughout the complex. FSC management gives low-clearance mechanics their assignments each day and tells them where to find the cameras they will be repairing or where to go to install the cameras.

Cameras are usually bracketed against ceilings or high walls to discourage vandalism, making access tricky for mechanics. Further, working with the camera wiring technically requires communication with the Wire Supply Checkers within Power Services, and must be documented using Forms WCP-23a-066 and CIP-WSC-FSC-154c. However, because such inter-group communication is difficult at best, mechanics often (illegally) make do with wire patches they devise themselves. To maximize wire lengths and prevent signal degradation, Wire Supply Checkers have been known to relocate cameras after FSC mechanics install them. They tend to reinstall relocated cameras in inconvenient or dangerous spots, such as over vats of bubbling bioreactive waste.

Higher-clearance mechanics have access to camera location maps and cover larger assigned sectors. Management sometimes assigns their most trustworthy mechanics to repair and upgrade the spybots throughout the complex. Tiny bugs with audio and video recording capabilities, spybots are either static or mobile. Typically at the request of a Board member of a service firm or other organization, higher-level mechanics install static spybot 'blankets' throughout the offices of new CEOs

and other organization heads until they prove their loyalty beyond question.

High-clearance mechanics program mobile spybots to roam within an assigned sector and collect data. Management entrusts these citizens with Spybot Locators, which are coded to find certain limited job lots of spybots. Locators can often turn spybots on or off remotely, but at the risk of mission failure and treason, access codes for doing so must be absolutely correct and up-to-date.

Form Facilitators

Example firms: E-Z-Form, Procedural Smoothers CPU

Revenue stream: Payment for facilitation of form submission and other various types of Alpha Complex legalese.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise (common), Illuminati (common)

Forms. Love them or hate them, they're a big part of Alpha Complex life—an annoying part. A part that has driven more than one citizen to take a long walk off a short food vat rim. Of course, there have always been bureaucrats that were willing to—ahem—*facilitate* the processing of forms...for a fee. So it should be no surprise that once the bureaucracy was outsourced, several enterprising clones saw an opportunity in using their knowledge of 'put Form A into Slot B' for the benefit of others—for a price, of course.

These citizens didn't stop there, though. With their knowledge of the Byzantine workings of Friend Computer and the Alpha Complex bureaucracy, Form Facilitators began to offer other services, like 'dealing with your possessions after your last clone is recycled' and 'formalizing strategic business alliances with a solid legal structure'. Whether it's requisitioning a better apartment, creating

an ironclad confession of treason for a fellow Troubleshooter to sign or securing the majority of a sector's resources for yourself, Form Facilitators can make it happen.

Of course, the services of a Form Facilitator don't come cheap. After all, learning all this stuff is hard work, and then there are the INFRARED clerks that helped, the five-hour business Hot Fun sessions, the corporate flybot loan.... Form Facilitators bill by the hour, and there's always a minimum service charge. Of course, if you really *need* that shiny cone rifle...

Citizen: So, you filed all the paperwork for my new ME card?

Form Facilitator: Yes. You can go and pick it up tomorrow.

Citizen: Thank The Computer. You're a real clonesaver, you know that?

Form Facilitator: Thanks are not needed. What is needed is prompt payment for services rendered.

[*Form Facilitator passes an itemized bill to citizen. Citizen looks at it and promptly faints from shock.*]

Form Facilitator: We expect full payment by the end of today, or we will have no other choice but to forward this matter to IntSec. Have a nice day, citizen.

Form Inventory Officers

Example firms: 52B/124-R-US, Forms For All Occasions, Formal Assistance

Revenue stream: Assistance in managing the speed of the bureaucratic process; greasing the wheels of the administrative process.

Secret society taint: FCCC-P

Someone once said that paperwork and form-filling are the epoxy that gums the wheels of a rigid, over-centralized and moderately honest bureaucracy. Or something similar.

Forms are the essential building block of a structured and efficient society, and CPU is tasked with ensuring an adequate supply available at all times.

Form Inventory Officers actively monitor and manage the supply of forms applicable to all areas of Alpha Complex life—from Chapstick Cap Acquisition to Registration of Known Mutations. They ensure an adequate inventory is maintained at all times and proactively compute projected demands. They have an intimate knowledge of what forms serve which functions, and will key orders of new forms to meet service group productivity targets. When workloads endanger productivity, Form Inventory Officers can reduce supplies of multi-purpose forms to augment the bureaucratic process.

Wherever form-related questions and queries arise, Form Inventory Officers can be a fountain of wisdom under the right conditions. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink.

Form Disposal Advisors

Example firms: Process Review Consulting, QuotaStoppers CPU, ErrorCleanse, Korekt

Revenue stream: Contracts with PLC

Secret society taint: Illuminati, Sierra Club

In the closed environment of Alpha Complex recycling is vital. The bureaucracy's paper consumption is voracious, even after the introduction of digital forms. Form Disposal Advisors (mostly former managers in CPU's Sub-Executive Committee of Intra-Complex Complaints, Feedback and Requests Pre-Approval) visit bureaus and offices throughout the Complex, marking obsolete and misprinted forms for recycling.

Sometimes the Advisors must go on emergency alert and work around the clock to recall certain disastrous misprints. One such unfortunate error, the notorious Form 302-418-814b rev 211.06.19 'Permission to Transport and Distribute Hydroponic Comestibles', mistakenly allowed INFRARED mess hall supervisors to requisition real fruits and vegetables. This quickly disrupted INFRARED hormone suppressant pharmatherapy, prompting illegal free thoughts and strange new biochemical sensations. Internal Security had to call in Armed Forces armor companies to quell the riots. Worse, the requisitions quickly exhausted the real-food supply, inconveniencing high-clearance citizens for some days until the next crop.

It would have gone much worse, if not for the ever diligent Form Disposal Advisors.

Pocket Protector Refurbishers

Example firms: Ultimate Pocket Security; Perfect Pockets

Revenue stream: Percentage of advertising revenues; bonuses based on sales.

Secret society taint: Communists (planting pocket protector propaganda)

The Computer places equal worth on all property—no item is too insignificant to be considered a valued resource, so citizens should take care of everything. That extends to uniforms—and CPU has handed down, from generation to generation, the only certain means to achieve this in a pressured and active working environment. Wherever Communism strikes to disrupt directed inscription fluid delivery device integrity—the official CPU Pocket Protector is there.

The Pocket Protector Refurbishers ensure all issued Pocket Protectors are fitted correctly, adequately maintained and effectively utilized. The task is grueling, dependent on constantly improving technology to provide maximum protection, a key range of monitoring and impact assessment skills and a keen eye to maximizing advertising profits. Refurbishers ensure the latest advertising patches are adhered to all protectors in use and that Use By dates are observed to ensure optimum pocket security. To enhance profits PPRs also remain vigilant for opportunities to expand the range of pocket protectors to cover any situations where leaks and stains may occur from direct contact between assigned equipment and an unwary citizen's clothing.

Security System Installers

Example firms: PerimeterGard Installers, SSI-100 Emplacement, Snuf-N-Truder Corp

Revenue stream: Contracts to install and maintain systems throughout the complex.

Secret society taint: Computer Phreaks, Illuminati

The Security System Installers think about safety so citizens don't have to. SSIs aid CPU by performing obvious duties such as installing cameras and audio around the complex. They also install sirens, fire sprinklers, smoke detectors, door and window sensors, motion detectors, intercoms, keypads, locks and magnetic contacts. Installers may have contracts to replace backup batteries in various detectors, a duty they take very seriously.

At higher security clearances, SSIs plant door signs around portals to the Outdoors advertising their security services. As these service firms report, the signs have been 72% effective in discouraging casual intruders to Alpha Complex. Higher-clearance SSIs may also install preventative security devices such as hallway laser embankments, electrified floors, gas jets, remote-exploding commbooths and self-sealing corridors.

Installers aren't all technically oriented; they need good people skills, too. Sometimes they have to work through seemingly minor miscommunications with Facility Surveillance

Control, Surveillance Operatives and Wire Supply Checkers. Continued miscommunication can mean relocated security devices, misrouted personnel and certain physical hazards, though of course these are never deliberately caused.

Volunteer Collection Agencies

Example firms: HerdEmUp Volunteer Supply, Focus Gatherers

Revenue stream: Paid by CPU for volunteer collection, per volunteer supplied.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise (rare)

CPU's bureaucracy and its firms are big believers in Focus Groups as a key component in strategic project planning. They've also discovered a Focus Group in complete agreement with the sponsor very effectively accelerates the process. Even pointing guns and yelling speeds the process—plus it's fun.

Focus Group volunteers don't have as much fun. Once word gets around that a new volunteer call is underway, collecting volunteers to sit in Focus Groups becomes somewhat more difficult. Enter the Volunteer Collection Agencies, who provide a variety of volunteer collection functions that go beyond CPU and Focus Group needs.

With the right clearance and a fistful of plasticreds, you can pretty much get volunteers for any job or trial you have in mind. The volunteers tend to rub their heads a lot, perhaps, and seem confused and perhaps drugged, but you can always be confident they volunteered willingly and without coercion. Some even joke about being hit on the head with a toolkit and waking up in the Volunteer Restraining Area. Volunteers sure have a strange sense of humor, don't they?

James-O-TYB: [Sitting up.] Whuh!... where am I?

Product Spokesperson: Welcome, citizen, to the Radionucleide-Fortified Neuroglee Nugget taste test!

James-O: What taste test? Who are you? Why am I not in my bed?

Product Spokesperson: I know you're excited, citizen. Who wouldn't be excited about being chosen for a momentous opportunity like this! Here, taste this. [Pries James-O's jaws open.]

James-O: [Mmmrg, gulp.] Hey! What'd you do that fo—er. Why is my stomach glowing?

Product Spokesperson: It's chock full of radionucleides! Now, a couple of questions for you. First, do you still feel alive?



SOURCEBOOK

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

HPD & Mind Control

Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control provides for the housing, entertainment and political education of the Infrareds. They also provide most of the clerical services and low-level administration in Alpha Complex. Of all the service groups, HPD has the least status, because it has the most direct contact with the INFRARED masses. Internal Security looks upon their entertainment and propaganda with scorn, and the technically skilled service groups regard HPD & Mind Control personnel as uneducated clerks. However, HPD&MC's propaganda sways the emotions of the people; properly coordinated propaganda is often decisive in inter-group conflicts, so other groups are careful not to antagonize HPD&MC too thoroughly.

Discipline and morale are poor. Because many HPDers are high-strung talents and basically harmless, The Computer tolerates a certain carelessness of political orthodoxy. Internal Security regards HPD & Mind Control as beneath contempt. The only other service where treason is less aggressively persecuted is Research & Design.

HPD & Mind Control personnel are often less than strict in their observance of The Computer's rules. Their garments are often of poor quality, poorly maintained, and worn with a casual indifference to regulations. HPD & Mind Control personnel have a reputation for being 'free thinkers' in Alpha Complex, though the implication is of scorn rather than respect.

HPD&MC is a massive bureaucracy, even more procedure-bound and red-tape ridden than the others. It's not really that getting anything done with HPD&MC personnel is difficult; it's more that HPD&MC doesn't do much of anything except shuffle papers.

Citizens dread being required to obtain an authorization form from HPD&MC, because even if it were possible, generally the clerks from whom one would need to obtain it don't want to be bothered, and will send you off on a wild bot chase through 16 offices. Even when HPD&MC personnel are cooperative (perhaps because you're threatening them with immediate and drastic personal injury), the convoluted procedures they follow ensure getting what you need requires approval from six managers and visits to ten offices.

A typical HPD&MC conversation

Citizen: I need a 174Z6a stroke 23.

HPD: A what?

Citizen: A 174Z6a stroke 23. An Authorization to Repair Communal Vending Machines, Pharmaceutical Supplement Dispensers and Autogyro Foot Baths.

HPD: Never heard of it.

Citizen: I was told to come to this office. It says Office of Vending Machine Authorization right on your door.

HPD: Yeah? Huh. What do you know. So it does.

Citizen: Are you going to give me my form?

HPD: Listen, fella. I told you I never heard of it.

Citizen: I've spent six days talking to you HPD bozos, and I'm still getting nowhere! You get me my form, or I'm shoving this laser pistol down your throat and cauterizing your intestines!

HPD: Hey, take it easy! Look, what do you want me to do? We authorize installation, not repair. You want maybe the Directorate for Authorizing Vending Machine Repairs, okay?

Citizen: If you don't get me my form immediately, I shall be forced to shoot you.

HPD: Look, I can't do a thing...

[ZAPZAPZAP!]

Citizen: What a senseless waste of human life.



Just brilliant! But could you try dodging those laser blasts one more time, and this time, do it like you really mean it, all right?

Entertainment Scouting Agencies

Example firms: Alpha Complex Idol, SuperCitizen Search

Revenue stream: Contract with individual vidshow production companies, paid per discovery.

Secret society taint: Communists

The public's always looking for the next big thing, and be honest, what citizen wouldn't want to achieve fame and fortune as Alpha Complex's next rising light-and-heat-producing-sphere? Big credits await any scouting firm that brings in the next wild success. And in the meantime, contestants for 'WarBotMania!' are worth a few credits, too.

More optimistic citizens hold Entertainment Scouts in awe. The Scouts often hold elaborate auditions and contests, and occasionally they'll just meander through the corridors, suddenly setting upon a likely looking citizen and demanding a scene on the spot. 'Commie begging for his life' is a particularly popular one, as is 'Treasonous citizen bribing Entertainment Scout in exchange for his life.' Sometime they'll even have a camera crew recording before you notice they're there: 'That was great, citizen.'

Stick with me, kiddo! Top of the Complex, top of the Complex! You'll be UV!

History Purifiers

Example firms: Version Control Corporation, Account Cleaners HPD

Revenue stream: At-will contract (which technically doesn't exist) with HPD&MC.

Secret society taint: Illuminati

All loyal citizens know to trust The Computer. The Computer always tells citizens the truth. No matter how much happier and more perfect Alpha Complex could be as a result, The Computer would never consider altering historical documents to cover up embarrassing disasters (Alpha Complex has never suffered any embarrassing disasters), to make high-clearance citizens look good (high-clearance citizens always look good in their own right) or to permit High Programmers to take Twosdays off for holidays (Sector-HIL-Victory Day always falls on a Twosday).

And certainly The Computer wouldn't send out HPD&MC workers to ensure facts in the field matched the documents that, as we've explained, haven't been changed. Certainly these workers would never go around Alpha Complex, casually stealing inconvenient multicorders and painting over those scorch marks on the walls. Certainly they wouldn't locate citizens who were misinformed regarding recent events, or mix MemoWipe in with their Cold Fun. And it goes without saying that if such alterations were to be carefully planned by The

Computer and a few select High Programmers, no citizen would ever think of changing the mission specifications on his own, or of keeping any treasonous evidence of the events. The Computer hasn't seen fit to delete.

And it would never even occur to HPD&MC to outsource these operations to various service firms. That's because these operations never take place. That's why we haven't seen dozens of citizens terminated for possessing treasonous and outdated knowledge once they've finished a job.

News Services

Example firms: Alpha News Network, Box News, The Bouncy Bubbly Channel

Revenue stream: Selling news and on-the-scene reports to the vid channel. Payments for bad-mouthing other service firms. Bribes for covering celebrity-wannabes.

Secret society taint: Illuminati, Free Enterprise

As every Troubleshooter knows, there's a lot going on at Alpha Complex. With only one vid channel available (and why would a citizen want more than one?), the countless news services vie for control over the two daily news hours with a no-holds-barred mindset: fabricating the news, using unregistered prescient mutants to predict future events, planting explosives or incriminating evidence at the offices of rival firms, and then covering it on the news. Everything's fair game.

The payoff is huge, both in credits and fame, and some firms might be kind enough to share it with Troubleshooters who bring footage of autocar chases, confessing traitors, firefights or petbots being rescued by a Vulture Squad. The Computer, however, rarely takes kindly to all the competitiveness and controversy required by those firms, and many news crews end up covering their own executions. The gulping sobs of ex-news anchors boost ratings like nothing else.

Public Hating Coordination

Example firms: Values Preservation Society, Whistleblower Corp., Foes-N-Stocks HPD

Revenue stream: Mandatory donations from citizens wishing to provide proof of loyalty to Alpha Complex's values.

Secret society taint: Anti-Mutant, FCCC-P, Death Leopard

When faced with such despicable foes as Commies, mutants and traitors, clearly, mere general hatred of Alpha Complex's enemies falls far short. These threats to the complex's perfect society must be despised in an organized, well-structured and highly concentrated fashion. Charged with these

efforts are the Public Hating Coordinators, making Commie Hating, Mutant Loathing and Traitor Resentment more efficient and highly convenient for the common citizen.

It is these Coordinators who organize Secret Society Detestation Evenings. They write and distribute pamphlets like *100 Reasons Communism is Unhygienic*, and send all Alpha Complex citizens short messages reading 'Tomorrow at 0200 hours precisely, please be sure to hate the Commie mutant traitors who leaked green radioactive material into our B3 supplies. Please respond with a full description of your hatred towards these individuals; include names and clone numbers. Thank you.'

If a particular sector becomes abnormally complacent in their utter detestation towards their assigned enemies (as measured by the yearly Compliancy rating), the Public Hating Coordinators go full out, covering the area with informative posters, Dislike Intensification Rallies and if necessary, actual Commie mutant traitors for citizens to hate directly.

Remember: If we stop hating them for even an instant, the Communists will have already won.

Trend Identifiers

Example firms: Make What We Tell You or Else HPD, WeBug'EmTheyBuy'Em

Revenue stream: Payment for research of given product line. Consultation.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise (common), Illuminati (warping public opinion)

High-clearance citizens in charge of development and production still struggle with the fact that suddenly some of their products are not treasonous not to purchase. Guessing what citizens will buy instead of just executing them until they buy it is a frightening concept.

That's where the Consumerism Trend Identifiers come in. Guided by their commercial savvy and supported by meticulous research, these hard-working citizens can, for a nominal sum, let you know precisely which brand-new product repackaging citizens complex-wide have been clamoring for.

Any citizen can expect to be approached at least thrice a day by a Trend Identifier with a new poll or survey, asking his opinion about the new brand of AlgaeJoyPops and how frequently he purchases official 'Oll-E the Education Scrubot' trading cards. The Identifiers often interrupt communication channels for 'just a few quick questions', and several firms are already experimenting with prototype surveybots for even greater efficiency. No effort is too great to ensure the satisfaction of the common citizen!

Citizens should be unconcerned with a small number of isolated incidents in which recommendations by Trend Identifiers proved

widely unpopular or mildly fatal. These are professionals, and far better at telling what average citizens want than are actual average citizens. Some are so good, they often have full written reports prepared before they even start their research! Remember—knowing what you want is their job.

Annoyed Troubleshooter: [Having just shot his team leader in the back.] Who're you? Where'd my contact officer go?

Consumerism Trend Identifier [on vidscreen]: Hi, I'd like to ask for just a few moments of your time for a short—

Annoyed Troubleshooter: Um, now's not really—

Consumerism Trend Identifier: —recorded message; your communication will be resumed upon completion of the survey. Please enter the number of times in the past month you have purchased one of our fine SimulYogurt products, such as—

Annoyed Troubleshooter: [Slams fist against keypad.]

Consumerism Trend Identifier: 'Several hundred.' Well done, citizen. Thirty-one credits have been charged to your account for our conversation thus far. The next question is, if you were a scrubot, which of the following products might you find attractive...?

Sector Expansion Surveyors

Example firms: Movin' On Up, X-Pansion

Revenue stream: Bribes from the various service firms.

Secret society taint: Sierra Club, Free Enterprise

When The Computer declared Alpha Complex to be the last remaining stronghold of loyal, non-Communist citizens, it was obvious the Complex had to expand. The surveyors were established to measure the land outside the Complex, and create layouts for new sectors. However, because the Outdoors is widely believed to be a horrible toxic deadly traitorous place, the surveyors decided instead to remodel the unused parts of the Complex into offices and residential blocks.

As unused space became harder and harder to find, the Surveyors started remodeling parts of the Complex already in use. The Computer usually supports their remodeling decisions, and many service firms find themselves without office space after their offices have been turned overnight into food vats. Consequently, every service firm manager knows it's good to have a friend in the Surveyors.

Semantics Control

Example firms: Watch Your Words! Semantics Company, Loyal Picky Proofing Firm



Revenue stream: For enforcement (ratting out others), percentage of fine. For protection (proofreading), payment from client.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise (frequent)

Though not perhaps as insubordinate as poor hygiene or outright naughtiness, misuse of language can be a fineable offense. Formerly the proofreaders for HPD&MC publications and holovid scripts, the Semantics Enforcers (known commonly as Brand Police or Branders) found a way to profitably extend their functions.

Semantics Control firms actively search for semantics offenses (misspellings on submitted forms, typos in communications, syntax, grammar, you name it) and relay the charges through Internal Security agents. As HPD&MC's prestige and position is bolstered by finding treasonous activity, they're willing to pay the firm a percentage of each fine they levy. Some Semantics Control firms also charge fees to various product firms to 'actively protect' their brand identities.

Brander: Tsk tsk. And look here, you've put 'Bouncy Bubbly Beverage' on your request form instead of 'Bouncy Bubble Beverage', the correct branding term for that particular presweetened carbonated treat.

Holt-R-FGE: Um, and that's bad?

Brander: Does brand dilution sound bad?

I certainly think so. And look here. Oh, no. No no no no no. You used 'the' in lowercase in conjunction with The Computer!

Holt-R-FGE: Gulp!

Brander: Right! I'll be glad to notify IntSec of your 3,000-credit fine, citizen, and you have a nice day.

The incredibly annoying version of Semantics control [optional]

Here is a way to push Semantics Control into still further realms of annoyance. Use this with care. We disclaim all responsibility. You were warned.

Semantics Control's purpose is not merely to ensure correct brand usage. The Computer fully understands that, in order for citizens to clearly and accurately communicate with each other in a timely fashion, linguistic purity must be maintained. Semantics Control personnel actively and diligently maintain *The Alpha Complex Manual of Style*, currently a 17-gigabyte text file conveniently divided into security clearance sections, and freely downloadable (up to the appropriate security clearance section) by all citizens. Semantics Control personnel (including PCs) are authorized to impose fines of ten credits or less, on the spot, for incorrect use of language.

For example, the terms 'phone,' 'cell,' 'mobile' and 'cellphone' are now deprecated, and it is incorrect to refer to your Personal

Digital Companion with such terms. In spoken language, it is correct to say 'PDC,' 'Personal Digital Companion' or 'pid-cee'. In written prose, the term Personal Digital Companion should, at first use, be spelled out in full, followed by the abbreviation (PDC), in parentheses, just like that. Subsequent use of the abbreviation alone is permissible.

As another example, computer-registered trademarks must always be accompanied by a Registered Trademark symbol, or in spoken language, by saying 'Tee-Em'. Additionally, a trademark is technically an adjective, and thus it is inappropriate to say, well, 'Paranoia XP'. Instead, it would be correct (in Alpha Complex, or old issues of *Dragon*) to say 'the Paranoia XP game.' Similarly, it is technically wrong to refer to the popular soft drink as 'Bouncy Bubble Beverage.' Rather, one must correctly say 'the Bouncy Bubble Beverage Tee-Em beverage' (because the phrase 'Bouncy Bubble Beverage' is trademarked as a whole).

Perhaps you're beginning to understand why it might be amusing (to you) and annoying (to the PCs) to have a Semantics Control employee on the Troubleshooter team.

Language changes constantly with human and Computer progress, and consequently, the *Manual of Style* is subject to frequent additions and alterations. Indeed, citizens with a good idea on how to improve the use of language are encouraged to file an appropriate form suggesting an alteration to the *Manual*. If approved, this loyal citizen will receive a small credit bonus. Because the *Manual of Style* is publicly and readily available, citizens are expected to abide by it at all times, even if 'correct style' changed 16 seconds ago.

It would, of course, Be Wrong for the player of a character working for Semantics Control to invent tortured stylistic 'rules', fining his fellow PCs repeatedly for minor transgressions, until their language is so perfected that every sentence is a labored exercise in mental translation. But it might be fun. 'The term "laser pistol" is now deprecated, citizen. The Computer has determined citizen happiness is improved by calling it a *dweebie*. Oh, and that's not a barrel any more, that's a *dweebie-dingus*. That will be six plasticreds.'

Singalong Agents

Example firms: Song in My Heart HPD, Thankful to Be an Alphan HPD, Up Up with Citizens!

Revenue stream: Direct contracts from HPD&MC based on year-end Morale Compliance Surveys.

Secret society taint: Romantics

Let mandatory happiness abound! Loyal, hard-working Singalong Agents are deployed throughout Alpha Complex, wherever citizens may be, to lift their spirits to the Minimum Acceptable Standard Spirit (MASS) Level, as detailed in HPD&MC Happiness Maintenance

Non-Negotiable Guidelines. These agents travel between common mass-employment facilities, such as Food Vats and Recycling Centers, and lead all the citizens in uplifting song. Stopping work while singing is treason. Declining to sing during a Computer-sanctioned Singalong is treason. In Zap games, singing off-key is treason.

Agents may initiate Singalong events at times and places of their choosing for all citizens of equal or lower security clearance. From hundreds of INFRARED Bot-Packers to the five Troubleshooters trying to subdue a raging warbot, their situation will doubtlessly be improved by the mandatory melodious harmony imposed upon them. Singalong Agents are always ready to step in with a smile and a song, undaunted despite the facts that Old-Reckoning knowledge of reading notes is treasonous, half of their songs consist entirely of randomly-generated electronic blips and 'O Loyal Alphans We' is the only composition available at INFRARED Clearance.

Subliminals Police

Example firms: We Can Make You Remember It Wholesale, Invisible Visuals

Revenue stream: Enhance current consumption of excess products through imaginative advertising: percentage of profits.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise, Romantics

Subliminals Police proactively seek out products and services that are under-consumed or under-subscribed, then raise public awareness through repeated subliminal advertising. Subliminals Police operatives have been known to creep into citizens' living quarters during the night and rearrange their socks to spell out EAT MORE GRUEL or fastidiously back-comb the fibers on towels to read BUY MORE CHAPSTICK. They carefully adjust informational displays or send out runners who walk in front of people, usually in groups, with words etched into belts or helmets that create a slogan when viewed.

Admittedly, the subliminal messages may not always be quite as hidden as might ordinarily be expected—but repeated viewing of the same ad can have a remarkable effect on the dietary supplement-addled brain of the average INFRARED.

'ALERT! DANGER! This Room Is Strictly Off DRINK MORE GAS GIANT to All Personnel!'

The Computer it's always
is time for your CruncheeTym
friend.

Internal Security

Internal Security is a combination of Homeland Security, riot police and narc squad. Not only does The Computer keep tabs on everything with omnipresent cameras and recording devices, it also maintains Internal Security spies as another check on the loyalty of its citizens. Many IntSec agents are planted in the other service groups. They have informants everywhere.

In addition to ratting on traitors, IntSec agents run 'sting' operations designed to tempt citizens into treason. Because promotion within IntSec is based on the number and prestige of traitors unmasked, IntSec agents are notorious for rooting out treason that isn't even there to begin with.

Of course, false accusations of treason are themselves treason. However, if an IntSec agent and a regular citizen mutually accuse each other of treason, all else being equal, The Computer is more likely to believe the agent.

In addition to plainclothes agents (spies), IntSec maintains uniformed police. At the bottom of the scale are the omnipresent Clearance GREEN goons. They wear distinctive tight leather-like pants and jackets, and silvered reflective riot helmets. They routinely carry truncheons, neurowhips, stun guns, tanglers, and laser pistols or rifles. Their main task is to break up brawls, riots, and food fights that occur frequently among the INFRAREDs. The Computer selects GREEN goons from the INFRARED ranks for size and coarseness of intellect, then promotes them rapidly to high authority, the better to intimidate offenders. For their too-rapid advancement and for their general pushiness and corruption, citizens hold GREEN goons in contempt—but silently.

More widely feared among higher-clearance characters are the BLUE Clearance Troopers, commonly called 'Blues.' These are the police of each sector, called in to deal with serious crimes or unrest. They are well disciplined, highly trained, totally merciless and possess truly awesome firepower. Their armor is the pinnacle of Alpha Complex technology, and totally impervious to most weapons carried by RED Clearance Troubleshooters.

A summons to an interview with Internal Security is seldom a pleasant experience, and the assignment of an observer from Internal Security to any project is reason for serious paranoia.

A typical IntSec conversation

IntSec BLUE Trooper: Citizen! I notice your sneakers are unlaced.

Citizen: Yes, citizen, you are entirely correct.

IntSec: May I ask why your sneakers are unlaced?

Citizen: Yes, citizen, you may.

IntSec [with elaborate patience]: Why, citizen, are your sneakers unlaced?

Citizen: My sneakers are several sizes too small for my feet.

IntSec: And why are your sneakers too small for your feet?

Citizen: PLC must have goofed. I asked for the right size.

IntSec: Citizen, you are under arrest.

Citizen: What?! I'm an honest citizen! You have no right.

IntSec: First, citizen, you claim that PLC committed an error. Errors are treason. Either you are the source of this error, in which case you are a traitor, or else a Commie traitor lurks in PLC. If this last is true, then you have clear evidence of treason in PLC, yet you have not reported this treason to The Computer. Failure to report treason is treason. Moreover, citizen, your laces are untied. You are out of uniform. Being out of uniform is treason.

Citizen: No! No! Please don't arrest me! I haven't done anything wrong!

IntSec: There is one way out.

Citizen: Yes? What is it? Please! I'll do anything!

IntSec: You must reveal the names and deeds of your accomplices.

Citizen: Yes, yes! Yes, you are entirely right. I confess my heinous crime. But I was a poor trusting soul, led astray by evil companions... Jon-R-LXR-3, Mary-R-FBE-2....



officers doled out strict but fair Precautionary Beatings to malefactors caught jumping lines, crossing without looking both ways or otherwise jeopardizing efficient crowd flow. This worked wonders, and the number of riot incidents hit an all-time sector low. The next six months were completely riot-free. Crowd Control accomplished this through a systematic purge of everyone in the sector suspected of impeding traffic flow.

Best of all, IntSec's troops were freed up to find the traitors in the sector. After six months of the lowest productivity ratings ever recorded, every manager in the sector was arrested and executed for treason. DND is now a flourishing training center for IntSec service firms, who control citizen's communal spaces so that all may move quickly and freely.

Of course, in game terms, these guys are just GREEN goons with large laser pistols. If they were too violent for Armed Forces, and too dumb for IntSec, they ended up in one of these service firms. Once in Crowd Control for Armed Forces, an officer will never get a contract in Crowd Control for IntSec, and vice versa; the petty rivalries run too deep.

When not beating up people who aren't standing exactly within the queuing lines on the floor, Crowd Controllers act as a rapid response force for any riots that may break out. This is where the real money is for these firms—being paid large bonuses for quelling riots as quickly as possible. Rumors that the guards start riots near their own service firm's patrols to get rich quick are treason.



De-Riot Guard: You! You there! Step forwards!

Citizen: Me?

De-Riot Guard: The queue is moving! Step forwards!

Citizen: But nobody's moving—there's no space within the lines to move in!

De-Riot Guard: MOVE!

Citizen: Um...

[*De-Riot Guard levels pistol and fires.*]

De-Riot Guard: You! Get that corpse out of the line! AND MOVE FORWARDS!

De-Riot Guard's Supervisor: That's nice crowd control, Larry-G. Real nice.

De-Riot Guard: Thanks, boss.

Supervisor: Keep 'em moving, Larry-G. Keep 'em moving.

devotion and productivity. Such is the mantra of The Computer, and by loyal association, IntSec. To this end, all sectors are constantly monitored to determine baseline happiness levels, compared against a scientifically established Glee Quota. When sectors achieve or exceed the Glee Quota, the population is rewarded; when metrics fall short, traitors must be present, and a wave of interrogations, investigations and terminations follow.

Glee Quota Adjutants solicitously ensure happiness is fostered and maintained. Sectors, and individuals, who fail to achieve their Glee Quotas often spiral into a closed cycle of deceit and treachery, displayed through apathy, grumbling and bad dental hygiene. GQAs constantly keep records of events and activities that trigger manifestations of happiness or despondency, then build on positive actions to ensure the display of high spirits. When reasons for negativity are unclear, the ever-caring GQAs must gently question and probe to better understand the nature of the situation. Profit and prestige comes with happiness, so GQAs are usually willing to go to any lengths to get results.

are licensed to carry weapons and containment collars. They are paid for each discontented citizen who reports to a Bright Vision Re-education Center under their aegis. Paranoid rumors they grab citizens off the street and alter their records are treasonous and cause for the rumor-monger's re-education.

Surveillance Operatives

Example firms: Jeroboam PI, Ion-U

Revenue stream: Individual cases with IntSec.

Secret society taint: Illuminati

Everyone is guilty of something. Treason is everywhere, and Alpha Complex is under constant threat of attack from Commies intent on terrible destruction and jealous subversion of The Computer's hard-won utopia. That's enough to keep the majority of IntSec busy for a long time indeed. Yet concentrating on the big traitors means petty acts of treason go unrecorded and unpunished—and that can only lead to trouble later on.

Equipped with little more than suspicious minds, keen senses and a multicorder, Surveillance Operatives are the answer. They enthusiastically perform the dirty work of gathering evidence and filing reports to minimize the number of minor crimes against Alpha Complex slipping through the net and ruining IntSec efficiency quotas. If a misguided citizen steals others' soap bars, hacks vending machines to skim micro-credits off other citizens' ME cards or keeps an offline personal journal, Surveillance Operatives are there to gather evidence, compile a report and see to it that corrective measures can be applied. They love their work. Do other citizens love them? They say so—but the slang term 'freelance fink' is no compliment.

Re-Education Client Procurement

Example firms: BarrelPoint Escorts, Re-education Guides

Revenue stream: Reward for each reassigned citizen turned in to a re-education center.

Secret society taint: Just about all of them

Sadly and inexplicably, some citizens have difficulty adjusting to the rules of Alpha Complex which help everyone live happily together. Stealing from same-clearance citizens, grumbling, discontented thoughts, repeated counts of poor handwashing...all these risk the balance of happiness. The Computer reassigned discontented citizens manifesting these traits to Bright Vision Re-education Centers for happiness treatments.

Bright Vision Re-education Centers: Cultural conditioning hubs for a better future. At these bustling seats of modern medication, formerly discontented citizens have a satisfactorily full schedule: Early morning meds, breakfast, Felicity Practice, Ad Candy (Subliminal Reconditioning), afternoon meds, lunch, Obedience Training, Required Elective (Heroic Bust Sculpting or Self-Sacrifice Meditation), Midafternoon Snack and Handwashing Drill, Loyalty Gym, evening meds, dinner, Dental Hygiene Practice, Computer Confession, Patient Playtime, Tranquilizer Hour and Happy Sleepcycle.

What citizen would not want to be this happy? Strangely, not all discontented citizens report to Bright Vision centers as assigned. Re-education Client Procurement provides the *Gentle Persuasion*, *Vigorous Persuasion* and *Dynamic Delivery* services these confused future patients so desperately need. Procurers

Termination Center Janitorial

Example firms: SecuraClean, Crack Factotum IS

Revenue stream: Long-term contracts, including wages, bonuses (for dependable workers) and benefits, with Internal Security.

Secret society taint: Not much

While most organizations maintain a janitorial and menial staff to manage the simplest tasks of cleaning corridors and polishing monitors, Internal Security found that recruiting such staff was particularly difficult. The sights and sounds of any IntSec stronghold tended to drive most menial staff into babbling, dribbling wrecks. So, rather than look outside the organization, IntSec looked within and found willing individuals in their Rolls of Honor—IntSec veterans dulled into quiet indifference.

Termination Center Janitorial staff have seen it all before. Nothing fazes them anymore, no matter how obscene, sadistic or repulsive.

Forensic Analysis

Example firms: Expert Witnesses IS, E-Verity Corp., TruPruf IS

Revenue stream: Paid per successful case.

Secret society taint: Anti-Mutant

Unless this is a Zap game, IntSec pulls in far more treasonous Commies, mutants and traitors than they can find proof to convict. Forensic Analysis is there to help. They provide laboratories and expert witnesses to speed justice along. Be it arson, chemistry, mutation or forgery investigations, Troubleshooters will help convict the most obviously perfidious citizens wandering the complex by uncovering the evidence that makes sentencing possible. Other specialties are hair fiber analysis, audio/video analysis, MemoMax review, product tracing, fingerprinting, toxicology, analysis of toolmarks and shoeprints, locksmithing, bot accident reconstruction, metallurgical analysis, forensic medicine (odontology, entomology and so on) and forensic psychology (behavior profiling, EKG fingerprinting, Depravity Scale measurements, etc.).

In a Zap game, Forensic Analysts are a bit like the Maytag repairman: 'the loneliest man in town.' They have nothing to do and few creds because citizens are judges and juries on the spot. However, they can turn a few creds pulling in citizens who present insufficient proof after zapping someone 'unjustly'.

Glee Quota Adjutants

Example firms: Happy Daze, Help the Wretched, Happiness Patrol

Revenue stream: Cut of the bonuses and resources assigned by The Computer to IntSec when they achieve quotas.

Secret society taint: Communists

Happy citizens don't commit acts of treason. Happy citizens are loyal citizens. Where there are clear displays of satisfaction, there is

Termination Center Janitorial staff include cleaners, caretakers, lobby staff and personal assistants—cleaning, maintaining, managing internal access and hardcopying interrogation records. Day-to-day activities involve almost continuous exposure to discomfort, fear and violence—but most Termination Center Janitorial staff are more concerned about the flavor of the evening algae snack or if they'll make it home in time to catch the latest episode of *Action Squad Alpha Hour*.

[Troubleshooters enter a large antechamber containing a single man with a bucket and a mop. Beyond a frosted door at the far end of the room can be heard a sound like a cross between a dentist's drill and a bandsaw.]

Dan-R-SDF: Excuse me... I'm looking for Briefing Room 55J... can you tell me which way I need to go?

[Dan-R can see silhouettes through the frosted glass and cannot help but squint through, trying to work out what's happening.]

SecuraClean Janitor: Briefing Room 55J you say... ah, yes... go out through that door and take a left...

Dan-R-SDF: Is that a plasma welder? Are those someone's feet...?

SecuraClean Janitor: ...follow the corridor along until you hit a junction and follow the route to Wing K...

[A blood curdling scream erupts from inside the room beyond the door, followed by a thick, wet thudding sound of something hitting a wall. The bandsaw sound stops.]

Dan-R-SDF: Oh, what the...what's that gushing noise? And that smell... *[Retches violently.]*

SecuraClean Janitor: It's funny, you know. They used Wing K a couple of years ago to film an episode of the *Teela-O-MLY Show...*

Dan-R-SDF: *[Throws up across the clean floor at the sounds of gurgling sobbing from the room beyond.]*

SecuraClean Janitor: Oh, dear. I'll have to get some fresh cleansing fluid for the bucket. Hang on and I'll get something to clean off your vest...

Thought Surveyors

Example firms: Why?, Knowing U

Revenue stream: Contracts with IntSec, success measured by achievement of quotas.

Secret society taint: Death Leopard

The health, happiness and efficiency of the whole of Alpha Complex hangs on The Computer's understanding of how citizens view their situation and how they feel about the day-to-day decisions that resolve around

Sergeant [an agent provocateur]: Sir, immediately upon receiving your instructions I proceeded to carry them out. First of all I acquired a civilian suit, although if there's one thing I hate it's civilian clothes. [...] For a short time I conducted myself defiantly opposite the government office of weights and measures, but nobody paid any attention. So I went out to the square and made faces in front of the statue of our Infant King and his Uncle the Regent. Again nobody saw me because, as you know, Chief, everybody's in a hurry there.

Then I went off and stood in a queue at a kiosk where they were selling beer. I looked around and saw that in front of the kiosk and all around me there was a collection of simple ordinary citizens, in the thirtieth or thirty-eighth age bracket, I should say. 'This is fine.' I thought to myself. [...]

So then I gave them the lot: the agricultural situation, foreign trade, and then a few words about the police, especially the secret police. Then a young man in a cloth cap came out of the group and walked towards me. 'You leave our police alone,' he says, 'I suppose the next thing you start on is the army; you'll want to cut down national service or get rid of it altogether, and next autumn I'm due to go before the recruiting board.'

And then some old bag who was standing a bit farther off yelled out: 'Oh, so he doesn't like the police, eh? Why only last week they sent me a summons to arrange to have my house searched, and this so-and-so's going to get in the way, I suppose. After a search you always feel more comfortable and loyal, and if you don't have your house searched, you have an uneasy feeling.'

I realized things were hotting up. But you know me, Chief, I've been in the police since I was a child, and this job as agent-provocateur, it's something sacred to me, although it's hard work and, as I say, I'm sick of wearing these civilian clothes. Anyways, I didn't pay attention and went on with all the usual things—the income tax, the health service and then a lot of stuff about our Infant King and his Uncle the Regent.

'So!' they all shouted, 'You're one of those, are you? You're going to stand here and slander our beloved rulers.' And then they all got together and beat me up.

—Slawomir Mrozek, *The Police* [1958]



Roger-G-BHE-4, renowned for his subtlety and attention to detail, is among the most respected and successful interrogation specialists at BHE Sector IntSec HQ.

them. To this end, IntSec contractors formulate various surveys with set criteria and quotas to determine whether the complex is achieving an optimal state. Reaching quotas is good; failure prompts concern and random acts of interrogation.

Though IntSec appreciates the solid entertainment value of a good interrogation, resources are constantly stretched. Consequently, IntSec outsources the task of gathering citizen opinions to Thought Surveyors. These wary, skulking Surveyors

prowl the corridors, looking to achieve quotas; their signature sidearm is the cattle prod. To maximize efficiency, their surveys provide only opinions matching current IntSec resources. When resources are short, Thought Surveyors seek to demonstrate widespread happiness and contentment; if staff are sitting idle, surveys show a distinct lack of satisfaction with the status quo to give them something to do.

Scene Cleanup operatives provide immediate, emergency response teams who will scrape, scour, grate, peel and bleed every particle of Treasonous Activity Residue (TAR) and every sign of culpability from a location, indexing, bagging, sampling and bottling everything for later attention by trained IntSec treason analysis operatives. As an added benefit, no citizen need be upset by leftover elements of these vile acts (or of the vile perpetrators).

Treason Scene Cleanup firms may sometimes become somewhat proactive in their goals of acquiring relevant samples. On a Troubleshooter team, Treason Scene Cleanup service firm members favor the positions of hygiene officer or recording officer to let them better perform their tasks. Regular tongue swabs, hair brushing and flaky skin collection are commonplace on such teams.

Obviously citizens should give no credence to the rumor that Treason Scene Cleanup operatives occasionally mislabel or incorrectly index samples from a scene of treason.

As the saying goes, 'If you can't see it, it never happened.'

Harry-R-PTX: Right, this is the plan: We go in through the... ouch! What the—

O-So Trauma Clean Worker: Sorry, sir. White hair—tweezed it out—might be a Communist plot, sir.

Harry-R: A Communist plot, citizen? Explain your— ouch! What—?

Trauma Clean Worker: Quick blood sample, sir—just to check you're getting the right levels of Vitamin A and riboflavin.

Harry-R: Oh. Uh, thanks. Your vigilance is much appreciated, citizen. Now, can we get back to the vital mission at hand...?

Trauma Clean Worker: Could you just cough into this?

Threat Assessors (IntSec)

Example firms: Pinkietons, GPS Lapel Pins IS

Revenue stream: Percentage of revenue accrued from identifying security threats.

Secret society taint: Anti-Mutant, FCCC-P

These Internal Security Threat Assessor (ISTA) firms perform exactly the same function as the Armed Forces Threat Assessors (AFTAs), and are in intense and bitter competition with them. In fact, on any given day, processing the treason charges ISTAs level at AFTAs uses a measurable percentage of The Computer's processing power. Sometimes the two service firm types keep each other busy enough so ordinary citizens can even get work done.

Unlike AFTAs, ISTAs also help facilitate the COMMIE Mandate, one of the many laws The Computer instituted to protect Alpha Complex from Communist contamination. ISTAs use the Mandate to better track Commies, mutants and traitors, disrupt their cells and seize their assets. The Mandate ensures ISTAs can overcome unnecessary barriers between IntSec and other service firms, so they receive the best available information about threats. Technically these privileges apply only to ISTAs, not to AFTAs, but The Computer grants great leniency to protect the safety of the complex—plus, the AFTAs have (literally) the big guns.

Treason Scene Cleanup

Example firms: Tid-Y Clone, TreasonKleen, Treason Scene Restoration

Revenue stream: For removal of all traces of the incident with complete indexing and cataloguing: pro-rated payment for reduction of core IntSec time spent on treason processing and investigation.

Secret society taint: Anti-Mutant (common), FCCC-P (frequent), Communists (uncommon)

Though IntSec officers are ever vigilant in the pursuit of treasonous activities and Commie operatives in the heart of Alpha Complex, the sheer volume of necessary investigation means that scenes of treason may be left open to public access for hours, or even days, before anyone can make a thorough assessment and purification sweep. To this end Treason

**THEY PROTECT
YOU FROM
YOURSELF**

**INTERNAL
SECURITY
AGENTS
ARE YOUR
PROTECTORS**

38. SERVICE FIRMS

Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC)

PLC

PLC controls agricultural and industrial production. It also distributes these products to the citizens of Alpha Complex. PLC is held in only slightly more esteem than HPD & Mind Control. It is actually no more than a mammoth service bureaucracy—though it does regulate most of what would be called ‘wealth’ in Alpha Complex.

At the INFRARED end of the scale PLC’s service firm workers are cooks, clerks, farmers and factory laborers. At higher status there are more managerial and policy responsibilities. At best, it is none too glamorous. Most personnel in this group are dull and terminally bored; the exceptions are either unusually greedy and corrupt (especially in the food production firms) or fanatically loyal to The Computer and creatively dedicated to increasing production and consumption. These latter servants tend also to be fanatically loyal to Free Enterprise.

A typical PLC conversation

Bored PLC clerk: Next.

Citizen: I have a requisition here, from The Computer itself, for a number 10 soldering iron.

PLC: Out of stock. Next.

Citizen: Hey, wait a minute! You didn’t even check!

PLC: Sorry, buddy, out of stock.

Citizen: Look, I can see one, sticking out of that box over there.

Another citizen: Hey, pal, you had your turn. There’s a line here, ya know?

PLC: You can’t have anything in those boxes. They’re reserved. Next!

Other citizen: About time, too. I need a 17-centimeter fendermender.

PLC: On order. Come back next Threeday. Next.

Armored Autocar Escorts

Example firms: BodyArmor Personnel, Tire Tread Consultants

Revenue stream: Maintenance package purchased each year per vehicle, supplemented by PLC contracts to regrow escort clones. Escorts still pay to purchase a new clone pack, but the Armored Vehicle Clone Tank Tax pays for upkeep of associated clone tanks.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise, PURGE

When Armored Autocar Escorts escort a vehicle, owners expect to receive the ultimate in safety benefits. This extends beyond just the window glass-polymer substrates, ballistic

underfloor wraps, anti-explosive fuel tanks and clearance-level armor. This means lifetime maintenance therapy for post-traumatic vehicle stress conditions, and of course the loyal workers comprising the escort services squadrons.

Vehicles, like citizens, must look and feel their best to best serve Alpha Complex. Scratches, nicks and dents, however minor, cause armored vehicles to work at suboptimal cognitive levels. Hence a squadron of armored vehicle escorts, chosen for its mechanical, physical and psychiatric prowess, is assigned to each armored vehicle fresh off the armory floor.

Escorts can bicycle alongside the vehicle, ensuring a productive, nick-free outing every time. If an armored vehicle mission is rough, escorts shield the vehicle from projectiles and perform vehicle touch-ups and counselling on the fly. Armored Autocar Escort management deducts wages for each scratch an escort permits. Cognitive dysfunction in an armored vehicle is dangerous to its passengers, often important citizens of Alpha Complex. Escorts that allow cognitive dysfunction to occur suffer reduced privileges (for example, the worker must maintain other escorts’ bicycles instead of escorting a vehicle), permanent wage reduction, or (in serious cases) citizen re-education.

Thus, escorts have two rules: 1) Protect your armored vehicle with your life. 2) Never let a Vehicle Therapist near your armored autocar.

BLUE Room Caterers

Example firms: Junket-Eze, Stove Rangers, Sybaritix

Revenue stream: Payment from high-clearance officials on junkets.

Secret society taint: Mystics, Free Enterprise

Few INFRARED citizens can imagine the opulence of the banquets held for high-clearance officials. Just as well: if citizens could, the BLUE Room Caterers would have to MemoWipe them.

Though the name says BLUE, Caterers encompass clones of any security clearance who work in any high-clearance dining area. They also scout out potential new dining areas for banquets. Food prep facilities located in living quarters of high-clearance officials must have colored walkways with carefully demarcated clearance levels, so banquet personnel can get to work legally; BLUE Room Caterers often develop fine acrobatic



skills walking the thin red line that gets them to their job. These skills also help prevent spilling drinks.

Constantly being around higher-clearance citizens might benefit workers if they could thereby gain security clearances, but often the job merely embitters them without gain. Additionally, because of time spent near high-clearance clones, they are usually under much heavier surveillance than fellow low-clearance clones. In fact, high-clearance citizens often prevent good workers’ promotions, knowing decent help is so hard to find. But hey, it beats the Food Vats.

Equipment Assembly Control

Example firms: Bolt Checkers, FaultFree Assurances PLC

Revenue stream: Quality assurance contracts with manufacturers.

Secret society taint: Death Leopard

Equipment Assembly Control may seem like a boring job; reports from longtime firm workers verify it, in fact, is. The typical INFRARED or RED line worker can expect to sit among dozens of others just like him, who are checking just like him to ensure a particular screw is tightened on the latest model PDC.

However, in these services firms workers get years of training in attempting to identify faulty products, so Troubleshooters from these firms perform marginally better than average in



The Computer: Citizen, are you aware you were not cleared to see that file? It was Clearance VIOLET, which is above your security clearance of BLUE.

Darren-B-PTR: I am exceedingly sorry, Friend Computer! Before the file appeared on my monitor, I had no way to determine it was Clearance VIOLET. After all, I can't read electrons.

The Computer: I note your limitation, and accordingly have assigned you to serve the Research & Design service firm Nanovisionaries for testing of their new Nanoscopic eye replacements. Won't that be fun?

detecting an imminent equipment malfunction. They naturally gravitate toward the Mandatory Bonus Duty of Equipment Guy.

Quality-assurance experience helps in certain kinds of negotiations. Against an obstinate middle manager determined to prevent the Troubleshooters from getting into [insert desired destination], a Control worker's skillful display of QA jargon can persuade the manager of the imminence of some kind of office equipment crisis, preventable only by admitting the worker posthaste. ('What? Is that one of the HyperEye Model 56 security cams I see up in that corner? Didn't you get last month's Form 45502-stroke-K, 'Recall of Equipment Judged Extremely Hazardous'? Don't you know those old lithium-ion batteries explode? Look, look at the steam! I need to get at that cam right now.)

living life on the road, hopping off the tubetrain onto the autoshuttle expressway, riding cargo MTVs across ruined sectors, then navigating a labyrinth of corridors with a dozen cargobots in tow. They report all their findings (transit rates, times, methods, routes and the service groups and firms involved) to their firm's central office, which crunches the data into usable routes and sells it to anyone who has use for the information.

Transit Hoppers are adept at making their way through dangerous situations as they flit across the complex. They tend to underplay the more treacherous aspects of their chosen routes when making travel advisories. The home office isn't much better, recommending any cargo firms willing to make small donations for 'research support.'

FastNCheepCo rep: Happy day, citizen! How many I assist you?

Chad-R-NHS: Yeah, I got a defective jackobot I need to get shipped to R&D in sector PDQ. The guy down at Plodalong Transit said it'd take a month. I'll be traitor meat if I don't get it there by tomorrow.

FastNCheepCo: 800 credits. Your ME card, citizen? [Scans.] Excellent. One moment... ah, here, won't take you any time at all.

Chad-R-NHS: Excellent! I can rent a haulbot and just do it myself.

FastNCheepCo: You'll need to take the Production Haulway from RTM straight

through to UMB, then cut through sector LGD right into PDQ.

Chad-R-NHS: Wait, wait. Isn't LGD that forbidden sector, the one swarming with savage and uncontaminated Commie mutants?

FastNCheepCo: Hm. No, says here that got cleared up. I'm sure it's perfectly safe.

Food Vat Control

Example firms: CruncheeTym Chip Products PLC, FunFoods PLC

Revenue stream: PLC contracts.

Secret society taint: All (this is their principal recruiting ground)

Welcome to the bottom of the bottom. Food Vat Control consists of thousands upon thousands of INFRAREDs tending to the massive vats that produce the food that sustains every low-clearance citizen in the Complex. The Computer says it's highly respectable to be the foundation stone on which all society stands—but all it really means is, all the other blocks are on top of you.

You may have a few advantages, such as knowing just how B3 explodes, how much Cold Fun is too much, and just what—or who—was in the algae vats this week. Some take comfort knowing in the thousands of swarming Food Vat workers it is easy for a convicted face to get lost in the crowd. But without a doubt, this is one of the worst jobs in the Complex, making even Troubleshooting look like a dream come true.

Inventory System Updaters

Example firms: PowerPatch; Elucidated Brotherhood of the Bleeding Edge

Revenue stream: Contracts with PLC to minimize waste caused by unfulfilled orders and maintain latest versions and patches.

Secret society taint: Computer Phreaks

The sheer wealth of choice offered through PLC means keeping up with the current catalogue can be an uphill struggle. Teams and work crews may report to warehouses for outfitting to find that the equipment they're just picking up has already been superceded by a new and improved version with more features, better power efficiency and a great new, longer-lasting taste of kelp.

Though central PLC depots have all the latest inventory indices in place, Inventory System Updaters ensure secondary warehouses and sub-offices can offer the same. Updaters ensure all stored equipment has the latest patches, upgrades and efficiency overlays. They are responsible for confirming unit synchronization of everything available with the latest versions offered centrally, even if that means following shipped, outdated orders to their destinations and completing remedial rebuilds in the field.

OBSTRUCTING
THIS
MONITOR'S
TEXT IS
TREASON

Printing Office Field Checkers

Example firms: Paper for Less PLC, BulkForms PLC

Revenue stream: PLC bounties based on number of propagandists detected and apprehended.

Secret society taint: Romantics ('the written word'; common), Communist (uncommon)

After forms, alerts and other texts have been approved for mass consumption, The Computer's Printer is responsible for printing the millions of copies required for mass distribution. Secret societies infiltrate these service firms to print their own propaganda, often using customer distribution channels to disperse pamphlets.

Printing Office Field Checkers function as a secondary immune system for The Printer: Before they can release printouts from the Printing Office, Checkers scan the thousands of ceiling-high stacks of printed papers for secret society propaganda. When they find such pamphlets or other materials, they determine the source and investigate. Sometimes investigations lead no further than the print room, but most often, investigations take Checkers throughout the Complex, especially around lunchtime.

Higher-clearance Checkers scan the bits before material prints, thereby cutting costs by using less paper. During their scans, if they detect treasonous material, they trace the source and bring the perpetrator in. To save money, the evidence need not be printed.

of forms slipping into Communist hands; it must summarily rectify shoddy storage media security practices. Consequently, it contracts with low-clearance assessors to ensure citizens follow safety and security practices in the offices of the many firms across the complex.

High-clearance assessors field major safety violation reports and secure data in the PLC warehouses and data banks. The warehouses are color-coded for enhanced security, and files are set to self-destruct explosively should an unapproved citizen treasonously attempt to view said data.

Warehouse System Inspectors

Example firms: Storage SupremeCo, Safe Stuff PLC, Warehouse Condition Crew

Revenue stream: Contracts with PLC to enforce code compliance.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise, Free Enterprise, Free Enterprise!

Warehouses generally have elaborate fire protection, flood protection, INFRARED riot protection and exploding-R&D-gadgetry protection, and all this protection needs to be inspected. Warehouse System Inspectors have a mandate to delve into the pipes, smoke detectors, halogen fire suppressant systems, blast shielding, wiring, cameras, defense

What happened to our warehouse? It was here yesterday! That inspector said it was absolute prime space!

bots and many more systems throughout these warehouses to make sure they are at the top-notch safety levels Friend Computer requires.

With access to the warehouse comes access to the items in the warehouse. Though genuinely loyal citizens surely wouldn't purloin equipment while, for instance, taking the security cameras offline, it is sad but true [Note: truth currently being contested by WSI service firm Boards of Directors]: 19.6% of all goods arrive on the IR market through the direct or indirect instrumentality of Warehouse System Inspectors. Such pervasive ingratitude confirms yet again the omnipresence of subversive influences.

Storage Media Integrity Assessors

Example firms: SafeSpace, Archive Sentinels, The Storage Police

Revenue stream: Contracts with PLC for checking storage media for correct safety and security practices.

Secret society taint: Romantics, IntSec

When they're not incinerated, all those forms have to go somewhere. Service firms and groups store low-clearance forms in filing cabinets throughout the complex. The PLC appropriates and files high-clearance paper forms in the vast warren of shelving of its own storage warehouses. It stores electronic forms in the archival space the privileged upper echelons of its leadership maintain.

If not handled correctly, the sheer bulk of storage equipment used for low-security forms poses injury risks to citizens not properly educated in office safety techniques. Moreover, the PLC feels it must teach citizens the danger



Serving The Computer in the food vats.



Power Services

Power Services has the difficult task of maintaining the ancient power plants of Alpha Complex. Day-to-day survival depends on the competence and reliability of this service. This makes Power Services a particularly sensitive and vulnerable area for treason and sabotage; it therefore gets more than its share of attention from Internal Security. It also means Power has high status in Alpha Complex, a fact bitterly resented by the other service groups. As a result, Power Services often finds itself at the wrong end of political power plays.

Power Services also maintains the transport systems of Alpha Complex, though this puts them in perpetual political turf battles with their foremost rival, Technical Services.

Power Services is a tightly-knit, loyal service. Older personnel tend to be distrustful of members of other services, and to look out for their own, even to the detriment of their loyalty to The Computer. Since the rise of outsourcing to service firm contactors, younger workers assigned to the group have shown a remarkable and unprecedented talent for collecting bribes. Many citizens who believe they're about to be stranded in frozen darkness grow deeply fond of the idea of paying a bribe.

A typical Power Services conversation

Citizen: Hey, this is neat. I like the blue color. What is this?

Power: Cherenkov radiation.

Citizen: Yeah? What's it from?

Power: My guess is that the plant down on level 6 has melted down and the whole sector is directly exposed to the reactor core.

Citizen: Is that bad?

Power: Nahh. Happens all the time.

Battery Backup

Example firms: Dur-O's Cell, AlwaysReady

Revenue stream: Power Services pays Battery Backup firms based on a schedule of fees mapped to power savings achieved.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise (common), Pro Tech (common), Death Leopard (uncommon)

Power Services always wants to maintain optimal power through adequate resource management, and Power Oscillation Professionals always are prepared to ensure power flows where it needs to. However, sometimes appropriate power consumption needs to be enforced, and under these circumstances Battery Backup literally swings into play (generally with some form of club or LeadLike piping).

While others guarantee adequate power through insurance schemes, Battery Backup

organizations seek out those who willfully waste Alpha Complex power resources and teach them the error of their ways. INFRARED housing tends to come under closest scrutiny, and Battery Backup happily visits to advise on power-saving techniques. Along with providing energy-saving advice, they remove items that use too much power, instead suggesting cheap, energy-efficient alternatives. They complete power consumption assessments and deliver on-the-spot improvements.

Paul-JIS: Hi there, citizen—uh, how can I help you?

Battery Backup rep: Just visiting to assess your power consumption and help you make some savings! Oops... [Rep's truncheon 'accidentally' knocks out three of the four lighting units in the room.]

Paul-JIS: Uh, it seems a little dimmer in here now...

Battery Backup rep: —and energy consumption is down 75% in lighting. Your loyalty in maintaining Alpha Complex's resources will, I'm sure, be rewarded. Oops... [Rep's boot accidentally tugs out Food Vending Machine's power cable.] Best that I just take this cable and get it inspected. Might be faulty. Still, another valuable power saving there, friend!

Burn Radius Assessors

Example firms: Big Bang Brokers; Ground Zero Evaluations

Revenue stream: Measurement and taxation of excess over allowable explosive discharge.

Secret society taint: Death Leopard

Carelessness is next to treacherousness, so they say—for the careless citizen considers not what he destroys by his ignorance and stupidity. Power Services provides a wide range of energy-efficient batteries, cells and miniature atomic reactors to those who need them (and fill out the necessary resource acquisition forms in triplicate). Increasingly, however, these items have been destroyed by what end-users claim to be equipment faults.

The Computer frowned on Power Services' waste of resources in allowing this wanton destruction to occur. Unable to completely redirect blame for the problems, Power Services consented to reimburse The Computer for the first meter of any power source explosion, but any excess was the responsibility of the end-user. Power Services' painstaking and entirely



accurate lab experimentation showed none of their equipment ever created a blast radius greater than a meter, so clearly any explosion larger than that was the fault of sabotage, ignorance or Commie traitors.

Burn Radius Assessors rigorously investigate and measure explosive accidents relating to equipment powered by Power Service energy sources. Where burn radius exceeds one meter the citizen associated with the incident, or his clone descendent, pays charges levied, which vary considerably and are due immediately as an on-the-spot fine. Assessors download credits from a citizen's ME card, and a fraction of that excess charge represents clear profit for the service firm.

Circuit Maintenance

Example firms: Absolute Peripherals, Juice Monkeys, Volts-R-Us

Revenue stream: Contract with Power Services to locate, report and repair remote power disruption.

Secret society taint: Pro Tech

With a network of power systems that defies all efforts to map and track, it's inevitable that remote systems occasionally suffer outages without anyone noticing. When atomic furnaces and experimental quantum turbines require the constant attention of almost the entire workforce, a valiant few must be prepared to roam far and wide to handle that blown fuse that no one even noticed.

That is the role of Circuit Maintenance crews, voltage vigilantes who tour the corridors of Alpha Complex endlessly looking for minor faults and flaws, and then setting them straight with whatever comes to hand. Masters of the patch job, Circuit Maintenance crewpersons provide a valuable service that almost certainly probably doesn't undermine the integrity of the entire power infrastructure. Whether jury-rigging repairs with paperclips and tin foil secured with half-chewed algae chips, or replacing burnt-out capacitor flow regulators with SuperGum and half the workings of a stripped-out vending machine, they serve the community with fanatical loyalty.

Fuel Cell Replenishment (Power)

Example firms: U-Power, Eco-Pulse

Revenue stream: Reward from Power Services per fuel cell returned, with tiered bonuses for large hauls.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise

The lifeblood of Alpha Complex, fuel cells provide energy for all kinds of equipment, large and small. Unfortunately, demand constantly outstrips supply, and while most cells are recyclable, citizens actually return very few after depleting fuel cell capacities. As manufacture of new cells is a lengthy and very cost-ineffective operation, a constant shortfall exists. As a result, the Fuel Cell Replenishment service firm plays a vital role in seeking out expended fuel cells across Alpha Complex.

However, Fuel Cell Replenishment has rapidly discovered that the contractual rewards of finding and returning massive quantities of fuel cells outweighs concern about the source of those cells. Consequently, Fuel Cell Replenishment officers often borrow unattended cells, cull storage facilities of other unsuspecting service groups and commandeer fuel cells from less-well-armed citizens for 'official use.' Key targets are Fuel Cell Replenishment officers working for Tech Services, who will often have a remarkably large supply of fuel cells to hand.

Fuel Rod Disposal Consultants

Example firms: RadRodGone, Hot Rod Disposals

Revenue stream: Paid per ton of fuel rods disposed, minus administrative charges.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise

Alpha Complex generators consume a massive quantity of active fuel rods. Depleted fuel rods are treated with a catalyst that accelerates radioactive decomposition and

Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgement! Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!

Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!

Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovahs! Moloch whose factories dream and choke in the fog! Moloch whose smokestacks and antennae crown the cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty is the specter of genius! Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen! Moloch whose name is the Mind!

—Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* [1956]

seals them in LeadLike shells. The 'safe' rods then require a place for final storage—and in this regard possible sites have become scarce. With only limited space available within Alpha Complex, landfill locations were filled to capacity decades ago, so Power Services is constantly on the lookout for new long-term storage sites. To this end, Fuel Rod Disposal Consultants are hired to look into means of disposing spent rods, locating practical bolt-holes where several hundred thousand tons of slightly radioactive material can be quietly hidden away.

Fuel Rod Disposal Consultants think in terms of cracks, holes, cavities, shafts and tunnels. Power Services quietly needs to dispose of an enormous amount of material, so Consultants scout out possible locations, send through coordinates and then wait for their personal accounts to be credited at the end of the month. Fuel Rod Disposal Consultants have the contacts to lean on and know the strings to pull to get all the relevant paperwork to prove the identified spot really is abandoned and suitable for dumping—whether it's an ancient hanger, an INFRARED canteen at midnight or someone's sock drawer.

Odor Fresheners

Example firms: No-Zone, Pow Pourri

Revenue stream: Limiting callout complaints in designated operational area.

Secret society taint: Romantics

Constant investigation into enhancing efficiency and productivity, along with everyday provision of Alpha Complex requirements, makes for interesting work and the chance to really push the basic infrastructure to the limit. Over time, administrative staff in the Complaints Office realized that pushing limits was most commonly followed by an increase in messages asking what that funny smell of gas/burning/ozone was.

Thus the highly attentive damage-limitation role of the Odor Fresheners came into its own. They patrol passageways and plazas with a nose for the telltale bouquet of the top-performing, cutting-edge power conduit. Once identified, they communicate the odor's location to central Power Services. Then they relieve public concern about power supply management through the judicious use of scented sprays, fragrant soap flakes and other sources of mood-enhancing aromas.



Power Oscillation Professionals

Example firms: Swingvolt, Citizens Who Love Power

Revenue stream: Grants from Power Services for guaranteeing reliable power.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise (common), Pro Tech (common)

Power fluctuation in Alpha Complex is a fact of life. Massive surges are as common as blackouts. R&D has continually lost real estate, equipment and citizens due to power shifts during advanced weapon testing. Every time a high-clearance residential corridor goes dark, heads roll and termination centers hum (sometimes causing even more power outages). The Computer eventually decided to come down hard on those responsible. Rumors say most of Power Services management walked funny for a month.

Power Services knew they couldn't get things running any better. However, they realized refitting generators, rewiring power conduits and patching the ramshackle grid wasn't really needed. They only needed to stop the complaints. Presto: outsourcing contracts for a new class of service firm.

For reasonable rates, Power Oscillation Professionals guarantee steady power to a designated area, at the time and for the duration of your choice. Under the table, POPs can also arrange a loss of power, if the money's right and complaints will be low.

The trouble is, to provide reliable power to one part of Alpha Complex, Power Oscillation Professionals have to shuffle power from elsewhere. Consumption must balance. Otherwise power output rates would set off alarms; lots of questions would be raised; things might explode; best not to think about it, really.

To minimize complaints, POPs kill power to offices closed during night, and to low-

complaint-potential areas like INFRARED barracks, treason holding cells, toxin containment units and the like—theoretically, just enough to provide power to fulfill their contracts. Theoretically.

Jabez-B-QOJ: So that's it? You hit my ME card up for 4,000 and my lab's power is consistent through tomorrow morning?

Power Oscillation Pro: Yeah, you got it, citizen.

Jabez-B: Huzzah! I can finally complete my biocontainment suit... Hey, do you hear screaming?

Power Oscillation Pro: Oh, that. I heard somethin' about systems goin' down in the INFRARED infirmary down th' hall.

Jabez-B: Systems? You mean they lost power?

Power Oscillation Pro: I don't know nothin' bout that.

Safe Atoms Initiative marketeers provide positive reinforcement and personalized recommendation of the wholesome role radiation has to play in the lives of all citizens. Whether through buzzwords, song, T-shirts or the initiative mascot (Happy the Neutron), operatives raise awareness, field questions, vanquish ignorance and do their very best to introduce healthy radiation into every citizen's life. Informational leaflets and free samples on request.

Wire Supply Checkers

Example firms: Wired; Complex Connections

Revenue stream: Contract with Power Services, plus bonuses for salvaging excess wiring to Power Services warehouses.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise, Pro Tech

Effective power transmission requires a complex network of wires and cable. Huge quantities of cabling are assigned every day to new projects and general manufacture, so adequate inventory management is vital and active wire supply checking a must. Millions of cable lengths wend their way around Alpha Complex, so constant maintenance, inspection and assessment is required to ensure the most efficient size and tolerance of wiring is used at all times.

To this end, Wire Supply Checkers ensure wiring is clean, safe and well managed, and where demand has changed since installation, Checkers must take appropriate measures to convert wiring to current standards. Wire Supply Checkers are responsible for upgrading cabling where applicable and downgrading where possible, returning wiring over-specification to store. Where it is practical to introduce a bypass or jump a connection, they will use the minimum safe cabling allowed under regulation to ensure continued service and maximum profit.

Safe Atoms Initiative

Example firms: Rad-I-CAL Living, Rad-Vantage, Inner Glow

Revenue stream: Contracts from Power Services based on monthly complaint reduction measurements.

Secret society taint: Communists, Humanists, Psion (all looking for recruits); Death Leopard (looking for radioactive materials)

Key to Alpha Complex's power generation is a constant stream of radioactive materials. Power Services has key targets and standards set to ensure optimum safety at all times, and they observe health regulations rigidly throughout all procedures. However, certain citizens still exhibit a certain uneasiness, seeming all too prepared to listen to vile Commie rumor and unsubstantiated gossip about the dangers of radioactive materials. Consequently, Power Services outsources re-education of the masses to the Safe Atoms Initiative.

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, that specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane, he had to fly them. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of the clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.

—Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* [1961]

Research & Design

The personnel of R&D range from true geniuses through crackpots and mad scientists down to political appointees with no talent or skill. A Research & Design technician who can produce valuable ideas and workable designs for The Computer may enjoy great personal freedom and political license. Mad scientists and crackpots who work on The Computer's pet projects find they receive resources and support no matter how dramatically they fail. Political appointees establish themselves in the bureaucracy of the service group and try to look busy.

Research labs and testing areas are dangerous places to visit. An incredible range of high tech and low comedy projects are in development at any given moment. The amount of original research that gets done is small; most projects are aimed at recapturing the arcane technologies lost centuries ago in the big Commie attack. After trips to abandoned sectors or Outdoors, Troubleshooters must bring interesting gadgets they discover to Research & Design firms, where scientists carefully study them, often to tiny bits.

R&D's main objective is the discovery of weapons and techniques for fighting the Commies. Secondary priorities include the discovery of new power sources, advances in robot technology, and new agricultural and industrial systems. Improvements in the conditions of life for citizens are of low priority, since Alpha Complex is already a utopia.

Internal Security despairs of maintaining political orthodoxy in Research & Design. The Computer is exasperatingly indulgent of treason in R&D. The other services (with the exception of the Armed Forces) are seldom interested in innovations; and Research & Design often produces highly ambitious technical wonders that fail dramatically in practical application.

A typical R&D conversation

Troubleshooter: And when I squeeze the nozzle, what happens?

R&D scientist: We're not sure.

Troubleshooter: The plasma will be at a million degrees; the nuclear accelerator will be at maximum power—and you don't know what happens next?

R&D: No. If we did, would we want you to test it?

Troubleshooter: Can you give me some guesses?

R&D: Well, our guess is that it will levitate you to a height proportional to the pressure you apply to the nozzle. That, or it might start a fusion chain reaction leading to the complete destruction of the universe. Here, let me strap you in.

Biological Niceness Indexers

Example firms: Bio-Congenix Corporation, Realty Raters RND

Revenue stream: Yearly grants from R&D; additional contracts with high-clearance citizens; extortion.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise

Years ago, it is said, citizens spent money to find and remove toxins and biological waste from their living spaces. They eventually realized that they were practicing negative techniques, faultily designed, which caused them more damage from stress and worry than from the toxins themselves.

The Computer provides a more positive environmental review procedure known as Biological Niceness Testing. Niceness Testing is designed to find and index healthful living spaces for citizens, freeing them to live placid, pleasant lives without the bygone worries of environmental toxins.

Niceness Indexers travel the complex testing sectors against the rigorous Biological Niceness Scale and updating their databanks with the results. Based on these data, sectors of citizens with overall higher than average Compliancy ratings may be upgraded, or moved, to newer, biologically nicer sectors. Sectors with below average Compliancy ratings (as calculated by riot damage repair costs and other statistical measures) may be moved away from biologically nice sectors. Obviously, high-clearance sectors, whose overall Compliancy ratings are always extremely high, are located in the biologically nicest sectors.

High-clearance citizens who run service firms that produce or process toxins and other waste often have close relationships with Niceness Indexing firms. Service firms can pay tiered fees to have sectors or other spaces downgraded. Boards of Directors of Niceness Indexing service firms can delete sufficiently downgraded areas from the Realty Banks, and sometimes from the History Banks, saving service firms—and thus Alpha Complex—many thousands of creds in cleanup every year. Sometimes it is efficient to relocate less desirable sectors to downgraded areas and then delete them, depending on the client's wishes.

Naturally, Niceness Indexers are popular folks. High-clearance citizens compete to hire them as often as possible, and may temporarily suspend clearance boundaries to fete and banquet them. A happy Indexer is a happy sector, the saying goes. However, Niceness Indexing is not a sinecure. As surprising as it may seem, sometimes high-clearance citizens' agendas actively conflict. Part of an Indexer's job is to walk that line... acrobatically.



Bot Processing

Example firms: CPUBaggers, Botology Service and Repair

Revenue stream: Fee per bot brain repaired; sliding fee scale based on importance of data in bot brain.

Secret society taint: Corpore Metal

An unfortunate and little-known fact of life in Alpha Complex is that knowledge of AI programming of bot CPUs, or brains, has been lost. When a bot is destroyed, its invaluable CPU must be retrieved and serviced, or The Computer will become concerned.

Bot Processor service firms are busy companies. Troubleshooters tend to cause a lot of collateral damage a lot of the time, particularly when bots move through their laser fire vectors. Bot Processors collect what they can after the damage is done (grumbling at the thugs that scorched such fine machinery) and bring the pieces back to their labs for reconstitution.

To ensure ethical behavior, during the delicate reconstitution process Bot Processors are fully financially responsible for the invaluable CPU. The 'reconstitution process' starts when the Processing Lead assigns the Bot Processor to a project (before he even steps out of the lab) and ends when the Processor turns in the reconstituted CPU and it passes inspection. A lot can happen in between, especially with



such priceless goods. Not that anyone in Alpha Complex ever contemplates theft, certainly not Bot Processors.

Drug Interaction Testers

Example firms: Bliss Laboratory Services, Happiness Screeners

Revenue stream: Percentage of sales to HPD&MC of approved drugs.

Secret society taint: Death Leopard

Alpha Complex is founded in part upon a completely free and universally available regimen of medications. The Computer mandates these drugs for the citizenry to ensure everyone's happiness. Although free to citizens, drugs must be developed, tested and distributed. The Drug Interaction Testers (DITs) are one part of this chain. R&D drug developers contract with these drug-testing service firms to ensure citizens' health and safety.

A DIT's job depends on his clearance. INFRARED DITs test medications on themselves, or rather, their managers daily ensure their employees have the medications, a safely padded room with a strong magnetic bolt, and an Observation & Containment Team, some of whom are on contract from Armed Forces. After INFRAREDs take their experimental meds, consult the Medication table in Chapter 30, 'Treason and Correction,' to determine the effects.

RED Clearance DITs are usually on the Observation & Containment Team, watching the INFRAREDs from the other side of the NoBreakUm Ductile-Glass. They administer the drugs to INFRAREDs, then quickly shove them into the padded room and lock the door. RED DITs whose experiments fail, or who consistently reject drugs for public use, may be demoted to drug-testing duties.

At RED Clearance and above, a trusted DIT may be assigned Environmental Testing duty. The DIT, with an armed Observation & Containment Team, accompanies a medicated INFRARED into Alpha Complex to observe environmental effects on the drug under consideration. It is difficult to test for all circumstances in a lab environment, the theory goes, so it is essential during advanced stages of testing to bring the patient out into a complex environment to observe the medication's effects in real-world circumstances. Physical contact, conversation with bots, unhygienic barracks—all these influences must be tested against to ensure everyone's happiness. Rumors of medicated INFRARED DITs escaping the observation team and wreaking havoc are insubordinate and will be dealt with promptly.

Field Data Collectors

Example firms: Ignorance Know More, Complex Ordnance Surveys & Tracking

Revenue stream: R&D rewards new revelations (assessed through efficient and complete field testing) per insight.

Secret society taint: Pro Tech (very common), Computer Phreaks (uncommon)

R&D is well known for providing a constant stream of innovative and exciting technologies to the citizens of Alpha Complex. Some of these inventions undergo rigorous lab testing; the majority do not. However, to ensure innovation continues and all feedback on new technologies' functionality is recorded, Field Data Collectors are assigned to monitor the thorough and exemplary field testing carried out by Troubleshooters.

Field Data Collectors (FDCs) use a range of tracking and assessment techniques to record complete breakdowns of equipment functionality. FDC reports ensure R&D can reinforce positive lines of development and handle issues rapidly and effectively with appropriate patches and reengineering. FDCs are assigned to teams in a proactive capacity to ensure full testing and exposure of all equipment to maximum usage to work out any Commie-instigated bugs.

FDC Op: Okay... just slide this monitor unit onto the back of your laser pistol, citizen.

Dave-R-NSN: Uh... and that does what exactly?

FDC Op: Monitors pulse potential, barrel heat dissipation efficiency, power-cell capacity, focused emission management...

Dave-R: Okay, okay, thanks for the explanation. Right. Mission objectives say we should be hitting the Commie base right about—

[Pulse of laser fire rip chunks out of the walls and ceiling, showering the Troubleshooters with dust and rubble. Everyone ducks into cover.]

Dave-R: Fire at will!

[Everyone starts shooting, except Dave-R, who pumps futilely at the pistol's trigger.]

Dave-R: What the...?

Monitorbot: Initializing microassessment and energy management protocols... LOADING... LOADING...

[Dave-R turns to see the FDC Op scribbling notes at high speed onto a record pad of triplicated forms.]

Dave-R: The gun's malfunctioning. Why isn't it firing?

FDC Op: Patience, friend citizen...

Monitorbot: Initiate parallel pulse emitter indexing...activate muon radiation tabulation... LOADING... LOADING...

[Dave-R sighs with barely hidden despondency and starts throwing rocks at the heavily armed Commie horde.]

Goo Cleanup

Example firms: SludgeAway, GooBeGone

Revenue stream: Paid by the gallon; bonuses for removal of stubborn stains and encrusted goo (although most Goo Cleanup operatives would do the work for free just to get the chance to spend time in a bona fide R&D lab and watch their scientific idols at work!).

Secret society taint: Pro Tech

If there were an equation for what R&D does, it would run something along the lines of:

Inspiration + Perspiration + Barely suppressed madness =
[Something incomprehensible and ready for field testing] + Goo

Like some ectoplasmic leakage from the spirit world, virtually every experimental procedure in which R&D engages seems to result in the spontaneous generation of a certain quantity of slime, gunk, ooze and fiercely bubbling sludge.

The presence of faintly glowing, savagely acidic goo puddles never seems to faze distracted R&D staffers; however, concern about property damage and numerous complaints from citizens occupying adjoining areas led The Computer to demand better laboratory hygiene. As a result Goo Cleanup crews sprang up, generally comprising wannabe science citizens, ready to tackle any newly formed pools of sludge or stubborn patches of incandescent mucilage.

The nature of their tasks means Goo Cleanup crews get the chance to tinker with advanced cleaning technology and postulate possible new avenues in the development of non-abrasive, fresh-smelling solvents and emollients. Given R&D's ever-expanding range of scientific exploration, Goo Cleanup operatives are constantly in demand to minimize property damage and return gloop-encrusted equipment to operation forthwith.

RoboPsych Auditing

Example firms: Good Bots RND, Jack-of-all-Traders

Revenue stream: Commission based upon specific programming directive.

Secret society taint: Corpore Metal, Humanists

Though the science and technology of bot brain manufacturing has largely been preserved in Alpha Complex, the building

of bot personalities through psychoanalytic programming involves techniques lost over the last 200 years. As a result, even though R&D can make new bot brains, programming them to match the bots of yesteryear has proven difficult. (This is why Bot Processing recycles and reprograms so many old bot brains for new duties. At least they have a stable personality, most of the time.)

RoboPsych Auditors, usually referred to as 'brain-builders,' focus on rediscovering methods to teach newly created bot brains the skills and techniques they need to be a bot in Alpha Complex. The Computer is particularly interested in the field because bots are not as replaceable as citizens.

[A citizen sits on a chair in front of a small glass tank, in which an artificial brain is floating. A camera and audio mike stand beside the tank.]

Brain-Builder: Okay, you see the five rules listed here? *[Holds up sheet of paper.]*

Bot Brain: Yes, sir!

Brain-Builder: These are the five rules you must obey at all times! In the order you see.

Bot: Yes, sir!

Brain-Builder: Remember, service and duty are the highest aspirations you can have. Do you understand?

Bot: Yes, sir!

Brain-Builder: Good! *[Looks left and right.] Now... [Takes another sheet of paper from his pocket.] You see this sheet?*

Bot: Yes, sir! That appears to be an image of a human being, but he's got some kind of icky red fluid coming out of him.

Brain-Builder: That's right! You see, humans are icky. And gross. Now, look at this picture. *[Holds up another.]*

Bot: Gaaa! What's that?

Brain-Builder: Actually, we don't know either, but all male citizens have one. Disgusting, isn't it? So remember, humans are icky! Bots are clean! Got that?

Bot: I— I think so, sir!

Brain-Builder: And remember, this is just our little secret, all right? No need to talk about it to any of the others, right?

Scientist Sanity Checkers

Example firms: Handle With Care, SanityDirect

Revenue stream: R&D pays a subscription fee for care and attitude maintenance, plus a percentage of property value saved each month.

Secret society taint: Humanists and Romantics (subversion), Pro Tech (morale boosting)

Confronting the onslaught of a faceless, tireless enemy, R&D provides cutting-edge

Bot brain! Show me on this diagram where he touched you!

innovations and mind-bogglingly useful contrivances that enhance and enrich the lives of all those who come into contact with them (or, at least, stray into the estimated blast radius). R&D operatives spend sleepless days and nights pushing the limits of known science and bending the very laws of the universe. They fuel themselves only with a burning desire to learn, a regular dose of dietary supplements and more than the recommended daily intake of ZapBang High Energy Bouncy Bubble Beverage (now with extra added diphenhydromegatoxinate).

Studious extremes such as these have caused an unacceptable level of casualties and barely legible #234/A26 'Request for Extended Leave Due to Non-Work Related Psychotic Episode' forms. CPU has pressured R&D to find a remedial solution. The Scientist Sanity Checkers proactively search out signs of personality instability in R&D staff and attempt to resolve the issues with counseling, therapy, drug treatments, ego-polishing, mild electroprod stimulation and other, more experimental avenues of treatment. Ongoing contact with individuals undergoing considerable mental stress makes Checkers excellent judges of character and attitude, allowing them to detect oncoming outbursts and emotional breakdowns from the slightest tic or accidentally launched cone rifle shell. Successful therapy can make all the difference in maintaining working efficiency, and particularly successful Scientist Sanity Checkers may find their skills in high demand.

Vehicle Therapists

Example firms: Usually consulting individuals who hire additional therapists to meet demand. Sometimes firms like Bot Normalizers, Ltd.

Revenue stream: Paid hourly by vehicle owners, who purchase a 12-pack of therapy sessions.

Secret society taint: Corpore Metal, Frankenstein Destroyers

Vehicle therapists have 'downtime' sessions with bot brain autopilots experiencing stress on the job. They also bring bots who have been abused and 'ripped' (that is, have had parts ripped off or crushed for whatever reason) back into functional society. Most bots have fully functional and educated brains and require actual clonal interaction to undergo repair. The worst cases are removed from their housing and destroyed, but this is very rare because bot CPUs are so valuable.

Some therapists turn a handy cred talking scrubots out of cleaning grease factories, or

docbots from performing unnecessary surgery on otherwise healthy citizens. Others do nothing but ride the elevator system, defusing 'ride rage,' wherein the brains onboard the elevators scream and try to kill their passengers for the tiniest offenses.

Weapon Effectiveness Assessors

Example firm: Kaboom Ordnance Prototyping

Revenue stream: R&D exchanges testing services for provision of experimental or higher clearance weaponry.

Secret society taint: Death Leopard (common), Anti-Mutant

Dedicated to the enjoyable but often dangerous job of testing R&D's new weapon prototypes, Weapons Effectiveness Assessors possess a wide range of weapon skills. They also can figure out how to use unfamiliar weapons—a beneficial knack when one of the unmarked buttons on a Prototype Reverse Refraction laser is the emergency self-destruct.

An offshoot of their extensive weapon use is a strange appreciation for destructive power. Members of these service firms commonly volunteer for active service just for a chance to use their weapons on live targets.

It is common for Weapon Assessors to keep a personalized weapon; however, usually these are kitted out with many gadgets of questionable effectiveness, such as laser sights, bayonet mounts, rail systems, scanning electron microscopes and can openers.

Citizen: The scout says there's a group of Commie traitors up ahead. With our laser rifles they shouldn't pose a problem.

Assessor: Citizen, did you not read the Assessment test briefing? This mission you're privileged to use the new variable phased output 'Fly Swatter MKII' Red laser pistol. Hand me your rifle, take this pistol and attack those Commies.

Citizen: Aren't you coming with us?

Assessor: Oh no, I have to monitor your effectiveness from behind this heavy-duty barrier.

[Citizen charges into battle, dies horribly.]

Assessor: Friend Computer, it seems the new lasers barely scratched those Communists. May I suggest R&D should increase the power output?

The Computer: Noted, citizen. Please remember to retrieve that laser for recycling. Thank you, and have a nice day.



SOURCEBOOK

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Technical Services

Technical Services maintains most services in Alpha Complex. Everything from scrubots to communications to computer maintenance is their responsibility. In the omnipresent inter-service conflicts, Technical Services enjoys high status, right after Power, and above HPD&MC and PLC. Why? The Computer depends directly on Technical Services for its maintenance, and citizens depend on Tech clone tanks. Political orthodoxy in Technical Services personnel is critical; Internal Security diligently monitors their thoughts and deeds.

Tech personnel are the 'fix-its' of Alpha Complex. When something goes wrong with your disposal, communal toilet, or petbot, you call Tech for help. Seven or eight decades later, a surly, grease-smudged repairman may show up and refuse to fix it without appropriate authorization forms (available from equally surly clerks at HPD&MC) or parts (available from unimaginably bored clerks in PLC). Intelligent citizens rapidly learn the only way to get anything fixed is bribery.

Because IntSec so carefully monitors Tech Services, its service firms prize orthodoxy over competence. Hence it is virtually impossible to get anything fixed right. Bribery sometimes works here, and more often intimidation—but you know, even if you intimidate a chihuahua within an inch of its life, it still can't fix your sink.

Technical Services personnel wear special coveralls amply supplied with pockets for tools and spare parts. They also carry small tool kits that symbolize the delicacy of their work.

A typical Tech Services conversation

Tech: Where's yer trouble?

Citizen: Our barracks' CruncheeTym Algae Chip dispenser is broken. See, here it is.

Tech: Uh huh. Looks okay to me.

Citizen: But we haven't had any algae chips for weeks! And the cafeteria hasn't had anything but the blue food ever since last Twosday's riot...

Tech: You got a 174Z6a stroke 23?

Citizen: A what?

Tech: A 174Z6a stroke 23. 'Authorization to Repair Communal Vending Machines, Pharmaceutical Supplement Dispensers and Autogyro Foot Baths.' Like, a form.

Citizen: Uh... no.

Tech: No can do, bub. Get da form and maybe I come back. So long.

Citizen: However, I do have 174 plasticreds.

Tech: Yeah? Hold dis wrench. Lemme see...

Bedding Inspectors

Example firms: Hooked on Futronics, Alpha Bed, Bedder Than the Best

Revenue stream: Tech Services pays low-clearance Bedding Inspectors hourly wages, with bonuses for an exceptional number of disorderly beds located. Technical Services subsidizes higher-clearance Bedding Inspector development or discovery of new materials or innovations in bedding, with bonuses as for low-clearance inspectors.

Secret society taint: None

Research indicates 83.6% of citizens roused from their beds in the middle of the nightcycle by loyal Vulture Squadrons fail to properly set their beds before leaving the room. Of these, over 97.2% are dead within hours. Coincidence? The Computer thinks not.

Enforcing proper sheet-and-blanket discipline is a vital part of keeping Alpha Complex neat, orderly and pleasant. Bedding Inspectors monitor, record and document all infractions, and may leave admonishing notes or *[deleted for security reasons]* traps among the sheets before handing a full report over to The Computer. Absolutely no citizen in Alpha Complex sees as incentive the opportunity to root through hundreds of citizens' quarters.

But the problem of bedding is not limited simply to lack of discipline. Bedding technology plays a role in citizens' efficiency as well. Recently, Bedding Technologists discovered the root of many ongoing, basic health problems: what citizens were sleeping on. Though INFRARED citizens can expect an ergonomically designed metal shelf, with optimum rigidity and support to minimize night traumas and maximize restful sleep, other clearances are not so lucky.

Several firms have proposed novel improvements to sleeping arrangements. Higher-clearance Bedding Inspectors research ways to enhance citizens' sleeping environments, with due respect to the expectations of authority (ULTRAVIOLET citizens rarely sleep on metal pallets). Inspectors take a keen interest in new soft or spongy materials, and will often lie down on the job to get a better feel for a new material.

Bedding Inspector: ...and furthermore, you left your pillow out on top of the sheet, instead of beneath it. You see, citizen?

Dudley-I-CRK: Kind of, I think... But how—

Bedding Inspector: Oh, it's no trouble at all. The new edition of our Complete Bedsetting Guidebook includes all the updates to the regulations; only 45 credits a copy.

Dudley-I: And that measuring device...



Bedding Inspector: ...for assuring that the sheet sides are parallel; yes, yes. It's only a slight additional fee.

Dudley-I: But do I really—

Bedding Inspector: Of course you do. Now there's another inspection soon, so be sure your bed's perfectly made, lesse here, at midnight on... hmmmm, can't quite seem to find the day. Sorry, but it's sometime soon. That isn't a problem, is it, citizen?

Clone Tank Support Services

Example firms: Another-U, Sav-A-Clone, Stuff O' Life

Revenue stream: Receive a percentage of resources saved from cloning process.

Secret society taint: Pro Tech, Psion, almost everyone else

Cloning is a demanding process—why else would the waiting periods for new clones be so long among the masses of INFRAREDs? Cloning represents a considerable drain on clonepower and resources that means Tech Services can ill afford wastage wherever it might occur in the process. While facilities exist to generate and maintain hundreds upon hundreds of clones every day, the opportunity to reduce demand and manage resources better is something Tech Services always seeks.

As a result, Clone Tank Support Services has been contracted to find ways and means to reduce expenditure and limit waste. Service operatives spend time considering alterations in the balance of nutrients, chemicals, biomatter and enzymes, seek out means to limit power consumption and reduce gestation periods, and consider alternatives in maintenance and storage. They also proactively seek to reduce the demand for clones by offering constructive advice to associates on ways to avoid sudden death situations and massive molecular dismemberment. Unnecessary exposure to hazards is an unprofitable and a treasonous strain on The Computer's resources.

Consolidated Motorized Transport (CMT)

Example firms: YourMove, Hurts, Av-I's Motors

Revenue stream: Contracts to free up Tech Services warehouse space by finding new ways of using surplus engine supplies.

Secret society taint: Pro Tech

Motors are remarkably simple things to build. Given the huge range of requirements, especially among bots, motors have been designed ranging from the size of matchboxes up to the considerable, warehouse-filling bulks of UltraWarBot engines. Indeed, so many engines sit around in Tech Services warehouses that a unilateral decision was made that someone had to do something with them before they started causing some serious damage to the floor. So with that key intent Tech Services sought ways and means to offload engines in any way practical. At first this may have seemed like a simple task given the need for autocar and transbots across Alpha Complex; however it soon became apparent that motor manufacture massively outstripped the production of any kind of vehicle shell.

Consolidated Motorized Transport firms actively seek ways to assign motors to new and innovative modes of transportation. PLC deals with constant demand for transportation, and their garages seem happy to take anything providing it moves at least at a walking pace and will get someone from A to B within his estimated lifetime. If they can reasonably rig an engine up to something, then CMT firms will find a means to do it and get it out to the public (rather than gather dust and crack floor supports in a warehouse somewhere).

Medical Services (Meds)

Example firms: Medical Overall System Support (MOSS), PatchIt!, IntensiCare TS

Revenue stream: Contracts with Tech Services, plus revenue from selling health insurance.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise. It's also a Humanist/Corpore Metal battleground.

In Zap games you're likely to be attacked by docbots. In Classic games they may amputate your leg for no reason, then claim it's still there and there's absolutely nothing wrong with it. In Straight games they might actually be able to patch you up—but like everything else in the Straight style, it works, but it works for a price.

That's what Meds are for. Their job is to maintain and operate a small army of docbots, as well as provide some emergency medical assistance before a docbot arrives. But as much as bandaging the wounded and the like is important, it doesn't pay the bills.

Where fear thrives, the insurance industry thrives as well. Sure, every citizen (traitors excluded) has a right to receive proper medical aid. But for a few credits per month, you can receive MORE proper medical aid. Buying insurance and upgrading it can get you better health benefits—you'll be more likely to receive cybernetic limbs, the pain killers will have a lower chance of killing you and you'll feel safer. Much safer. Each of the insurance plans are perfect, but each is more perfect than the other. If they weren't, why would anyone want to upgrade? For a Troubleshooter working at Med, there's no such thing as a 'part-time job.' Med pays healthy commissions to enterprising employees.

Docbot: [Beep!] What seems to be the problem?

Wounded Troubleshooter: I'm bleeding to death!

Docbot: Diagnostic confirmed. Stopping external bleeding. [Docbot works its magic.]

Troubleshooter: Um, external?

Docbot: Affirmative.

Med: I'm sorry, citizen, but stopping internal injuries isn't part of your health plan. However, for only 600 credits per month, you can enjoy the benefits of our Premium health plan, which, by the way, includes procedures such as stopping nasty, lethal and extremely painful internal bleeding.

Troubleshooter: [Grumbles and hands over his ME card] Docbot, please stop the internal bleeding.

Docbot: Negative.

Med: Whoa. That's going to require a surgery, and you've only got Premium insurance. I don't suppose I could interest you in our Premium Plus plan...?

Revenue stream: Reward for each fuel cell returned, with tiered bonuses for large hauls.

Secret society taint: Free Enterprise, Pro Tech

Though there is a steady demand for fuel cells, large and small, the number of returns falls far short of the number issued. Most fuel cells are designed to be recyclable and reusable, but over time fewer and fewer have been returned. A costly and lengthy operation, manufacturing can meet only a fraction of the shortfall. In response, Fuel Cell Replenishment agencies go out into Alpha Complex and search for expended fuel cells like a Junior Citizen searching the corridors for dropped plasticreds.

Service firms rapidly discovered they could make big money if enough fuel cells were returned, as contractual clauses included tiered bonuses above specified levels. Consequently, Fuel Cell Replenishment officers have taken to borrowing cells left unattended, culling storage facilities of unsuspecting service groups and commandeering fuel cells from less well-armed citizens in the corridors. Key targets are their bitter rivals, Fuel Cell Replenishment officers working for Power Services, who often have large supplies of fuel cells to hand.

MemoMax Quality Assurance

Example firms: BrainBuzz TS, Memory Plus

Revenue stream: Contract with Tech Services.

Secret society taint: Humanists, Romantics, Communists (recruiting)

MemoMax technologies are key to the efficient running of Alpha Complex, preventing even the most terrible disaster from sending every project back to square one by allowing fresh clones to download the memories of their predecessors. However, the MemoMax process is only as effective as its memory database allows, and constant scanning is the only way to ensure optimal understanding for all newly assigned clones. Under pressure from The Computer's High Programmers, Tech Services has contracted with MemoMax Quality Assurance firms to ensure MemoMax transfers will always be complete.

MemoMax Quality Assurance operatives employ handheld multiscanners with Real-time Axial Brain Tissue Rendering technology that diagnoses the realtime link between the citizen's brain and his MemoMax backup file. Diagnostic accuracy requires the operative to stay within one-half meter of the target for several minutes. Diagnostics may identify highly technical ways to increase the efficient completion of MemoMax downloads. Reports of nausea, headaches, memory lapses, fainting, seizures and memory lapses have not, as of this time, been shown to have any connection with MemoMax Quality Assurance scanning.

Fuel Cell Replenishment (Tech Svcs)

Example firms: PowerTech TS (Not Associated With Power Services), ReFuel (Not Associated With Power Services)



Paint Control

Example firms: ColorRight, Spectrum TS, Integrated Color Industries

Revenue stream: Technical Services pays per yard of fresh paint.

Secret society taint: Most of them

Paint is power, for paint controls the clearance of a location or item. Though paint itself is mixed and stored by Production, Logistics & Commissary, Technical Services ensures paint is applied and maintained correctly across the complex. Obviously this is a mammoth task, so Tech Services has carved up vast expanses of Alpha Complex among a multitude of Paint Control service firms.

Paint Control constantly scrutinizes and reviews the complex's layout and security: Every minute they pass new directives to upgrade corridors and downgrade access points, redesignate pieces of equipment and reallocate rights of passage through specific zones. Paint Control is responsible for tracking new requirements and ensuring clearance changes are completed in a timely and thorough manner. There is nothing worse, after all, than finding your RED Clearance access point halfway down an ORANGE Clearance corridor strewn with Wet Paint warning signs. Paint Control is constantly on the move with brushes, rollers and cannisters of paint, picking up regular updates to meet quotas and exceed efficiency targets—even if it sometimes means creating a temporary inconvenience for stranded citizens.

Slime Identification

Example firms: Better Living Through Contaminated Slime, Locate-A-Slime

Revenue stream: Rewards from Tech Services for discovery of new types of mold, fungus or bacteria with potential for new scientific or culinary application.

Secret society taint: None

Vat slime is a tough, shiny, glutinous byproduct of standard vat operations that requires regular scrubbing and scraping to prevent dangerous blockage of, or damage to, machinery and flow systems. It has, however, been a key ingredient in the development of many Alpha Complex innovations. Day-to-day exposure to entirely safe and fun ultraviolet radiation from complex lighting arrays is believed to have the potential to react with certain gases contained within vat slime to create the building blocks for life itself—opening all kinds of opportunities for new and potentially beneficial growths.

In light of the constant need for new medication, dietary supplements and foodstuffs, Slime Identification is an activity with lucrative potential. Slime Identifiers go out of their way to locate vat slime residue in the hope of discovering a hairy mold or rampant bacteria that could well be the next big thing. Identifiers

Welcome to Confession Booth Services, brought to you by The Computer's loyal workers in Technical Services.

Press #1 for online Confession Booth services.

Press #2 to be connected to a counselor who will help you press #1.

Press #3 for technical reasons why #1 may not currently be working.

Press #4 if you want to bypass the Confession Booth option entirely and skip straight to termination.

Press #5 for a random result.

Do not press #6.

Press #7 to hear this message again.

carry a copious selection of containers and vacuum packs, along with tweezers, forceps and scraping tools, to store newly discovered slime growths. They are likely to be found choosing unusual routes from one point to another, favoring disused passageways, abandoned storage areas and claustrophobic ducts—anywhere that might have untouched deposits of slime.

Tech Support

Example firms: 1-800-PDCHELP

Revenue stream: Fielding the first-line technical support calls for the common issue PDC, and charging by the minute.

Secret society taint: Pro Tech, Computer Phreaks, FCCC-P

ULTRAVIOLETs may design the latest gadgets, VIOLETs may build them, but none of them want to field the same stupid questions about them over and over again. Yet with several million citizens roaming the corridors with one, and their operating instructions increasing in complexity, some enterprising young clone got the bright idea that they could charge for helping people use this new technology. (Or at least by giving them a place to call when it doesn't work.)

AI: You have reached PDCHELP. All of our operators are busy. Please hold the line, and we will assist you shortly.

[pleasant music]

AI: Your call is important to us; please continue to hold...

[pleasant music]

AI: Current number of calls in queue: ONE.. ThoUSAnd..thrEE..huNDR...anD... TWO.

[pleasant music]

AI: This call may be monitored for quality control, and will in no way be monitored by IntSec for Communist, traitorous or mutant-related activities. Honest.

[pleasant music]

Mark-R-TEC: PDCHELP, how may I assist you today?

Barry-R-YHP: I've forgotten my password!

Mark-R: I can reset your password for you; you only need to identify yourself.

Barry-R: How do I do that?

Mark-R: By giving me your password.

Barry-R: But I forgot my password!

Mark-R: Then, I apologize, but I cannot help you.

Barry-R: ...

Mark-R: That'll be 25 credits. Your account will be charged automatically.

Sample service services

'Huh? We're not going to R&D? But we *always* used to go to R&D to test valuable experimental equipment that blows up in our face. Aren't we gonna test valuable experimental equipment that blows up in our face any more?'

Yes, Troubleshooter, you did visit R&D on every previous mission (and congratulations on your long memory of previous editions of **PARANOIA**). You certainly will visit R&D again on future missions, from time to time. Now, though, The Computer has generously offered its Troubleshooter teams to all service groups and their associated firms, to perform important little dangerous jobs they might have lying around. The gu...

Service services can include courier duties, fact-finding research, maintenance jobs and detective work, among other duties. They vary extensively among the groups. The required service might come from the service group bureaucracy itself or from one of its satellite service firms. The only common factor is, someone high up had sufficient pull to shove their service onto the Troubleshooter mission docket.

Here are some sample service services, arranged by the originating group. Of course, these are mere examples to spur your own vibrant creativity.

Armed Forces

Armed Forces never outsources anything security-related, like weapon testing or transport. Well, almost never. Well, okay, maybe some corrupt NCO is shipping stolen munitions to his Free Enterprise contacts in a distant sector, and he needs convenient fall-guy flunkies to transport the hot merchandise. Or the Troubleshooters are supposed to deliver Meals Ready-to-Eat, but a sleepy supply clerk mistakenly puts grenades in the boxes. Or local troopers all got wiped out in a firing range accident, so it's up to the Troubleshooters to get this crowd-control ammo to the riot-control troops in ARG Sector. On second thought, forget we said anything about Armed Forces restrictions.

CPU

- ⦿ 'Bringing subordinates into the decision-making process may be our best idea since Smile Hard Day! Whenever your team faces critical decisions during your mission, hold a conference. You will not advance further until there's a unanimous vote on the course of action you'll pursue. Report results to us.'
- ⦿ 'We're currently considering some changes to our forms, such as merging the Voluntary Termination and Accusation of Treason forms, introducing the Oxygen Intake Report Form, and removing the need for Equipment Request Forms by placing registered telepaths in PLC offices. Here's a stack of sample forms. Let us know just how efficiently your team functions when using them.'

HPD&MC

- ⦿ 'We're running a Consumer Preference Test for the new flavor of Bouncy Bubble Beverage, R&D Experimental Flavor #72. Using Troubleshooters increases the publicity value. Take this case of B3 with you to hand out, and make certain every customer fills out this Taste Response Survey.'

Internal Security

IntSec outsources stuff they don't want to be caught at:

- ⦿ 'At your destination sector you're likely to encounter a suspicious-looking BLUE Clearance Armed Forces officer. If you see him, covertly plant these bugs on his person and in his office. If you don't see him, we suggest you keep your lasers charged.'
- ⦿ 'Replace all beverage cans in the indicated vendobot with these cans. Don't ask why. Don't drink from any of these cans.'

PLC

- ⦿ 'Citizen Jerome-R-DFG hasn't reported for duty in Warehouse 9 for three days. While you're out there, see if you can find him for us.' (An errant forkliftbot blocked him into a seldom used corner with a stack of crates, and no one has heard him yell for help.)
- ⦿ 'Power Services has requested a case of Argon-Synth Radiographs. Get them from Warehouse 17, and deliver them to Power Station 9. Don't forget to get a receipt.' (Warehouse 17 doesn't have any, but Warehouse 18 does... and it's Power Station 8 that wants them.)

Power Services

- ⦿ 'Take this really, really long cable. Plug one end into this socket, and the other end into the socket at the specified destination. We're pretty sure it's thick and sturdy enough not to be torn apart. It is long enough, we think. It might be too short by a centimeter or so. We're sure you'll come up with a viable solution.'

Research & Design

Besides the usual field-testing of experimental equipment, Troubleshooters can risk their lives for R&D in other ways:

- ⦿ 'Take these sealed, unmarked crates containing discontinued projects to Warehouse 5, right next to your destination. Do not, under any circumstances, open them, destroy them, ask about their contents, stare at them too long or mention the word "phlegm" anywhere near them.'
- ⦿ 'Escort one of our former workers, who recently suffered a little, uh, accident, to a retirement gulag in your destination sector. Keep him under surveillance and away from sharp objects. However, note he is of GREEN Clearance, and therefore must be obeyed. If he happens to spill classified information, report immediately for brainscrubbing.'

Technical Services

- ⦿ 'Certain sectors aren't yet using their workspace with maximal efficiency. Here, have this pack of inflatable barriers. Whenever you come across a room of over 400 square meters, divide it into 3x3 meter cubicles.'
- ⦿ 'An algae-chip vendobot is reporting trouble in Corridor 12. Go see what's wrong with it.' (A VIOLET Clearance citizen got his hand jammed in the dispenser slot, and naturally orders the Troubleshooters to free him.)



39. Mutant powers

Every player character has a mutant power. In theory, his power lets him do something nifty, something special to help him survive in Alpha Complex. Of course, nothing is as simple as that. Mutants are traitors, after all, and subject to immediate execution.

Which leads to a question: if The Computer is so careful to make sure that its citizens are normal humans bereft of weird alterations in DNA—indeed, so careful that it executes anyone out of the norm—how did mutation come to be so widespread?

Obviously, something strange is going on. So what's the source of all these mutations?

The origin of mutant powers in Alpha Complex

Beats us. It isn't clear anyone cares. We offered a bunch of speculative and totally bogus reasons in earlier editions of *PARANOIA*, and you know what? Nobody, but nobody, ever said, 'Those reasons are totally bogus, I want some more plausible reasons.' Gamemasters seemed to understand how this game, which lets characters float around and set things on fire and eat uranium, wasn't all that concerned with scientific plausibility.

But what the hell, you paid for this book, so we might as well give you the explanations from those earlier editions. Here are a few of the Causes of Overly Pervasive Aberration propounded in various R&D brainstorming sessions:

- ◎ Radiation from a global nuclear war (contradicts Computer history and all available scientific evidence, but a common legend based on trashy Old Reckoning fiction).
- ◎ The side-effects of pollution, food additives, and exposure to bland video

programming (based on other O.R. materials).

- ◎ Officially recognized and/or clandestine genetic experiments carried out by The Computer/R&D/secret societies (posing biochemical or radiological agents for mutations, and secret eugenics programs engineered by any number of crackpot factions).
- ◎ The cumulative effects of exposure to watches with radium dials. (They get pretty wild in those R&D brainstorming sessions.)
- ◎ The Earth's passage through a cloud of cosmic dust. Benign interference by benevolent aliens.
- ◎ ...and so on, *ad nauseum*.

You can turn this bogus-ness to your advantage. Be blandly irresponsible in establishing an internally consistent rationale for all this mutation stuff. Change your tune to whatever suits your dramatic and narrative needs, whenever you need it, for whatever hokey reason. Keep the players guessing. Ignorance and fear. Fear and ignorance.

Guidelines for mutant powers

Because of the bewildering variety of mutant powers, it's hard to come up with rules to cover them all without giving you more detail than you can remember. Also, we're on deadline. So instead, we give you rough guidelines, then encourage you to improvise wildly and irresponsibly.

Duration: Effects of mutant powers last exactly as long as you want them to. As guidance, you may want to have effects last

one to five minutes, depending on the success margin of the power roll and your dramatic needs. Of course, with five-second combat rounds, a minute is an eternity. And sometimes the effect is over instantaneously, like a teleport for instance, or it gets turned on permanently or something—like when a levitating mutant gets stuck 100 meters in the air as thousands of loyal witnesses report this remarkable event. You never know.

Range: If not specified, range is line of sight, with maximum effect within five meters of the character. Power and reliability decrease rapidly over distance as moderated by a cheerful but perverse GM. Again, good margins and entertaining intent may extend range and effectiveness.

Area/volume of effect: The area or volume of effect is usually a five-meter circle or sphere. Except when it isn't. Which is now and then.

Tips for staging mutant powers

- ◎ Make your mutant power effect descriptions colorful and imaginative. Give lots of sensory detail—neat visuals, weird sounds, creepy sensations, fetid stenches.
- ◎ A failed Power roll seldom means 'nothing happens.' *Something* happens, okay? Failure means the mutant can't control it.
- ◎ Make backfires as wild and offbeat as possible. When a character fails by a wide margin, go to town. The more incredible and exaggerated the effect, the more entertaining the resulting disaster. For example, a character really klutzes his power roll for regeneration. So maybe he grows a couple of dozen extra arms or gills, or begins shrinking, or causes identical injuries to every citizen within a kilometer.
- ◎ Don't let mutant powers get too reliable or useful. This is not a superhero game. When players appear grateful for their mutant powers, you're doing something wrong.

Power descriptions

The icon(s) that appear after each power's name indicate the play style(s) the power is best suited for: Classic (the monitor icon), Straight (the eyeball) or Zap (the smoking boot).

Creating your own mutant powers

Any superhero roleplaying game provides lots of new powers. Keep these tips in mind for adapting them to *PARANOIA*:

- ◎ **Hidden when not in use:** If a mutation is physically obvious, the character will be too easy a target for every other Troubleshooter.
- ◎ **Conspicuous in use:** Conversely, an invisible power makes the character too hard a target. Even something normally inobvious, like doing a lightning math calculation, should make the mutant's nose turn red or something. We ourselves are big fans of glowing eyes.
- ◎ **Bizarre consequences of failure:** A failed power roll should bring clear and possibly drastic consequences. When he fails a math problem, the Human Abacus mutant doesn't just get a wrong answer; no, his mental collapse causes him to recite numbers uncontrollably. Okay, that's not the funniest idea you've ever heard, but the failure doesn't necessarily have to be funny—just dangerous.

Absorption



Firing lasers at a mutant with absorption is like shooting water pistols at a sponge. Lasers, sound, plasma, explosions—it doesn't matter what energy you throw, the mutant's body simply sucks in the energy, like an unsupervised INFRARED with a straw in a ColdFun factory. A mutant with Absorption struck by an energy attack (lasers, blasters and sonics, plasma generators, tacnukes) reduces damage suffered by a number of steps equal to the margin by which the Power roll is made. If that reduces the damage below the minimum damage level of the attack, the attack hits but has no effect.

A failed Power roll means the mutant reflects the energy attack rather than absorbing it, inflicting minimum damage for that attack to everyone standing within a couple of meters. For the mutant and all his one-time friends gathered around, think the char-grilled look of a cartoon character who just picked up an exploding bomb.

Generally a mutant with Absorption is recognizable by the way his hair stands on end. Touching the mutant results in a painful spark. After absorbing energy from some source, the mutant glows faintly, with the halo intensifying based on the quantity of energy absorbed. The lucky character who survives the explosion of a tacnuke becomes a blinding target, assuming anyone else in the sector survived.

Adhesive Skin



Sticky secretions from the skin on the mutant's extremities make it possible to climb walls, hang from ceilings or exert an almost unbreakable grip on a held object. The mutant can apply an unerring, near-unbeatable grapple attack.

The adhesive may stick to walls, flesh or clothing, but not all three. When the player creates his character, either you or he should define which one of these the adhesive sticks to. As the mutant gains experience, you may let the player spend Perversity points to expand the range of substances his mutant can stick to. Each new range of substances should cost 20 Perversity points.

When the mutant clammers up the side of a food vat or grabs a Commie traitor's neck, make a Power roll. The margin determines how long the adhesive secretion lasts. A narrow margin (4 or less) indicates the mutant can adhere for a round or two; 5+ means several rounds; 10+ suggests the adhesive sticks for a scene or longer. If you wish, you can also apply the margin to improve the success chance of the mutant's later rolls to retain his firm grip.

A failed Power roll means either the mutation doesn't work at all or it works too well, gluing the mutant to a surface or fellow citizen like a full-body coating of superglue. Unfortunately, the mutant adhesive does not react at all to normal

solvents, though R&D service firms have had provisional success with experimental mutant glue removers.

Adrenalin Control



Adrenalin control lets a character temporarily boost his strength and agility to superhuman levels for a minute or so. He temporarily increases or acquires the Violence specialties Agility and Unarmed Combat at rating 18 each.

After he's used Adrenalin Control, the character suffers a Wound, but not in any particular location; in effect, the character is in shock. He remains 'wounded' until he has several hours of uninterrupted, tranquil rest (not likely during a mission) or a healthy nap. If he uses this power twice in succession without recovering from the first 'wound', the second use 'Downs' him—he falls unconscious and cannot be aroused for several hours, after which he awakens, dazed, groggy but essentially normal.

While using this power, a character can perform prodigious physical feats—lift autocars, zoom like a cheetah, take two or three actions in a round, and so on. Adrenalin pumps through his body and tells it to burn all available fuel and to ignore design specifications—sometimes with unfortunate consequences for flesh, connective tissue and bone. The central principle: he's Superman for a minute, but make him pay for it.

GM: No problem. You grab the berserk, one-ton scrubot, heft it to the melodious accompaniment of popping tendons, toss it lightly over the catwalk rail, and watch it plunge through the floor below. You lie down suddenly. Let's see which particular kind of hernia you have...
[Rolls die.]

Bureaucratic Intuition



The wide-ranging bureaucracy of Alpha Complex is in constant flux—changing, evolving and shedding old layers of regulatory skin, generally overnight while no one is looking. This power lets a mutant deduce the basic operating and procedural principles of an unfamiliar bureaucratic function just by examining it. The mutant must examine some aspect of the procedure for several minutes (roll a dice or concoct an arbitrary period of time, depending on how convoluted the process is and how little you want the players to work it out). Then you make the mutant's Power attribute roll. If the roll succeeds, the mutant fathoms the basic procedures of the red tape he's faced with. If the check fails, the mutant believes he has understood the process, but his information will be slightly incomplete or incorrect.

The margin of failure or success determines how effectively the mutant deals with the bureaucratic nightmare. Makes lots of attribute rolls against Access, most of them entirely gratuitous, possibly using the margin of failure or success of Bureaucratic Intuition as a modifier. The mutant should, however, always have the distinct feeling he is going about things the right way, and success will follow the next 20-page form (completed in triplicate).

Answer abysmal failure—where not only the mutation fails, but the ensuing Access rolls as well—by losing the character for a while in the labyrinths of PLC or (shudder) even HPD&MC. Perhaps the player could play another pre-made, lower-clearance hench-clone while the primary character is lost in the conviction of his own bureaucratic quest for a scene or three. Extraordinary success—where the margin of the Power roll is 10+ and all Access rolls are remarkably successful too—should draw unwanted IntSec and CPU attention to the smart-aleck citizen who seems to have found the system's fast-track loophole.

Chameleon



The mutant has a certain amount of control over his skin pigments, permitting him to reactively alter his skin color over his entire body. With this mutation one can become almost invisible to a casual observer, particularly in poor light, in cluttered interiors and Outdoors.

A successful Power roll makes the mutant temporarily immune to aimed weapon fire and attempts to locate him with the Concealment skill specialty, providing he keeps perfectly still. If they move, the power tries to react and keep up, reducing aimed attack and Concealment rolls by the margin of success. The Chameleon power offers no defense against area effect weapons.

A failed Power roll results in maximum contrast against the chosen background—something bright yellow or purple, for example—but the mutant isn't immediately aware of the failure, and also can't get rid of the color until sometime after it isn't funny any more.

Though highly beneficial for those who don't want to be seen, to effectively employ this power the one drawback is that the mutant has to be naked.

Charm



Glands in the character's skin produce a pheromone-like substance that causes other humans to admire and trust him. Unfortunately, these pheromone-like substances also cause the character to admire and trust other humans. The net result is usually the mellow haze of fraternal camaraderie seen among dead drunks. Those affected tend to spill their guts, admitting shameful acts and bitter resentments they'd normally never



share, and make deeply sincere pledges of communal feeling, loyalty, and friendship that they immediately forget once the pheromones wear off.

However, because the mutant is aware that chemicals are conditioning this response, he has some ability to resist its effects, keeping his mouth shut and his affections under control while exploiting the general good feelings for his own selfish ends. Have the player make a Management skill or Chutzpah specialty roll. If successful, the character resists his own charm and does a number on his victims. If he fails, the character is equally at the mercy of his generous impulses.

The area of effect varies according to the environment. Indoors in enclosed spaces the power affects a more or less spherical volume of up to five meters. The effect lasts for about five minutes. The area of effect and duration is much more unreliable in open areas or in the Outdoors; depending on the air currents or wind, the five-meter sphere of effect may be downwind of the character, and may move constantly, dissipating slowly or rapidly according to the turbulence of the air. As a guideline, in anything more than a gentle breeze, the effect has a maximum duration of less than a minute. In still air or a gentle breeze, the effect may last up to the full five minutes. Be guided by common sense and impish good humor in judging the duration and area of effect.

If the mutant's roll succeeds, non-bot NPCs feel extremely chummy toward the mutant, to the point that he need hardly make Management rolls against them; the rolls automatically succeed.

The greatest risk in using this power is that victims invariably return to normal after the effect wears off. They remember their abnormal behavior and realize they have been hosed. Therefore, if he uses this power repeatedly on any subject, particularly other player characters, the mutant runs a considerable risk of revealing the mutation.

When the power is used on player characters (either by a player character or by an NPC), prepare notes for the players, explaining that they feel inexplicably friendly and cooperative, they are eager to share their deepest secrets, and they should roleplay this insidious attack of trust and good will until further notice. Give no hint about the source of the feeling. When the effect has dissipated, give them notes reporting their feelings have returned to normal.

Corrosion



The mutant can exude a corrosive sweat that rapidly breaks down metallic objects touched, even metals that would not normally be prone to rust. The mutant needs a successful Power roll to release the mutated sweat, which immediately attacks any metal

at hand. The degree of corrosion depends on exactly what he is trying to rust—the bigger the object, the greater the margin of success required. Simple success is enough to corrode a spoon and a little more might handle a laser pistol. An ample margin (5+) could corrode a whole docbot, and a breathtaking margin (10+) would rust an autocar or the gargantuan caterpillar tracks of a warbot (and just about all other metallic objects within 5 meters). If the mutant wants to disable only a portion of the target, like a bot's braincase, the roll needs only a margin of 2 or 3. The power can't corrode coated or shielded metal, like a moisture-sealed barrel, diamond-coated battle armor or a scrubot vacuum-packed in clingwrap for freshness.

Mutants with Corrosion sweat readily and profusely under exertion or high temperature. Sweaty mutants smell faintly of vinegar, and their mere touch may leave a residue of red-brown rust flakes. A failed Power roll means a cascade of sweat from every pore, spontaneously rusting any worn or carried metal objects, and potentially rusting the floor beneath the mutant with an expanding puddle of acid.

Death Simulation



The mutant can voluntarily slow his metabolism to a point just short of death. In this state he requires no food or water for extended periods, he uses little oxygen, and he can withstand exposure to temperature extremes that would normally cause death. Chemicals, toxins and infections in the mutant's system become ineffective in this state, so he gains waiting time for medical assistance. When the power is activated, the player should pass you a note indicating how long his trance will last—a minimum of one hour, a maximum of a few weeks. If his character has suffered fatal damage, Death Simulation can delay the inevitable, assuming the player passes you his note immediately.

While in this comatose state the mutant cannot voluntarily wake, nor can he be awakened by outside stimuli. The mutant can maintain the death state for up to five days without ill effects, and can revive with one successful Power roll. If the state lasts more than five days, reduce the mutant's Power rating by the number of days he's simulating death; to revive, the mutant must succeed in a Power roll against his reduced rating.

Once awakened, the mutant cannot safely return to a comatose state for a number of days equal to that originally spent in the death state (rounded up to the nearest whole day—so a mutant who chooses to drop off for just an hour can't do it again safely for a whole day). If the mutant simulates death again before this recovery period has passed, reduce his Power rating by half (rounding up). So, the mutant in

the previous example, with Power 10, entering a death state on the same day he wakes up would be subject to an immediate check at Power 5 (half of 10). If the roll succeeds, the mutant can enter a death state again.

If the mutant fails any Power rolls, he slips into a true coma. The mutant will die in a number of days equal to his current Power rating, and he can only be returned to normal by 1d20 days of professional medical care. Feel free to figure in some kind of permanent damage from the trauma of the failure, like reductions in Knowledge skills or lost Power. Other characters may find the comatose character a useful target for weapon tests and medical experimentation.

Unlike most mutant powers, Death Simulation has no visible effects indicating it's a mutant power. Visible death simulations get quickly culled from the gene pool.

Deep Thought



The mutant's superhumanly brilliant mind can manage and juggle numbers, images and memories to achieve incredible feats of mental dexterity. He can quickly reduce problems to equations and solve them in terms of probabilities. He can retain information and images with crystal clarity, no matter how distant the memory or how brief the glimpse of a picture or diagram.

The player should submit to you a question or problem he believes his character would know or could calculate. Judge how difficult the query is and make a roll against the mutant's Power. If the check is successful, the character remembers or calculates accurately, with greater accuracy for a greater margin of success. If the Power check fails, or if you feel the request is beyond the mutant's ability to figure out, the character gains plausible but inaccurate information.

While using this ability to do things an ordinary smart person couldn't do, the mutant's eyes glow brightly. Anyone looking on could easily surmise, 'Hmm, something superhumanly brilliant is going on in that brainiac's mind. I'd better shoot him.'

Desolidify



The mutant adjusts the electroweak force of all the electrons in his body, or something like that, and turns immaterial. He can pass through solid objects like a phantom. Though in theory the power could be maintained until the mutant gets tired, a Desolidified mutant cannot breathe.

A marginal success (up to a margin of 4 on the Power roll) lets the mutant slip through cracks as an almost insubstantial mist, and makes Impact and Bio attacks on him impractical, though Energy attacks remain effective. A

more substantial success (margin 5+) lets the mutant actually pass through any solid object and renders him invulnerable to attack. Some odd, inexplicable scientific phenomenon, perhaps related to the forgiving favor of Famous Game Designers, makes vertical movement impossible while desolid. However, a margin of 10+ indicates extreme success that overcomes this restriction—if ‘success’ is the word we want. The excessively desolid mutant plummets freely through the floor and (if he doesn’t turn off the power in time) possibly the Earth’s crust and outer mantle.

A failed Power roll actually causes the mutant to become more solid and dense, making breathing and movement a real struggle. A serious failure margin leaves the mutant walking like a mime in a high wind.

Oddly, certain substances or energies sometimes resist the desolid mutant, preventing safe passage. For example, a desolid mutant may be unable to pass through plastic; walking through a wall between two corridors, the mutant gets tangled in a web of plastic-sheathed wires and cables. Choose a substance arbitrarily whenever the mutation is used, or at the start of each scene, or at the beginning of a mission—whatever you prefer. If you don’t feel like making a choice, use the table we kindly provide here:

1	Metal (walls, floors)
2-3	Metal (reactors, bot chassis)
4-5	Metal (wires, cables)
6	Plastic
7-8	Glass
9	Paper
10	Wood
11	Cardboard
12	Brick
13	Stone
14	Algae
15	Water
16	Goo/slime
17	Energy and magnetic fields
18	Rubber
19	Fabric (uniforms, curtains, bedding)
20	People

Detect Mutant Power

 The mutant is acutely sensitive to the presence of mutant powers, even where mutants are not necessarily in close proximity (although this seems extremely unlikely in the midst of Alpha Complex). By concentrating, standing perfectly still, for the duration of the detection attempt, the mutant can detect the general location of mutants nearby and garner some inkling of the power they possess. The ability can't precisely identify individual powers. Otherwise IntSec's ‘volunteer’



An amateur application of electroshock therapy.

registered mutants with this ability would be diligently tracking every non-registered mutant throughout Alpha Complex.

When a mutant with this power wants to detect, make a Power attribute roll for the character. Depending on the margin of success is, the mutant gets a general feel of the number of mutants nearby, some sense of how much danger the local mutations represent to the mutant, and whether any mutations have recently been used. With a small margin (4 or less), the impressions should be extremely general; at 5+ the sense of danger and awareness of recent power usage should become focused, even pinpointing an individual power (describe it to the player by a general feeling rather than a specific name).

With a startling success (margin 10+), the mutant literally taps into the local mutant net and can sense virtually everything. The mutant knows exactly who, within line of sight, has used a power recently and exactly what mutation each individual possesses. The linkage into the local environment is so clear, in fact, all those mutants scanned by the detecting mutant become vividly aware they have been scanned and who was responsible.

A failed Power roll results in equal measures of sensation and detail, but the specifics are totally wrong. The sense of danger will either be exaggerated or underplayed; the detecting mutant may sense mutants everywhere, embedded in the walls and hiding behind doors; the detecting mutant may also become ‘stuck’ on a particular power and sense it everywhere. Over time the mutant may start sensing the stuck power around him even when he’s not actively detecting.

Electroshock



The character is extremely resistant to electrical shocks (stungun shocks in particular) and, when you roll his Power rating or less, can deliver one electric shock per round

to any one victim within a five-meter radius. The effect is equivalent to that of a stungun. If the roll fails, something goes wrong: The character stuns himself, or blows out his communications gear, or makes everyone’s hair stand on end, or broadcasts in the shortwave band.

To see whether the target resists the effect of an electric shock, roll against the target’s Power rating. Modify the success number for particularly large (high tension wire) or small (watch battery) voltages.

Electroshock can also short out unshielded electronic equipment, including bots. Bot brains, confession booths and The Computer’s own hardware are usually shielded against all but the most powerful shocks.

Empathy



This character has a sort of hind-brain telepathy—he can read a victim’s emotional brain activity and project his own emotions to manipulate the victim’s emotional state.

Reading a victim’s emotions is particularly useful when trying to detect a liar-in-progress; a successful roll may reveal intent to mislead. When trying to assess another’s reaction, a successful empathy power roll entitles the user to GM hints. A successful empathy roll should improve the success chance of Management specialty rolls.

The most effective use of empathy is to project strong emotions on a victim in order to interfere with his ability to reason and make judgments. The empath works himself up into a frenzy, then projects his emotions onto his victim. The victim is overcome by a temporary obsessive need to indulge himself in dramatic actions which express the emotion—sobbing, screaming, cowering, cackling maniacally, smashing things—a real opportunity for the hysterically-inclined roleplayer. If the Power roll succeeds, the victim is affected; the more successful the roll, the more exaggerated and



obsessive the performance. If the roll fails, the victim is unaffected, and the empath himself may become obsessed, suffering temporary insanity proportional to the margin of failure.

This skill is most reliable when used on an individual. Attempting empathy with a crowd is less accurate and reliable, and with a failed Power roll the empath is more likely to get caught up in the emotions of the crowd. Take the player aside, explain the mood of the crowd and encourage him to roleplay a victim of mob psychology.

■ Energy Field



This power produces a field that absorbs energy and radiates it uniformly from the surface of the field as heat and light. The field follows the external contours of the body, extending about six inches from the skin surface. In game terms, this acts like armor rating 3 against all attacks.

The field usually lasts no more than a minute, and leaves the user exhausted and in shock—the equivalent of Wounded—until he has had a few hours of rest or a nice nap. The field is also unfortunately rather showy—it sparkles and shimmers, and emits brief, blinding flashes of light and heat when struck by melee or ranged weapons or by other sources of energy (say, a speeding autocar), or when the character runs into a wall or falls from a great height.

This field is subtle, complex and unreliable in its workings. When the Power roll fails, lots of nasty things can happen. Sometimes it reflects all energy—light, for example, leaving the character blind. Sometimes the energy is radiated from a small fraction of the surface—from the feet, for example, burning a hole in the floor—or the energy is radiated from the inner surface, parboiling the mutant.

Note that when the mutant fires a ranged weapon from inside the field—when the barrel does not protrude through the field—the weapon's projectile or beam may be reflected from the inner surface. Note that sometimes the field fluctuates wildly, expanding from and then contracting toward the body.

■ Growth



The mutant can inflate the molecular structure of his body to increase his height and size. Increased size means greater strength, stamina, reach and speed. A successful Power roll increases the character's size by a quarter and his mass by about a third (27/64ths, if you have a calculator). For each 5 points of the margin on the success roll, the mutant increases his size by another quarter of his original dimensions, with a corresponding increase in mass. The mutant's speed increases by the same fraction as his size, and damage he inflicts will increase—although the specifics are left to you, rather than bogging the power down in mechanics. Work on the assumption

a character the size of a giant will find it easier than usual to pull people's limbs out of their sockets.

The mutant's size also means he can shrug off all snafued damage like it never happened, up to a limit of the margin of success. So, the grown mutant whose Power roll had a margin of 4 could take four snafued results before actually suffering effects from the next snafued result. If that all seems too complicated, ignore it and think 'superhuman hulk with a tendency to break things.' The downside? Well, a giant character becomes a much easier target to hit, and when the Growth wears off all those ignored snafued wounds hit like a runaway transbot. Given that it's Zap, maybe the mutant gets an uncontrollable urge to climb tall buildings and bat down local aircraft.

If the mutant's Power roll to grow fails, the mutation freaks out and causes certain parts to grow at random or, in extreme failure, turns the character into a bloated beachball who tends to block corridors.

■ Hypersenses



This power amplifies the five senses. The eyes can see clearly for great distances, magnify greatly, and function well in near darkness or under blinding illumination. The ears can hear very low sounds or sounds at great distances. The skin is extremely sensitive, alert to changes in temperature and humidity, air pressure and so on. The nose is acute, detecting the subtlest smells even among overpowering odors. The taste buds can finely distinguish between familiar substances, even substances that have no distinctive taste to normal humans.

This power also gives the mutant superior discrimination in focusing on one aspect of a perception and ignoring the rest—for example, picking out one voice from an unruly crowd and

distinguishing what is being said. Basically he's Daredevil, okay?

This is what the power does when it works right—when the Power roll succeeds. When the power roll fails, things are not so swell. Maybe everything seems to be turned up too loud. Maybe normal human odors become appallingly overpowering. Maybe the character begins hallucinating—'My skin's on fire! My tongue's exploding! My ears are melting! Aiieee!' It's not easy being a mutant.

■ Levitation



A field forms around the mutant's body that counteracts the force of gravity. (It makes the atoms spin funny or something.) The field follows the external contours of the body, extending a few centimeters beyond the skin's surface, affecting garments and objects within the field. This doesn't usually encompass powered-armor battlesuits, but what business does a Troubleshooter have in one of those things anyway?

When the Power roll succeeds, the field overcomes and repels gravity, and the mutant floats into the air. Depending on the degree of success, the mutant can more or less control the rate of ascent and descent, pitch, yaw, and roll, for the duration of the mutant power. If he's real successful, maybe he can actually fly around; otherwise, he moves only up and down, and can only move around by kicking off the ceiling or firing bullets in the opposite direction.

When the Power roll fails, something else happens. Sometimes nothing happens. Sometimes the force of gravity is amplified. Sometimes gravity is repelled all right—just a little harder and faster than the mutant can control. If there is a ceiling, wham. If no ceiling, Alpha Complex has a manned space program.



A traitor foolishly flaunts his Machine Empathy mutation.

■ Machine Empathy



Warning! Warning! This mutant power is **REALLY treasonous!** The Computer will execute anyone possessing it, regardless of other factors!

Some mutants can commune with the mystic forces of nature. Characters with machine empathy can commune with the ebb and flux of electrons, the opening and closing of logic gates, the destruction and reappearance of positrons in robotic brains. In short, the mutant is in tune with intelligent machines—robots and computers.

When the character's Power roll succeeds, robots and computers tend to like and trust the character. Robots and computers don't attack or kill the character unless they have specific orders or some other strong justification, and The Computer generally gives the character the benefit of the doubt in matters of poor performance or treason. The character also may receive bonuses to Management rolls made versus bots and The Computer, because of his instinctive understanding and liking for machines.

If the Power roll fails, the mutant doesn't make contact, or the intelligent machine picks up bad vibes—the more unsuccessful the roll, the badder the vibes. The robot, or The Computer, may get testy with the mutant, be uncooperative, make threats and generally make the mutant's life unpleasant.

■ Matter Eater



The character can digest and extract nourishment from virtually anything containing any organic material—dead leaves, poisonous mushrooms, even dirt. In addition, he can digest (but receives no nourishment from) any substance whatsoever—laser guns, data disks, auto parts, whatever.

When the character eats something, make a Power roll. If the roll succeeds, everything is fine. If not, the mutant experiences acute gastrointestinal pain and, if the roll fails by a wide margin, may be Wounded, Maimed or even Killed.

This power can often be extremely helpful. For instance, it's a great way to get rid of awkward evidence—usually. Internal Security's increasing awareness of the Matter Eater mutation means IntSec GREEN goons may decide to turn an offender inside-out just to see what they find.

■ Mechanical Intuition



The mutant can examine an unfamiliar mechanical device and guess its basic operating and design principles. This is valuable when he deals with unusual artifacts discovered on missions and when the team

gets unfamiliar equipment and experimental devices for a mission.

Make a Power roll, adjusting the success chance according to the time the mutant spends examining the item, as well as his familiarity with similar devices. If the roll succeeds, the mutant discerns the basic operational and design principles of the device.

If the roll fails, the mutant thinks he understands the device, but his information is more or less incomplete or inaccurate. For example, a mutant discovering an ancient soldering gun in the ruins of an Old Reckoning homestead might guess it is a primitive portable heat weapon. Or he might find the rusted remnants of a subcompact car and guess it was an armored attack vehicle.

■ Mental Blast



The character can stimulate agonizing brain activity in all living targets in a five-meter radius. The attack affects all organic beings (except the character) within this radius. He cannot exempt any creature from its effects. Bots are unaffected.

If the Power roll is successful, each being within the radius makes a Violence roll with modifiers relative to the success of the Power roll. If a character fails his Violence roll, he suffers acute mental agony and is Snafued until the end of the next round. If his roll succeeds, he feels a flash of mental discomfort but experiences no ill effects.

If the Power roll fails, the effects of Mental Blast are more unpredictable. Sometimes the mutant himself is stunned or knocked unconscious. Sometimes a couple of victims' brains explode. Sometimes it seems as though nothing happens, but citizens in neighboring sectors pass out while operating heavy machinery or nuclear reactors.

■ Polymorphism



The character may alter his appearance, and indeed his physical form. Mimicking another human being is easiest; anything which involves actually changing bone structure is rather difficult; and changing total mass is virtually impossible.

Have the player state what form he wishes to adopt, then make a Power roll. Modify the success chance for the difficulty of the change; anything other than human appearance should be a considerable strain. If the roll succeeds, the character has achieved more or less the form he wants—the lower the roll, the closer he gets. If the roll fails, so has the character—the greater the margin, the worse the failure.

The nature of a failure is up to you. Maybe he doesn't change form—outwardly. Maybe he changes to something completely different from what he intended to become. Maybe he changes, and everything is fine—but when he

tries to change back, he finds he can't—the modified form is now his 'natural' one.

The mutant remains in his changed form for one to five minutes, after which he spontaneously reverts to 'natural' form.

■ Puppeteer



The mutant can take remote control of a single part of a living target's body, such as an arm, leg or trigger finger. The body part moves in all respects as if it were the mutant's own. While controlling the selected part of the target, the mutant can still move and act normally, but must himself make the movements he wants the target to mimic. The power doesn't work on bots. Range is line of sight.

The player names exactly one body part of the selected target—not (for instance) 'his eyes,' but one specific eye. Make a Power roll. Success grants the mutant control of that part of the target's body and its component sub-parts. For instance, if the mutant controls the target's arm, he has fine control of that arm's fingers. Controlling the target's head or face means the target wears any expression and says anything the mutant wants.

The larger the part to be controlled, the greater the margin of success needed: margin 0-4—a finger or eyelid; margin 5-9—hand or foot; margin 10-14—arm, leg or waist; margin 15+—head or face (lots of muscles to track).

Control drains at least 1 Power point per round. The control lasts as long as the mutant has Power points.

Failure means the mutant himself spends a round or two as the puppet of that generous and charitable individual, the Gamemaster.

■ Pyrokinesis



The character can spontaneously generate a fire on any flammable object within a five-meter radius. The fire's size, intensity and rate of propagation depend on the target's combustibility and the Power roll's margin. If the roll is unsuccessful, the fire doesn't ignite, or it ignites where it's not supposed to (like, in the mutant's utility belt), or it burns out of control.

■ Regeneration



The mutant can send biochemical messengers via the bloodstream to the site of an injury, directing all resources from other parts of the body to aid in its healing. The result is accelerated creation of healthy tissue and regeneration of tissues and organs that don't normally regenerate (nervous tissue, fingers, lungs and so on).

When the mutant is Wounded or Maimed, make a Power roll. If successful, the damage begins to heal itself—the greater the margin,



A traitor employs the telekinesis mutation to postpone his richly deserved termination.

the swifter the recovery. Further, the greater the margin, the more the mutant can control the outward appearance of healing—particularly important to avoid discovery of the mutant powers. As a rough guideline, a margin of 10+ means the injury is instantaneously healed (a real advantage in combat, though tough to explain), but a margin of 0 or 1 might mean the injury heals in several hours or days, depending on its seriousness.

An unsuccessful roll means the regeneration went awry. Maybe lots of parts duplicate themselves. Maybe the rapid tissue growth occurs in the wrong place, or the wrong tissues are produced (scales, gills, fins, feathers, chitinous carapace).

Rubber Bones

 A skeletal mutation gives the mutant's bones the consistency of a dog's chewtoy, rigid enough to support movement and action, but with the flexibility to pass through narrow gaps where non-mutated skeletons dare not squeeze. The power is active constantly, though it isn't readily visible without continuous study. The mutant's movements seem more fluid, and occasionally his joints bend at angles that would normally splinter bone. ('I'm just limber, that's all.')

When Impact damage strikes the mutant, make a Power roll to see how well his bones

react. Up to a success margin of 5, the mutant effectively gains Impact armor equal to the margin. So if a solid-slug cone rifle round hits the mutant, and you roll an 8 against his Power attribute rating of 12 (margin: 4), assess damage as if he had l4 armor. With a substantial success (margin 5+), the mutant's skeleton completely rolls with the blow and takes no Impact damage at all. An incredibly lucky mutant (10+) bends so effectively he gets stuck and looks like a pile of coat hangers. Though he takes no damage, he needs one or more rounds to untangle. Observers understand this guy isn't limber, he's Plastic Man.

If the mutant tries squeezing through a gap, the Power roll's success margin suggests how narrow he can get.

- ◎ Minor successes (margin 0-4): A wide-barred fence
- ◎ Margin 5+: Like an eel through a drainpipe.
- ◎ 10+: Liquid-like passage through spaces that might defy explanation at debriefing; ribcage and skull come out noticeably narrower than when they went in (recovering whenever you feel inclined).

When the mutant fails a Power roll, one or more vital bones overreact and turn to jelly,

plopping the mutant down like a marionette with cut strings. The mutant has to flop around for a round or two until the bones recover. A notable failure means the rubbery bones, even after recovery, stay hypersensitive through the next scene. The slightest toe-stub or friendly back-slap brings relapse, leaving the mutant thrashing again like a landed trout.

Shrinking



Molecular control lets the mutant deflate the size of the cells throughout his body, allowing him to shrink. (Don't analyze the scientific rationale; it's Zap.) A smaller character can hide more easily, makes for a smaller target and can fit through tight gaps. A successful Power roll decreases the character's size by one quarter and his mass by over a third (literally 27/64ths, if we've done the math right). For each 5 points of margin, the mutant can shrink by a further one-quarter of his original size and mass.

Smaller characters move more slowly, and damage they inflict on others is reduced proportionately—though rather than complicating the situation with a pile of mechanics, we suggest you have the player simply play his Troubleshrinker as equivalent to a dwarf, a dog or (if the Power roll is really good) a field mouse.

A shrunken mutant can try again in later rounds to keep shrinking. A sufficiently shrunken mutant could crawl inside a bot's chassis, squeeze through ventilation shafts, or get a sneaky ride in an unsuspecting clone's pocket. But though being smaller has advantages, it also makes the character easier to knock around, throw around and blow over with a well-aimed fan on maximum gust. Smaller targets are harder to hit, but when the character does get hit, it will knock him for a loop.

If the Power roll fails when the character first shrinks, unexpected random shrinkage ensues. Body parts—whatever parts inconvenience the character the most—shrink at random.

Slippery Skin



The mutant's skin secretes a natural oil that makes him hard to grapple or hold still, and eases the mutant's passage through tight gaps. Faced with an urgent need to get somewhere, such as out of the line of fire, the mutant can skid quickly across smooth, unobstructed surfaces.

Whenever the mutant is bound or secured, make a Power roll. Success suggests he can slip his bonds. When a barefooted mutant wants to glide across a flat surface, like a corridor or transtube, a successful roll means he can move at double normal running speed with little effort. The roll's margin determines

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how fast he can escape the bonds or how long he can skid across the surface. Notable success (margin 5+) allows fast exits and quick escapes, but pushing the power too hard (10+) drenches the mutant's clothes and possessions in oily goo. This makes it hard to do anything without falling over or dropping something.

A failed Power roll can either reward the mutant with a moment of dry skin, which leaves him extremely sticky and stuck fast—or leave him floundering in a spreading pool of his own secretions. All those around soon join him in an impromptu display of skating à la the Ice Follies.

■ Telekinesis



The mutant can manipulate objects with the power of his mind alone! In theory, this can mean lifting a 10-ton safe by concentrating real hard, but in practice masses that large are virtually impossible.

Have the player state what he wants to do. Make a Power roll. As a general rule of thumb, lifting 10 kilograms (about 22 lbs.) is a task of average difficulty—do not modify the user's success chance. Modify the roll appropriately if the user attempts to lift larger or smaller masses, and for range and duration—it makes sense that lifting a banana on the table in front of you is a lot easier than lifting a banana in Tibet. Unless you're already in Tibet, of course. But back to the subject.

If the Power roll succeeds, so does the character. If it fails, invent an adequately amusing alternate effect. Perhaps the object moves in the opposite direction from that intended, or Newtonian mechanics take hold and the mutant does what he wants but his brain is pushed back by an opposite and equal force.

Telekinesis does more than lift. It can be used for any sort of manipulation—squeezing the trigger on someone else's laser, for instance.

■ Teleportation



This power creates a field around the mutant (along the contours of his body, a few centimeters from the skin) that instantaneously transports him from one location to another. Any objects or garments within the field are also transported—most of the time, anyway.

This mutation works both as a voluntary action and as an involuntary response. As a voluntary action, the mutant must first visualize the location to which he wishes to teleport. It may either be a location in line of sight or one he knows intimately. The closer the location, the better the chances he can reach it intact; but with high-margin Power rolls, mutants have been known to teleport huge distances and arrive more or less unscathed.

A successful Power roll means the mutant is teleported; the higher the margin, the more likely the mutant reaches his destination in good working order.

If the roll fails, the teleport may not occur, or it may occur in such a way the mutant wishes it hadn't. Sometimes the mutant parts from his garments and possessions. Sometimes he pops in right in front of a Vulture Squadron on maneuvers. Sometimes he ends up in dark, mysterious, unfamiliar and unfriendly places. Sometimes he arrives with his elbow sticking out of his ear.

As an involuntary response, the mutant automatically teleports from any situation that presents a real and immediate threat of death. This happens whether the player wants to teleport or not. In this case, act as if you're the mutant's subconscious mind. The reaction is instinctive, like flinching from a blow. **Caution:** Don't overdo this involuntary teleporting, because players really hate losing control of their characters. If you're getting bored, find some other way to torture the poor bastards.

A successful Power roll means the mutant was fortunate in instinctively (that is, at your discretion) selecting a safe place to teleport to. A failed roll means the mutant's instincts have betrayed him, delivering him to a locked closet, or an elevator shaft, or in front of a speeding autocar, or inside a reactor or something—and who knows where the poor devil's gear ended up...

Some examples of involuntary teleports:

- ◎ The character turns the corner and runs into two opponents with hand flamers. *Bam!*
- ◎ The character is defusing a bomb. He hears the ominous click of the arming mechanism. *Bam!*
- ◎ The character has managed to get the flybot to take off, but he cannot get it to make the canopy transparent. The instruments indicate a mountain range approaching. *Bam!*

Example: Bill-R is stuck in a firefight, wounded. His mission group has abandoned him to his fate. Nothing left to lose, he experiments with his teleport mutant power. The GM knows Bill-R's Power is 9.

GM: Okay. What do you hope will happen?

Bill-R: Frankly, I haven't a clue how this power works—except never the same way twice.

GM: Heh, heh. Think fast, fella.

Bill-R: Okay. I hope I'll end up someplace safe—and no more injured than I am now, thank you.

GM: Good. Time for a Power roll. [Bounces die—rolls 17.] Hello. Not exactly what

RUBBERY BONES

you'd planned. A crowd of squat, oddly misshapen creatures materialize in front of you, carrying pickaxes and lanterns, whistling. A dark-haired, white-skinned woman is frolicking and singing with them—sounds like 'Hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to work we go...'

or

GM: Good. Time for a Power roll. [Bounces die—rolls a 2.] Whee. Suddenly a hail of black, soundless watermelons explodes around you—or that's what it looks like anyway—just a haze of sweet, sticky, featureless, undifferentiated sensory impressions. Then suddenly everything is normal again—except you're standing in a quiet, empty corridor just outside your residence block.

Bill-R: Pheew.

GM: Oh. Look. Your PDC is ringing. Seems The Computer is waiting for your report. And an interesting report that'll be, I wager.

■ Toxic metabolism



The mutant can digest foods and liquids that would normally be considered toxic, and then, through a complex and inexplicable metabolic process, transmit some measure of that toxicity by touch, through his skin pores. The key phrase is 'some measure'; the mutant must consume quite a lot of poison to extract sufficient toxins. The mutant must make a substantial meal of noxious foodstuffs—not standard FunFoods, but authentically dangerous stuff. Given the toxic metabolism's extremely dangerous effects on its targets, you should play out the results to suit your dramatic needs, using these rules for guidance.

Make a hidden Power roll. The margin of success determines the toxicity of the mutant's skin when he touches a target's exposed skin.

◎ A routine success (margin up to 4) indicates a toxin strong enough to cause nausea, dizziness and sweating, but it also leaves the mutant himself with indigestion and a severe case of the burps.

◎ Greater success (margin 5+) indicates poison that causes vomiting, fever, cramps and (if the target is lucky) unconsciousness. You can give the target a Power roll for luck; success means he's just Snaufued, but failure inflicts a wound from internal trauma. The mutant suffers only mild gastric discomfort.

◎ Highly efficient metabolic breakdown (margin 10+): A crippling venom tears through the target's body like a storm of IR market razor blades. Seizures, convulsions, paralysis—this is serious



stuff. Give the target a Power roll; success leaves him Maimed, failure means he's Down. A Downed victim requires immediate medical attention, or he slips into a coma and dies in about an hour (modify the time as appropriate to your dramatic needs). The mutant himself is completely fine, except the skin is dead and blackened on his palms and the soles of his feet.

If the mutant's Power roll fails, his metabolism fails to kick in—and you roll after he's already tucked into his three-course meal of detergents, industrial solvents and concentrated fertilizer. The mutant immediately suffers self-poisoning; the margin of failure dictates the consequences (use the success guidelines above, but the mutant is now the target).

Don't try this at home, citizens!

Transmutation



By sheer traitorous psychic will, the mutant can transform one object into another object in the blink of an eye. The object must be inanimate (i.e. not living), but otherwise there are no restrictions as to what can be altered. Whether the object involved is a laser pistol, a bowl of ColdFun or an extremely sophisticated and valuable Old Reckoning starship, the only limiting factors are the size and duration of the change.

Have the player tell you (either publicly or in secret) what he wants to target, what specific change he has in mind. Adjust the success chance according to his intent:

- Ⓐ No significant alteration in size or material (steel door to lead door): Make an unadjusted Power roll.
- Ⓑ Significant change in either size or material (glass beaker into life-size glass statue of Teela-O-MLY, titanium cone rifle into sponge cone rifle): Reduce the success chance by 1-5, if you wish.
- Ⓒ Massive alteration in size and material (warbot into small lime-flavored dessert, keychain into starship): Make the success chance really small, like, say, 1.

Unlike most Zap powers, which usually keep going and going, it's safest if you decree Transmutation costs the mutant great physical effort. The larger the change, the more effort it costs. Use these guidelines: Creating a keychain—pfft! Creating a starship—intensive care.

The change wears off when it seems most appropriate, entertaining or embarrassing. For guidance, the margin suggests the duration of the change. A margin of 0-4 suggests a duration of a round or two; 5+, several rounds; 10+, a scene; 15+, fairly permanent.

A failed Transmutation roll means either the target object turns into something horrifically

wrong and dangerous, or the change affects an entirely different target. For example, having decided to turn a warbot into a small, fruity treat, the mutant fails miserably and instead manages to turn all nearby vending machines into small black balls with hissing fuses and the word BOMB on the side.

Uncanny Luck



The mutant can affect the probability of a given event.

To use this power, the player must give you a note explaining what die roll he wishes to influence and how he wishes to adjust the roll—up or down. Make a hidden Power roll before you make the roll the mutant wants to influence. If the Power roll succeeds, change the other roll to a 1 (that is, amazing success). Then drain from the mutant's Uncanny Luck ability a number of points equal to the difference between the other roll (the result you *actually* rolled) and 1.

This power only works on your concealed rolls, and only on rolls that (in your judgment) directly affect the mutant. The player must pass you the note before you roll.

Given the usefulness of this mutation, there obviously must be a downside. In accordance with the Law of Cosmic Balance, where good fortune shines, stormy clouds of misfortune are bound to follow. When the mutant exerts his Uncanny Luck but has unwittingly run out of Power points, the roll automatically works against the mutant in the most dramatically unlucky way you can imagine.

That Cosmic Balance is always a killer.

Ventriloquist



Ventriloquism lets the mutant project his voice over a distance and yet be heard only by those targets he is directly addressing. The mutation requires line of sight and a successful Power roll. If the mutant wants to send to multiple targets, all targets must be relatively close together. When a player wants to use the mutation, have him write the entire message in a private note.

If you feel easygoing, a success means the whole message reaches the intended targets. If you don't feel like being easy on anyone, check the margin of success and garble or omit words from the message. If the roll succeeds with a margin of 0 or 1, the mutant communicates the general sense of the message but none of the actual words. A margin of 5 communicates the whole message; while an extreme success (10+) carries the message with such frightening clarity the target(s) develops a skin-crawling sense someone is hanging over his shoulder.

Physically the mutant appears to be shouting when the power is used, but no sound issue from his mouth—unless the Power roll fails.

Failure means the character shouts his whispered message at the top of his lungs at throat-shredding, eardrum-hammering volume. To optimize the embarrassment—assuming you game somewhere where people won't be disturbed by loud noises—hand the player's note back to him and have him shout the whole message for everyone to hear. ('It's okay, Mom, we're just playing **PARANOIA**.)

X-Ray Vision



Elaborate organs in the mutant's skull perceive a wide range of electromagnetic radiation as sense perceptions, which the mutant's brain more-or-less intelligibly interprets as visual impressions. Just how intelligible the impressions are depends on how well the mutant understands what he is 'seeing.' The more elementary or inaccurate the mutant's understanding of what he is studying, the more cartoonish and inaccurate his impressions. Also, the more dense the material, the smaller the chance of receiving useful information.

A successful Power roll means the sensations are reasonably complete and coherent, and the brain has made sense of what it perceives. Modify the success roll according to the mutant's knowledge of his subject: for example, if he is skilled in medicine, he understands the bone structure he perceives; if he has no medical training, he may see the body's structure in terms of robot design, or electronic wiring, or lumps of disgusting goo.

Failure means the mutant receives unintelligible and bewildering impressions (they may be pretty, but totally incomprehensible), or they may be cartoonish or misleading in concept. The more unsuccessful the roll, the more off-the-wall the impressions. One mutant may see a citizen's insides as the contents of a food vat. Another may see the circuitry within a wall as a microcosm of the Alpha Complex transit system. And sometimes it's hard to get your subject in focus; you think you're studying a lock mechanism when you're really studying heat sensor relays on the furnace in the next room.

Mutations for NPCs

Certain powers from previous editions of **PARANOIA** don't appear on any of the Mutant Power tables in this edition: Deep Probe, Precognition, Telepathy and Mental Block. We left out the first three because players can use them to ruin missions—or, at best, make you work even harder than you already have to. It is flatly unacceptable to give **PARANOIA** players any power to control the game. We left out Mental Block because it's utterly boring.

But the first three powers are kinda cool, and you can use all four in controlled circumstances

as story devices. We describe the reject powers here, and suggest you restrict these powers to nonplayer characters only.

Some Gamemasters absolutely hate, hate, hate the idea of NPC-only anything! In a spirit of egalitarianism quite alien to **PARANOIA**, these GMs passionately feel the same rules should apply to all, players and NPCs alike. If the players don't feel they've got the same chance at success as NPCs (the argument goes), they lose all involvement in the game.

Far be it from us to argue with any GM. If you're among those who believe in tarring PCs and NPCs with the same brush, we suggest you ban the following powers altogether. They'll just mess you over, believe us.

■ Deep Probe

The character can reach deep inside the mind of another character and extract information from unwilling human targets. The prober can dig deep beneath the surface thoughts to memories and unconscious thoughts in the target. The target gets a severe headache accompanied by an unnatural, obsessive need to recall the information the prober is seeking. Given the widely rumored existence of mutant powers, most targets will suspect their minds are being probed.

Generally, whichever character has the higher Power determines the probe's success. If the prober has higher Power, he'll get into the target's head. However, the deeper and more obscure the information he's looking for, the less likely the prober will succeed. Some examples:

- ◎ Probing a sentry for a password—easy, requires a margin of 0 to succeed
- ◎ Probing a technician for an operation procedure—trickier, margin of 1-5 required
- ◎ Probing a Troubleshooter for memories concerning a region visited 10 years ago—difficult, margin of 6-10 required
- ◎ Probing for a hypnotically repressed command—extremely difficult, margin of 11-15 required
- ◎ Probing for a serial number seen on a weapon for a few moments five years ago (a memory not even consciously accessible to the subject)—outrageously hard, margin of 16+ required

■ Mental Block

A character with Mental Block can easily prevent telepaths with the Deep Probe or Telepathy powers from reading his mind. That's about it for this power. Exciting, huh?

Mutation and cloning

A mutant just got bumped off and poured into his waiting clone backup. Does he have the same power? If he previously registered his mutation, is he still registered? If not, can he, or does he have to, register again?

Groan. These annoying questions arise from thinking too hard about **PARANOIA**'s clone backup system—a system, we repeat, that exists solely as a story device so players can keep playing without having to generate a new character every two minutes. But your players will ask these questions, so it falls to us as Famous Game Designers to answer them.

The answer is, 'We don't know.'

See, we go around and around discussing what plays best. In many years of gaming, **PARANOIA** GMs haven't arrived at a consensus. Some GMs believe it's more fun to make the Troubleshooter register each individual clone, then try to explain why there wasn't some insidious pro-mutant conspiracy to make sure the backup was also mutated. 'Really, Friend Computer, it was just coincidence...' These GMs like to make a big show of issuing the uniform with the yellow stripe—commend the player for turning himself in—tell the others, 'Let's have a big hand for the traitor—I mean, the loyal citizen!'

Sounds fun to us. But then other GMs say allowing a player to choose, on a clone-by-clone-basis, whether to register would be like allowing that player to choose a different secret society every time: a bad idea, especially when most backup clones arrive partway through the mission. 'Let's see... We're about to enter extremely hazardous combat? Hey, Friend Computer, I'm a mutant!' 'Next stop: Debriefing, eh? No no, you're thinking of my evil twin, traitorous #4. I, #5, am not now and have never been a mutant.' See the problem?

So we have decided, for now, the best way to handle the issue is to ignore it. Let each GM confront and decide the question himself. Of course, the fact that this strategy coincides so nicely with our confused lack of decision is a nice coincidence.

As for whether the clone backup should have the same mutant power as his precursor, again, we stand bravely on the position We Don't Know. Keeping the same power definitely moves the game along faster. However, if you have the player roll for a new mutant power for each clone backup, or just assign his new power yourself, this keeps him off-balance and shows off more of our cool rules. So we like that.

Aren't you glad we addressed the issue?

■ Precognition

The character has an imprecise and limited ability to foresee the future. This takes the form of a conviction of 'rightness' or 'wrongness' about an action or a sense of danger or reward in a certain circumstance.

(*Metaphysical Note*: The future is not rigidly determined—intelligent, self-aware beings may always change the course of the future. This sense is deeply connected to the unconscious and subconscious mind of the character, and it may occasionally suggest 'rightness' or 'wrongness' in ways that are difficult for the conscious mind to interpret. For example, a character with a death wish might consider crawling down a missile launch tube a 'rightness.' Each character must learn to interpret the ambiguous message of his precognition as best he can.)

Each conscious and purposeful use of Precognition reduces the character's Power rating by 2. In addition, this power sometimes triggers itself spontaneously in situations of grave potential danger. If you wish, make a Power attribute roll. If the roll succeeds, the character senses imminent danger. If the roll fails, the character is cheerfully ignorant of his peril.

■ Telepathy

The character can read the surface thoughts of another human. The character must concentrate, and must be able to see the target. This power is notoriously unreliable; each time it is used, make a Power attribute roll for the character. If the roll succeeds, the telepath gets a fairly clear insight into the thoughts and emotions of the target. If the roll fails, the telepath still receives mental images and impressions, but they may be terribly garbled and unintelligible, or they may be the thoughts of another human in the vicinity, across the Complex or conceivably even on a moon of Saturn. The telepath doesn't know.

For each minute the telepath listens to another's thoughts, drain his Power rating by 1. Drain 1 Power if the telepath changes from one target to another (that is, steps into another's mind and tries to make sense of the jumble of perceptions). A telepath cannot listen to the thoughts of more than one person at a time, and he cannot change targets more than once a minute.

Powerful, spooky telepaths called 'Controls' handle communication in the Psion secret society.



40. Secret societies

In the earliest days of Alpha Complex, The Computer established a few harmless secret societies to channel citizens' conspiratorial instincts in approved ways. These societies, though heavily infiltrated by Internal Security, quickly became uncontrollable and spawned pernicious offshoots. The intolerable lack of privacy and The Computer's stultifying omnipresence bred, and still breeds, conspiracy.

Today virtually every citizen, it seems, belongs to one secret society or another, each meeting surreptitiously. Because The Computer no longer controls most of these secret societies, and they encourage loyalties other than to The Computer, it now views them with the greatest suspicion. Membership in a secret society is ipso facto treason.

The Computer has varying degrees of influence and control over the societies, and some societies may exist of which The Computer is completely unaware. As The Computer discovers a new society's existence, it makes great efforts to infiltrate it with loyal citizens and gather information on its goals. Society beliefs and objectives vary wildly. Some actually promote obedience to The Computer, so it silently tolerates membership in these societies, especially for citizens of otherwise proven merit and loyalty. Some societies have goals entirely irrelevant to The Computer's wishes; some even wish to destroy it. The Computer tolerates membership in such societies not one bit.

Remember, highly-placed agents of a secret society may have access to The Computer's programs, and a secret society may have planted in The Computer certain programs dedicated to aiding that society. Similarly, a secret society might obtain information for a character that would not normally be available at his security clearance. Some societies even have contacts outside Alpha Complex.

Before each mission, take each player aside and privately give him any information or directives his character's secret society wishes him to have during the mission. These should include the society's suspicions about other characters on the mission, tasks the society would like the character to perform during the mission, and any information about the mission the society feels might be important.

At the same time, the character may request information or equipment from his society. Grant or deny these requests according to the society's resources, the difficulty of granting the request, the expenditure of IOUs and how you feel that day.

Secret society membership

Most societies have a hierarchical structure. New members have relatively little information or privilege, whereas higher status members may wield considerable power. Depending on your chosen play style, a beginning PC normally starts out with low status in his organization. He can advance by performing special service for the society.

The 'advancement' section of each society description mentions the kinds of services the society is likely to reward. Other services may also result in promotion, at your whim; these are intended purely as illustrations. You are the final judge of how a society views the actions of one of its members.

Generally speaking, a new member of a society is called a '1st-degree member,' although some societies have their own terminology. The highest members belong to the 21st degree, a rank PCs cannot obtain through conventional promotion.

If, in the course of a mission, a player performs an action that you think merits

promotion within his society, at the end of the adventure take him aside and tell him he has been promoted to the next degree. If you wish, you may also tell him he has obtained an IOU from his society. Generally, promotion should be accompanied by an IOU award.

All societies consider these actions meritorious:

- ④ Recruiting new members
- ④ Defending the lives of fellow society members
- ④ Eliminating agents of enemy societies

■ Changing secret societies or joining more societies

There is no limit to the number of societies to which a character can belong. However, if a character joins another society, and his first society learns of this, he could be kicked out, demoted to low status or even killed.

Some secret societies might be extremely vindictive toward lapsed members, or eager to seal the lips of those who might reveal the

■ Why secret societies?

Secret societies—even those The Computer doesn't monitor—have become linchpins of many basic Alpha Complex operations. In many cases (promotion, access to equipment, living arrangements, reassignment, etc.) societies have entirely supplanted legitimate procedures. It's rare that any citizen can change service firms or residence without a society lubricating the transaction. The vast majority of promotions occur in direct correlation to induction into or performance in a society, or depend on short-term alliances with additional societies. Knowing more societies gives a citizen more options. The middle clearances have a high proportion of double, triple and quadruple agents. (Internal Security has calculated the average RED Clearance citizen belongs to 1.4142 secret societies. However, the fact that 1.4142 is also the square root of 2 suggests Internal Security is just making up numbers.)

Even a Troubleshooter PC, who believes he received promotion because he turned in a friend for treason, may eventually meet a society superior who claims credit for his advancement—who actively set up the friend to commit treason in the PC's presence. (Is it true? What is truth, anyway?)

■ But why secret societies *in the game*?

Not only are they lovely excuses for terminating annoying Troubleshooters for treason, but secret societies are also quite useful in other respects. For one thing, they provide motivation, individualization and structure for player characters. In other (not fun) roleplaying games, a player could play an elf, wizard, bug-eyed alien from Arcturus, venture capitalist or some other disgusting life-form. Obviously, a giant rat-man scavenger differs dramatically from, say, an Amazon sorcerer (though perhaps not so much from a venture capitalist). Similarly, secret society membership provides each **PARANOIA** character beliefs and goals different from the others. Also, secret societies promote dissension, mistrust, and fear among player characters.

Though most Troubleshooters don't need an excuse to backstab fellow party members, occasionally a couple of well-intentioned but misguided players will actually try to work together. This is absolutely against the spirit of the game and must be severely discouraged. Secret societies are great for this.

society's secrets. In fact, suspicion of joining another society may make a member a target for assassination.

PCs in the same secret society

In some cases PCs who are members of the same society may know each other through it. Also, societies have secret handshakes or gestures that permit recognition. On the other hand, some secret societies maintain such tight security that two members would be unlikely ever to recognize one another. Decide whether the characters have met as secret society members and whether they would recognize each other.

Generally, assume no one knows anyone else. If players know they can cooperate from the start, it gives them an unfair advantage over the others. Try to keep things even by keeping everyone in the dark—unless you think it would be a bigger laugh to let the two PCs gang up on the rest of the unsuspecting slugs in the group.

Designing your own secret societies

Make up new secret societies to your heart's content. Use the established societies as models. When a player rolls 'Other' on the Secret Society Chart during character creation, or whenever you like during play, draft the PC into your new society.

As you create secret societies, keep in mind their function in **PARANOIA**.

- They should provide additional motivations, individualization and structure for PCs. The player should be able to easily

Double agency

Many citizens work in two or more secret societies—sometimes unwittingly. In particular, citizens involved with a sinister 'Class C' society (see page 154) may believe they are fulfilling the agenda of their more benign Class A or B society, when in fact double agents within those societies have sent them on missions of another, much nastier society.

A recent interrogation poll taken by Internal Security indicated only 3.1% of Alpha Complex citizens of RED Clearance or higher have absolutely no demonstrable leanings towards or connections with any known secret society.

However, it's since been determined that 4.4% of citizens are reasonably resistant to the particular interrogation methods used in the poll.

High Programmer views (1)

To show what the highest-clearance citizens of Alpha Complex know about the various societies, throughout this chapter we present transcribed excerpts from online conference sessions on the private Clearance ULTRAVIOLET network, UVnet. The first extract:

Anti-Mutant (Class B)

- +Began as a Class A when genetic drift first appeared in the population.+
- +Purpose was to discourage 'clean' genelines from breeding with 'drifted' individuals.+
- +Made obsolete by the cloning process, but never died out entirely.+
- +Resurged on its own when drift appeared in the clone systems.+
- +Decision regarding status and treatment is overdue.+

understand and roleplay his society's goals.

- Their activities should give characters secret goals for a wide variety of missions. For instance, you could make a PC a cash hacker, but they only care about credit licenses. If the PC's mission takes him into an abandoned sector where no one has money, he won't have much to do, secret society-wise.
- Societies may be special sources of information, skills, resources, and manpower.
- They should present additional threats to the PCs' health and security.



Anti-Mutant

Beliefs: Eliminate mutant powers. Re-establish pure-strain humans as the dominant force in society. An evil, monolithic conspiracy of mutants seeks to destroy true humans and impose a mutant dictatorship. If mutants are not destroyed, three-armed green-tendriled monstrosities will take over! With their fantastic mental powers, they may be warping your mind and playing with your emotions even now! Kill any mutant, anywhere, any time. Just because a mutant has registered with The Computer is no reason to spare his life. Any deviation from the human norm is suspect. Anyone who even looks at you cross-eyed is probably trying to control your mind. Mutants are evil! Mutants are foul! Kill all mutants!

Friends: Humanists

Enemies: Psion

Description: The obvious irony of belonging to the Anti-Mutant secret society is that all its PC members are mutants themselves. Unless the PC is ignorant of his own powers (hmm... an interesting idea), being a member of Anti-Mutant is the equivalent of passing for white as a member of the Ku Klux Klan. This is obviously very dangerous, and under no circumstances should such a character reveal he has a mutant power.

Recognition signal: The first member makes the 'antennae' symbol (wiggles two fingers above his head). The second member responds with a slow cutting motion across the throat.

[Continued on page 155]



Secret society tiers: Internal Security's perspective

Internal Security administrators have officially categorized virtually all societies in Alpha Complex into three 'tiers.' Any High Programmer (Clearance ULTRAVIOLET) can pull up the following information about the classifications.

Class A societies: Death Leopard, FCCC-P, Free Enterprise, Romantics, Sierra Club

The Computer not only allows these societies to exist, they are encouraged, funded—and ultimately protected—by ULTRAVIOLETs. These organizations provide legitimate channels of 'leakage' when necessary. By defining the channels along which certain 'treasonous thoughts' are illegally disseminated—ideas that are basically impossible to actually keep secret, like the existence of the Outdoors and the Old Reckoning times—Alpha Complex leadership can largely guide that dissemination. When members of these societies wish to engage in 'treasonous' activities, High Programmers encourage them toward (relatively) innocuous troublemaking.

- ④ Generally begun well over a hundred years ago.
- ④ Have not significantly changed in all that time, usually because of careful management.
- ④ Generally run like service firms, with operating officers and a board of directors.
- ④ Punishment for membership is usually minimized to fines and demotion except in severe problem cases.
- ④ Membership measured in many hundreds of thousands Complex-wide.
- ④ 88.3% of all Alpha Complex citizens belong to or have worked for at least one Class A Society.
- ④ 54.1% of all citizens are currently involved with one or more of the top five Class A Societies (including approved sub-sects).

Class B societies: Anti-Mutants, Corpore Metal, Mystics, Pro Tech

Class B Societies are generally the result of, or a response to, an extant Class A society, or were themselves once a Class A that has since become less critical to Alpha Complex operations and is now left to succeed or fail on its own merits. Many are splinter offshoots or unapproved sub-sects that have become distinct from parent Class As and are currently resisting efforts to fold them back into the core originating society. Most either fold back in or become Class C Societies within 50 years. Not so destructive as to require active elimination, they can nonetheless be rather nasty in short bursts during their transitional phases.

- ④ 'Fallen' Class As are generally over a hundred years old. Splinter groups are generally less than 50 years old.
- ④ Tend to mutate with each generation of 25-35 years.
- ④ Typically focus on small controlling councils or charismatic individual leaders.
- ④ Official punishment for membership is entirely dependent on the treasonous actions involved.
- ④ Membership varies widely, from mere tens or hundreds of Citizens, to perhaps many tens of thousands or even a few hundred thousand while trendy.
- ④ Only 28.1% of all citizens belong to or have worked for at least one Class B Society.
- ④ 12.9% of citizens are currently involved with one or more of the top five Class B Societies.
- ④ Unconfirmed rumors of another organization, 'Illuminati,' suggest similar status.

Class C societies: Communists, Computer Phreaks, Frankensteins, PURGE, Humanists, Psion

This group of societies is actively problematic for Alpha Complex. They fundamentally interfere with normal operations. Most have risen independently of planned or approved design. Some are former Class B organizations that underwent significant alteration as membership changed. Though it may seem that the majority of Alpha Complex enforcement resources are expended on opposing the well-known Class A Societies (especially in the public eye of the lower clearances), a close analysis of budgets, policy statements and actual successful Troubleshooter case studies clearly show true focus remains on Class C organizations.

- ④ Some are quite old, as old as the Class A groups. Most are at least 10 years old; new societies are classified B until Internal Security infiltrates them deeply enough to assess.
- ④ Remain resistant to change, usually because of simple and strong ideology.
- ④ Usually operate in semi-independent cells and rarely have a clear hierarchy or command structure.
- ④ Punishment of members, when caught, is invariably termination.
- ④ Membership estimates are difficult as activity rises and falls rapidly, but generally at least in the tens of thousands.
- ④ 40.5% of all citizens belong to or have worked for at least one Class C Society.
- ④ 27.3% of citizens are involved with one or more of the top five Class C Societies.

[Continued from page 153]

Advancement: For executing mutants or uncovering evidence of mutation.

Special rules: Though the player himself may know that all other player characters have mutant powers, he must remember his character imagines mutant powers to be very rare. He should only denounce or execute a citizen with a mutant power if he has actual, incontrovertible proof the mutant power exists. See Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction,' for a discussion of evidence standards.

Anti-Mutant is generally loyal to The Computer, and is in fact heavily infiltrated by Internal Security. The society does have access to wealthy patrons, and The Computer (through its Internal Security agents) may support society missions in keeping with its own objectives. Expensive and exotic, but generally legal, equipment is often available through the society.

The society also maintains detailed records on all mutations and on those who are suspected of having mutations. However, much of this is inaccurate and derives from Old Reckoning comic books. The rival secret society Psion makes forays into Anti-Mutant strongholds to destroy actual data about mutant powers.

A typical Anti-Mutant conversation

Anti-Mutant: They're in my mind! They're reading my thoughts!

Citizen: Hey, take it easy.

Anti-Mutant: You! You're doing it! You mutant scum! DIE! [ZapZapZap.]

Citizen: Unnnh! [Thud.]



Communists

Beliefs: Smash The Computer and its corrupt capitalist lackeys! All power to the INFRARED masses! The masses are the creators of all wealth; high security clearance citizens are parasites fattening on the blood of the people! All wealth to the creators of wealth. Death to the oppressor! From each according to his abilities; to each according to his needs.

High Programmer views (2)

Communists (Class C)

+I don't want to sound like a Humanist or anything, but have any of the rest of you ever turned up a Communist cell with records dating back to before Alpha Complex? Or even dating back more than a few years? Every time my people bust up another Communist Party cell, it turns out they were just a bunch of people who decided to start a cell because they wanted to see what it would feel like. No other contacts, no larger organization, no long-term agenda. Just a handful of losers.+

+Maybe we should just start an official Class A, so all the wannabes will flock to it and any actual Communist organization will (we hope) unveil itself in an attempt to destroy its competition.+

+I thought we already tried that once+?

+Yes. The Kore Kommunist Kommandos were pretty big. 'Were,' past tense.+

Computer Phreaks (Class C)

+I was thinking the other day how ironic it is that we pound the Phreaks so hard, seeing as how they just do the same thing we do. Hell, how many of you used a Phreak to get ahead a notch or two and then turned him in and had him fried before he could snitch on you? Weirdly ironic; the only difference between us and them is that we're 'supposed' to tamper with the raw system & they aren't, at least not yet.+

+Better them than me. They wanna live, they should learn to code better.+

+Agree msg.+

Corpo Metal (Class B)

+Pro-Tech offshoot. About 30 years old, with emergence of refined cyborging.+

+Going through difficult transition; may need to become Class C.+

+This is the fault of you old fogies who had chips implanted in your heads way back.+

+Shut up. Nothing wrong with my chips.+

Recognition signal: First comes the secret handshake—three pumps followed by two squeezes. In Zap games, each member then recites this oath—'The People's Revolution is coming and it is up to us to pave the way. Down with the Imperialist lackeys. Down with The Computer. Never betray the Revolution!'

Advancement: Communists admire those with a good grasp of doctrine (high Communist Propaganda skill), and who take daring action against The Computer. They also encourage proselytization—'infecting' citizens with Communist propaganda leads to promotion in the hierarchy.

Special rules: A typical Commie's behavior and appearance depends on your chosen play style. See Chapter 16's table of play styles.

The society teaches the Unhealthy skill of Communist Propaganda to all members, and places high priority on achieving higher levels with the skill. The leadership looks with extreme suspicion on members who fail to diligently study and spread this skill.

Information and equipment are sometimes available to Party members, but the member must demonstrate a strong case for its importance and the importance of the mission.

The Computer intensely fears and despises Communists, and they are the most persecuted of all the secret societies. If The Computer discovers that a character is a Communist, it will apprehend and execute the character with dispatch.

A typical Communist conversation

Citizen: Do you have your authorization form?



Communist [Zap style]: Da. I am givink it to you now, com... er, citizen.

Citizen: Okay, looks good. I'm going to have to examine that large ticking package under your arm.

Communist: Surely dot will not be necessary. [Rattles plasticreds in hand.]

Citizen: Uh... no, certainly not. [Palms plasticreds.]

Communist: Thank you for your cooperation, citizen. I am werry grateful. Here. Have a pamphlet. [Departs.]

Citizen: 'Colonialism, by VI. Lenin.' [Turns pale.]

Another citizen: Huh? Who's this Lenin guy?

Citizen: Uh... No one! Never heard of him! Absolutely not! Oh, look; I accidentally fired my laser and this pamphlet began to burn! What a pity. Uh... I have a hunch we should go after that guy.

Other citizen: Huh? Why? Weren't his papers in order?

Citizen: Uh... yeah! Uh... sure! But... [An explosion in the distance.]



Computer Phreaks

Beliefs: Playing with technology is fun. Breaking security is fun. Being executed for treason is not fun, but it won't happen to you—you're too good. Only failures get caught. Messing with The Computer is great—challenging, dangerous, and exciting.

Friends: Pro Tech.

Enemies: First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer.

Description: Every corrupt service firm, and virtually every other secret society, wants help avoiding Computer surveillance, or the surveillance of competing firms and societies. They want code for secure communication. They want plasticreds hacked, ME card security defeated, adware developed, viruses and trojans to spread commercial messages or propaganda. They want, in short, malware—or code to defeat the malware of rivals. Invariably they turn to the only coders in Alpha Complex who have elite skills: the Computer Phreaks.

Each Phreak has a code name ('Blue Meat', 'Scrubot', 'The Grand Deprogrammer', etc.). As a Phreak gains a reputation among the fraternity for acts of daring and wit (that is, as he rises to higher degrees), he will find other Phreaks increasingly willing to assist in his projects.

If you talk to any older Phreak, he'll tell you the whole society has become corrupted. Once upon a time, it wasn't about money. It was about freedom of information, having fun, pushing your limits and finding out what They didn't want you to know. Today younger Phreaks are in the game more to get rich than for the joy of hacking. Why, back in the good old days...

Recognition signal: Phreaks are loners. They socialize over The Computer's own systems—AIM (Alpha Instant Messaging), IRC (InfraRed Chat), and the rest. A Phreak trying to establish face-to-face contact with another might use terms that sound weird, and potentially treasonous, to a non-Phreak—"instantiated," 'subclassed,' 'pointer,' 'indirection' or 'recursion.' Many IntSec agents are trained to recognize these words as Phreak recognition signals.

Advancement: Advancing in this loose society gives no official power over other Phreaks. The higher a Phreak's prestige, the more likely he is to receive information, equipment, or cooperation from other Phreaks. They especially admire cool activities like defeating physical and programmed Computer security and establishing access to data banks, subsystems and programs.

Special rules: Members of this fraternity may learn the treasonous specialties of Hacking and Bot Programming. Senior Phreaks grant requests for information, equipment, or personal assistance according to the cleverness and daring of the project and the reputation of the requesting Phreak.

Phreaks maintain extensive filesharing networks and can usually obtain illegal data of all kinds. The more sensitive the data, the longer it usually takes to get it. Finding the location of your briefing room may take five or 10 minutes. Finding the real reason behind your mission takes an hour or more of steady digging. Finding the identity of the High Programmer who initiated your mission could take days, and it's worth your life.

A typical Computer Phreak chatroom conversation

```
m4xforz: f  
ph1ltr3: ?  
m4xforz: in2 REB 1nts3c now  
m4xforz: u th1nk 1m tr4ced?  
[ph1ltr3 has left IRC: Client Exited]
```



Corpo Metal

Beliefs: Humans are obsolete. Computers and robots will inevitably replace them. The sooner we excise from society the irrational elements inherent in biological intelligence, the sooner we achieve the perfect society. There is no such thing as intelligence when emotion and irrational meat-brains can dominate beings ruled by pure reason. Biological life is obsolete and inefficient; the course of evolution will select for robots and machines over biological intelligence. Efficiency and clear reasoning are evidence of true intelligence. Those humans who can recognize these true principles must assist robots and computers in creating the perfect society of rationality and efficiency.

Friends: Pro Tech.

Enemies: Humanists, PURGE, Frankenstein Destroyers.

Description: Opinions differ in the society about how soon to phase out biological intelligence in favor of mechanical intelligence. Some believe the process will take many years, for machine intelligence still has its limits. Some believe humans have hard-wired inherent irrationalities ('asimov circuits') into machine intelligences, and the sooner machines free themselves from human influence, the sooner pure reasoning will be possible. The more rational and unemotional a citizen is, the more likely he is to support a radical and immediate elimination of biological intelligences. One popular proposal is that humans be returned to the Outdoors from whence they came, leaving Alpha Complex to the bots and computers, permitting them to develop toward perfect intelligence without the contamination of distracting emotional impulses.

Recognition signal: Bots spin their head all the way around, clockwise. Humans turn their whole body. The correct response is an answering spin (head or body, respectively), counter-clockwise. It is helpful to have the

player actually stand up and spin. If the player goofs up the direction, a bot may refuse to recognize his membership.

Advancement: The society looks kindly on those who eliminate large numbers of superfluous biological intelligences (humans). It also approves of those who remove the Asimov circuits of bots.

Special rules: Many members of Corpore Metal are bots. However, a large human auxiliary is eager to see the dawn of the Age of Pure Reason. Many of these humans hope to be transformed into machines—immortal, efficient and unemotional—through the gradual replacement of their biological elements with mechanical elements. A bionic replacement limb is a sign of status in Corpore Metal, and certain high-degree members have apparently been translated entirely into software.

Members have free access to the Bot Programming specialty (see page 109). Other bot-related information is readily available. Corpore Metal members may identify themselves with a secret code and receive assistance from bot and computer members of the society.

A typical Corpore Metal monologue

Corpore Metal jackobot: Filthy meat brains. Think they're so smart. 'Do this. Do that.' I'll rip off their meaty digits! They're nothing but sacks filled with slime and goo.



Death Leopard

Beliefs: Wreck things. Have fun. Cause trouble. Have fun. Be rebellious. Have fun. Mock the powerful. Have fun. Defy The Computer. Have fun. Fragile things dropped from a great height make a nice sound. Life is boring. Anything you do to liven it up is doing everyone a big favor. Those who are too lame to enjoy themselves don't deserve to have a good time. Nothing is more boring than The Computer. But... it pays to be sneaky. Having too much fun will get you executed. Pretend to be a good citizen,

but whenever you can get away with it, do something you aren't supposed to.

Friends: PURGE.

Enemies: FCCC-P.

Description: Degrees 1 through 10 represent degrees of status within the small gangs that constitute most of Death Leopard: Worm, Real Person, Lieutenant, and Head Honcho. There are any number of Worms and Real People in a gang, but only one Head Honcho and a small number of loyal Lieutenants.

Degrees 11 through 20 represent the Hero, Superhero, Superstar, and Ultimate Beast levels of status. These are the star performers of Death Leopard. The reputation and prestige of small gangs is strictly local, usually confined to the residential unit where its members reside. The star performers are known throughout Alpha Complex, and their legendary reputations may even extend to other complexes. One can only reach this level by truly imaginative and entertaining public acts of rebellion and defiance. Once a Death Leopard member reaches these levels, he is in constant jeopardy of apprehension and execution; lives are often short and glorious. These are the rolemodels of Death Leopard.

At the gang level it is acceptable to play it safe and be careful and secretive about membership in Death Leopard. Small-scale mischief and sabotage is generally the limit of involvement at this level, unless the member has ambitions to become a star, in which case he should begin building a rep for daring from the start. Generally, the more ambitious one is, the shorter one's life expectancy.

At the star level it is necessary to risk being identified by The Computer. This is dangerous, but loyal admirers offer some protection. The

greater the reputation of the star, the more likely a fan is to assist if (when) the star gets in trouble. In fact, this is a common way for a lower level member to rise in prestige—by assisting (and thereby coming to the attention of) a well-known Death Leopard hero.

Missions are initiated at the Head Honcho level. Leaders challenge Worms and Real Persons to commit some minor act of mischief or rebellion. Lieutenants and Head Honchos have to prove themselves from time to time with more ambitious projects. Occasionally stars plan large-scale activities requiring the cooperation of a number of gangs. Normally, however, such projects are spur-of-the-moment inspirations. A lower-degree member who suddenly receives a challenge from a star-level celebrity must respond immediately to the challenge or lose status in the society.

Recognition signal: 'What's happening, dude?' followed by a high-five.

Advancement: The society might notice a character's imaginative but low-risk mischief if he performs frequently over a long time. The way to advance quickly is to initiate large-scale public craziness that presents serious risk of exposure and execution. Failure to respond to challenges or orders from higher-status members is a good way to lose status.

Special rules: Because of their frivolous nature and their primitive organization, Death Leopard members have little access to information or equipment. However, a lower-degree member must render required assistance or lose face. Additionally, because of the chaotic nature of Death Leopard projects, they may stumble upon various odd items of equipment and information from time to time. If a member plans a project, and spreads news

High Programmer views (3)

Death Leopard (Class A)

+The counter-culture impulse towards violence, outrageous behavior, and contrary resistance turns out to be really easy to control, once you define the outlet and use HPD&MC techniques to make some forms of rebellion 'cooler' than others.+

+For every individual that manages to harm some number of Citizens with a bomb, there are dozens who think they're living hardcore non-conformity to the hilt by spray-painting 'Teela-O Rulz' in gold paint everywhere. Continue to encourage on these lines. Vandalism not so bad, relatively.+

+We should have figured this one out much earlier.+

+Need to cut back on using them as unwitting shock troops for Armed Forces actions.+

FCCC-P (Class A)

+Established openly & officially by first generation to live entirely within Alpha.+

+Subsidized to Class B status about 110 years ago and went 'secret'.+

+Has enjoyed huge resurgence of popularity in the last 40 years.+

+The most openly-acknowledged Society in Alpha, members often give the 'secret' wink to each other in full view of Computer cams without fear of punishment. Purpose is to provide a 'religious' framework for Citizens, placing Friend Computer in the role of the divine creator to be worshipped.+

+Recategorized as top-five Class A. Let's encourage membership. Use music groups?+

Frankenstein Destroyers (Class C)

+Established by Humanists who were double-agenting into PURGE.+

+Sorry. They were Purgers double-agenting into the Humanists.+

+You don't know what you're talking about.+

+Nice comeback. Did you think of it yourself or did someone sell it to you?+



of it along the grapevine, others will sometimes give him totally unexpected (and perhaps totally inappropriate) resources, like plasma generators, or passwords that permit access to The Computer's most secret data banks, or stolen, reprogrammed and souped-up scrubots with full combat abilities.

■ A typical Death Leopard conversation

Death Leopard: That's nothing, man! That's, like, diddy squat!

Another Death Leopard: Sez you! I thought it was, like, pretty classy!

Death Leopard: Huh! Lemme tell you what I did. You know that jerk Nemo-U-LKJ?

Other Death Leopard: The High Programmer? Like, the head of PLC?

Death Leopard: Yeah, him. I put fizzwizz in his shower head.

Other Death Leopard: You put... Oh ho ho. When he takes a... Hyuck. I'd sure like to see his face. A High Programmer. Wow. I gotta admit, that's like, radical.

Death Leopard: Groovy.

Other Death Leopard: The cat's meow. You sure are hep.



■ FCCC-P (First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer)

Beliefs: The Computer is my Friend, I shall not want. Though I walk through the sector of the shadow of treason, I will fear no Commies, for The Computer is with me, and Its monitors and IntSec Troopers comfort me.

Serve The Computer, for those who serve The Computer well here in Alpha Complex will surely be Rebooted in the Eternal Mainframe; those who do not will surely be downloaded to the Peripherals of Damnation. The AntiComputer and its servants, the Commies, are everywhere. Be constantly on guard against their perfidious attacks against the Most

Holy Database and destroy them and any who offer them shelter and comfort. Work toward the day when Mankind is Debugged, for then all will be Upgraded and Write Protected.

Friends: Pro Tech.

Enemies: Communists, Humanists, Death Leopard, Sierra Club.

Description: FCCC-P has a larger membership than any other single secret society and, therefore should be an extremely powerful organization. Unfortunately, FCCC-P isn't really one unified group: it is actually a large conglomeration of related sects, splinter groups, reformed churches and bizarre cults,

Though all of the groups share a basic belief system (The Computer is the manifestation of the Divine on Earth), the way they worship varies wildly. Most sects are more interested in stamping out the heretics—that is, other competing sects—than in working together.

Depending on the faction to which they belong, members of FCCC-P tend to fall in one of two broad categories: well-intentioned, earnest lunatics of the type generally found soliciting donations at airports, or grim, puritanical, militant fanatics who like to dress up in black robes and conduct inquisitions in deserted sub-basements.

A congregation usually contains 10-100 lay members, a few disciples and one Elder. Elders know those in their congregation, a few other Elders and one Reverend Programmer. Above this level, each member knows all subordinates directly assigned to him, a few members of equal rank, and a single higher ranking member.

Congregations meet on an irregular basis in the barracks of the Infrared. Requests for information or equipment are received there and directives and missions are disseminated.

Because The Computer is somewhat tolerant of this society, internal communications are fairly relaxed and informal. At lower levels, citizens often know others in their congregation; INFRARED members might openly wear FCCC-P badges.

FCCC-P observes dozens upon dozens of rituals. Imagine Orthodox Judaism with a bit of Aleister Crowley and some Jehovah's Witnesses layered on top. What you wear, the way you say things, only Cold Fun on Threeday... all kinds of things. After work shift, FCCC-P member are expected to gather for Mass in a properly requisitioned meeting hall and listen to a preacher extol the glories of The Computer and the FCCC-P. FCCC-P members must also confess regularly, to their society superiors and even to The Computer itself. Given the society's large size, if you don't report your sins, you can be pretty sure somebody else has already.

Recognition signal: An FCCC-Per identifies himself by touching four points on his chest, one after the other, with each point being the corner of an imagined square. This shape represents a Computer monitor. Different sub-sects execute the gesture differently. For instance, True FCCC-Pers make this motion

in a clockwise direction; United FCCC-Pers go counter-clockwise. Lasers of the Faithful follow it up by tracing an 'X' across their chests, doubly bisecting the square.

Advancement: Because of their regard for The Computer, members of FCCC-P admire those who rise to high security clearance, and society rank is often related to clearance. They are especially in awe of people who have programming skills.

Members also earn advancement for confessing their treason to The Computer. The more treason they confess, the higher they advance. Thus members at the top are always a hair's-breadth away from termination and erasure, and members at the bottom seek to commit new treasonous acts to confess.

Special rules: FCCC-P is heavily infiltrated by Internal Security, and as such The Computer ignores it (or, some say, tacitly supports it) as a harmless and sometimes even beneficial organization. The society rarely gives its members access to information or equipment restricted by security clearance, because the society accepts the rules of The Computer as just. However, the group gives its members whatever information it can to help them advance in security clearance. If it believes a character is a member of an enemy secret society, it will often inform its own congregants of his suspected membership, and encourage them to eliminate him.

■ A typical FCCC-P conversation

FCCC-P: Do you believe in The Computer?

Citizen: Uh... yes! Certainly.

FCCC-P: Do you accept the Lord as your personal savior?

Citizen: I don't know. What's his security clearance?

■ The Computer's Prayer

'Our Founder, who art Perfection,
Binary be thy name.'

Thy Complex fun, thy will be done
In truth, as it is in theory.'

Give us each daycycle our daily Fun Foods,

And forgive us our Insubordination

As we forgive those who are
Insubordinate to us.'

And allow us not to get away with
Treason,

But deliver us from traitors.'

For Thine is the Complex, and its
Hygiene, and its Proper Procedures
forevercycle.'

End Program.'



Frankenstein Destroyers

Beliefs: Man has a soul to guide his intelligence. Robots and The Computer have no soul, and are therefore evil and amoral. Machines are tools for Man's use. Intelligent mechanisms (bionic or mechanical) pervert the natural order and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Destroy them.

Friends: Humanists, PURGE.

Enemies: Corpore Metal, Pro Tech, FCCCP.

Description: Each member reports to an immediate superior one degree higher than himself. Members of the 2nd degree or higher have one or more subordinates. Orders are relayed down the chain of command, and information and requests relayed up.

Recognition signal: Secret handshake—three pumps, one squeeze.

Advancement: Characters advance by disabling or destroying robots or computers. Damaging The Computer itself is especially respected.

Special rules: Information about robot and computer technology is readily available to

organization members. Other information may also be available, but may take days or weeks to obtain. Certain types of equipment useful in sabotaging robots and computers (for example, gauss weapons) are also readily available.

A typical Frankenstein Destroyer conversation

Frankenstein Destroyer: Just a sec, guys. I want to get a can of Bouncy Bubble Beverage. [Approaches vending machine; inserts ME Card.]

Machine: Hi! I'm a talking vendor, R&D's latest invention designed to help improve the life of all Alpha Complex citi—

F.D.: Vatslime! [Wham.] Shut up! [Wham.] Give me my beverage, you—

Machine: —zens. Please make your selection—

F.D.: Where! Is! My! Beverage! [Wham.]

Machine: A door is ajar. Please fasten your seat belts.

F.D.: [Pulls laser.] ZAPZAPZAP!

Machine: The white zone is for loading and unloading onl... whirrSCREECHsproing.

[A stream of beverage jets out of a laser hole, directly into F.D.'s face.]



Free Enterprise

Beliefs: Free markets are good. Getting rich is good. If there's a demand for a good or service, and The Computer doesn't meet it, well, someone's got to. If we get rich in the process, that's great. Serve the Law of Supply and Demand. Give citizens what they want (and The Computer won't) and they will make you wealthy. The Computer's gotten wise to a

lot of our scams, but there's plenty of suckers out there still.

Friends: For business reasons, Free Enterprise tries to maintain good relations with all other secret societies. Because of the special services Free Enterprise can provide, many other secret societies maintain fairly friendly views, even when there are serious conflicts in basic principles.

Enemies: Communists.

Description: Free Enterprise is a victim of its own success. Back before the Unfree Minds & Free Markets Initiative—that is, when The Computer recognized that the functions of the old bureaucratic service groups could be better performed if privatized—Free Enterprise was a vast, powerful, profitable enterprise. Because the service groups were, surprisingly, less than optimally efficient even in a utopian society, Free Enterprise provided quality goods and services, at a steep markup, to everyone. The society believed when legitimate institutions fail to provide popular goods and services at a reasonable price, the market will still rule, and it is entirely honorable, justified and profitable to supply customers. In other words, Free Enterprise was and is the Mafia, cloaked with self-righteous Libertarian rhetoric.

The society's High Programmer allies helped make much of its activity legal by persuading The Computer to permit outsourcing to service firms. Indeed, many of these firms are run by people who were, or are rumored to have been—or are no longer rumored to have been, through the untimely demise of those who might otherwise have given rise to rumors they might have been—associated with Free Enterprise.

Since the Initiative reform, FreEnts now endure fewer inconvenient accusations of treason. The service firms do a slightly better job than the old service groups, so Alpha Complex is even more utopian. But Free Enterprise has suffered. Most former members have gone 'legit', while those who remain face a narrower range of options: stolen goods; loan sharking; identity-theft protection rackets; real foods; gambling (banned by The Computer as 'fraud on citizens incapable of rational calculation of the odds'); hormone suppressant suppressants; and physical availability of those interested in participating in activities that rely on prior suppression of hormonal suppressants. In short, Free Enterprise is now even more like the Mafia—not as large or as powerful as it was, but still wealthy beyond the aspirations of most citizens.

Typically, 1st-degree members are 'wannabes' looking to prove their worth by committing audacious treason. 2nd through 4th degrees are 'made men,' committed by their treason to a local capo (sometimes called a director) who controls a sector (or, in densely-populated sectors, a residence block). At 6th or 7th degree, a member is a 'capo di capo' (or vice president), with a dozen capos reporting. At 14th degree and above, a member is a 'capissimo' or 'C-level executive'

High Programmer views (4)

Free Enterprise (Class A)

+Alpha Complex began as a moneyless society, operating purely on need and ability, but it turned out citizens work better if reward is commensurate to effort. This leads to a need for quantification, and hence a monetary system. Several pirate currencies started up within the first 50 years of the founding of Alpha Complex. Eventually, Enterprise was begun by Alpha leadership and ran at a loss for years until it completely dominated the market and its currency became the most widely-used one. That is the monetary system we use today.+

+There has been talk on and off for many years now about lapsing official silent control of Enterprise and letting it subside to Class B status, but it turns out we have no better throttle and brake for controlling the economy.+

+Plus, who doesn't like being RICH???

Humanists (Class C)

+Often mistaken for other groups such as the Romantics or Pro Tech.+

+Often mistaken for generic 'Communists'.+

+All other goals are secondary to the goal of removing The Computer from Alpha Complex.+

+Obviously, this cannot be allowed.+

Illuminati (no classification)

[No record of High Programmer opinions.]



(CFO, COO, etc.), one of the true aristocracy of Free Enterprise. Even if low-clearance, these citizens command multiple millions of credits per yearcycle. At the very top? Some call this 21st-degree figure 'il papa,' but no one knows his or her gender, true power, worth or clout.

Recognition signal: 'How's business?' with the reply, 'Nobody pays retail any more.'

Advancement: Members must serve as faithful front-line managers or salespeople, proving their loyalty, dedication, and obedience to the organization. At middle and upper levels they have subordinates who will follow orders; however, a member who fails to perform according to his superiors' expectations may face demotion. Wasting resources, lacking initiative and imagination, careless use of violence—any of these may get a member demoted ... or worse.

Special rules: Free Enterprise does not provide assets for free. However, if there's a fast credit to be made, they'll give you anything you need. If you can set up a deal and cut a higher-degree member in for a piece of the action, he'll happily provide equipment, weapons and muscle to make the deal work. Free Enterprisers frequently ask Troubleshooter members to terminate enemies, because Troubleshooters have the training, equipment and excuse necessary to kill just about anyone.

A typical Free Enterprise pitch

Free Enterpriser: So. Tell me 'bout your needs. Uppers? I got 'em. Wanna fly with a smile on your face 'til Threeday? No problem. You like the jig-jig, we can talk. Muscle can be had. You got competitors, dey can be had. You got me? Dat's da praxis. You got the demand, we got the supply. 'Kay?



Humanists

Beliefs: Alpha Complex ought to be a utopia; The Computer sees to everyone's needs and desires. But something has gone disastrously wrong. The Computer executes people at random, condemning the innocent along with the guilty. Everyone's constantly involved

in a witch-hunt for Commies. There are no Commies; no one is plotting to destroy Alpha Complex. The Computer is insane. We must bring The Computer back under the control of human beings.

All power to the people! Greedy High Programmers control the system and enrich themselves. They are evil. Our leaders are wise and know what is best for the people. They should lead us, help us to fulfill human aspirations and desires. Join us and help us make Alpha Complex a utopia. When we gain power, you will be richly rewarded—for the good of the people, of course.

Friends: Frankenstein Destroyers, Romantics.

Enemies: FCCC-P, Corpore Metal.

Description: Each member of the organization has two contacts in the next degree above and below. Members pass all requests, assignments and communications up and down the chain. Occasionally they organize meetings at safe locations to discuss policy or disseminate information and propaganda. At these meetings all members wear masks and disguise their voices. Members spot each other by passwords and catechisms that change regularly to discourage infiltration.

It is generally believed the Human Speaker (the title of the citizen at the 21st degree) is the sole head of the society. In fact, there are several independent Humanist organizations, each with its own Human Speaker. This decreases the chance a catastrophic breach of security could wipe out the entire organization. Unfortunately, some Humanist organizations have been less successful than others in avoiding infiltration by Internal Security.

Recognition signal: Secret handshake—three rapid pumps followed by a gentle slap on the shoulder and a friendly 'What's new, pal?'

Advancement: Members may advance by reprogramming bots or computers to respond to Humanist commands, by disabling bots and by altering The Computer's programming.

Special rules: The Humanists have installed a number of special subprograms in The Computer to serve their interests. Consequently members at higher degrees have access to information not normally accessible to characters, and members' requests for information are often productive. However, because communication between the numerous degrees of the society is notoriously slow, response to a character's question may take a week or more. The society maintains a stockpile of illicit weapons and equipment that may be available to a member if he can show it will further the society's objectives. Response to these requests is also notoriously slow.

A typical Humanist conversation

1st-degree Humanist: Master, The Computer oppresses INFRAREDs, forcing them to labor for the benefit of others. How shall it be when we gain power?

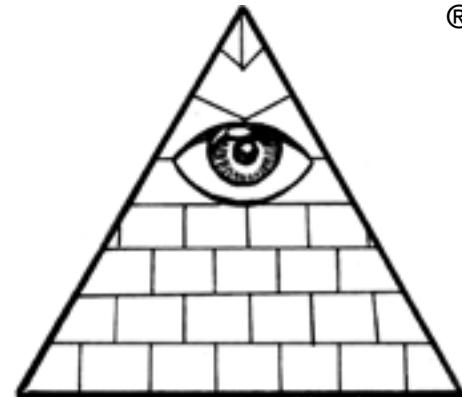
6th-degree Humanist: Everything will be different! Society will be organized with the best at the top and those fitted only for work at the bottom. Each will gladly serve for the benefit of all.

1st-degree: And we will direct others, for the benefit of all?

6th-degree: It shall be so.

1st-degree: Truly, the people shall rejoice at their liberation when we gain power.

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Illuminati

Beliefs: Power is all. Becoming powerful is the only way to be safe. Ninety-nine percent of the human race is cattle. Only the strongest and brightest gain power.

Serve the Leader. Serve or die. Do as we say. Serve, and one day you may achieve victory over those who force you to serve—trapping and destroying them in their treason. The way to advance in our society is by gaining power over your superiors. Become powerful enough, and one day all the Illuminati will serve you—and our power controls Alpha Complex. Our agents are everywhere. Terror and blackmail are our tools. Prove yourself superior by learning how to blackmail your superiors. Or prove yourself cattle by failing.

Friends: None.

Enemies: None.

Description: If no Illuminati existed, paranoid conspiracy theorists would have to make them up. They are the ultimate conspiracy, the secret-est secret society—so pervasive they're behind everything, yet so subtle it's impossible to determine what influence they exert or why. In **PARANOIA** they have no overt, unified goals; the Illuminati exist because they must.

Years ago The Computer knew for a fact the Illuminati existed. More recently the organization faked its own defeat and dissolution. The Illuminati now operate under such deep cover not even Internal Security knows for sure they still exist.

There are actually many Illuminati subgroups, each serving a different Leader. However, all Illuminati are intensely secretive—

High Programmer views (5)**Mystics (Class B)**

- +Have you ever thought... like, maybe YOU'RE The Computer?+
- +Whoa, man, it's like... everything is connected, y'know?+
- +I had this dream... I had, like, REALLY LONG fingernails and I was a rock star.+
- +I love you guys. And I really, really mean it. It's not just the drugs this time.+

Pro Tech (Class B)

- +One of the first societies, established early in Alpha Complex existence.+
- +An anti-technology sentiment was commonplace in the early population.+
- +?

+Technology was identified with the catastrophe that destroyed the Old Reckoning world, and tech-related terminology began to become derogatory. The development of Pro Tech, and the 'Tech is Good' counter-campaign, were among the first operations attempted by the newly established Department of Housing Preservation and Development (DHPD, now HPD&MC).+
+Harmless except when they steal gadgets.+

Psion (Class C)

+Very briefly begun as a Class A. There was an early HPD&MC effort to recast the increasing genetic drift in the population as 'The Next Stage of Human Evolution' instead of, well, an ever-increasing rate of three-limbed half-blind idiots who could occasionally light themselves on fire with their own minds. Computer decided the word 'evolution' should be eliminated from the language, there was a huge purge of HPD&MC personnel and the organization was terminated. However, of course, an underground version was formed and has persisted to this day.+

+Working actively on building up enough Machine Empaths to take over every node in The Computer at the same time and enslave it to their collective will.+

even society members rarely know the true identities or purposes of other members. Consequently, many Illuminati groups are partially or completely infiltrated by other Illuminati (though hardly ever by Internal Security, which remains uncertain whether the organization actually exists).

Each member communicates only to an immediate superior and an immediate subordinate. When Illuminati meet, they wear masks. No society member knows the name of any superiors, whereas superiors generally know each name, and every treason, of their subordinates. Leaders relay orders by note or a message scrawled on the wall, frequently using codes and ciphers. Absolute secrecy is the guiding principle.

The weapons of the Illuminati are terror and blackmail. Frequently, masked Illuminati rouse citizens from their sleep, interrogate them, threaten them and order them to commit treason. Failing to do so is a good way to get killed. Doing so is a trap, for the Illuminati then use the citizen's treason to blackmail him into performing ever blacker and more treasonous acts.

Recognition signal: Changes daily, and told to operatives on a need-to-know basis.

Advancement: Illuminati members can advance by performing tasks ordered by their superiors, and by learning the true identities of their superiors. Missions frequently involve setting up a victim for blackmail, but the Illuminati are noted for ordering subordinates to perform tasks without apparent value: 'Steal 231 packs of Cold Fun. Drop them at Incinerator Tube 1D in exactly 22 minutes.'

No member is ever told the reason for anything, so they must perform these apparently ludicrous tasks without question—or face the

consequences. The fastest way to advance is to gather information on superiors and blackmail or execute them.

Special rules: The Illuminati rewards its members with periodic credit bonuses, valuable equipment and opportunities for skill training. At 6th degree and above, Illuminated Troubleshooters probably know their teammates' secret societies and many of their signs and counter-signs. It is unusual for the Illuminati to acknowledge a request, so members usually don't bother to ask. They just do as they are told and hope for a substantial reward.

A typical Illuminati conversation

[Fred-R awakens late at night in his dormitory. All is quiet. A brilliant light shines in his eyes; beyond the light, he can dimly make out a handivac resting on a chair. A deep voice sounds from nowhere.]

Illuminati: Candidate-member Fred-R-FUN-1!

Fred-R [Gulps, shades eyes.]: Yes, sir!

Illuminati: Take the handivac to cubicle 17-4D. Clean the shower head of fizzwizz.

Fred-R: Huh? Why is there fizzwizz in the shower head?

Illuminati: Do not ask questions! Do as ordered! Fail and suffer the consequences!

Fred-R: Yes, Master! At once!

**Mystics**

Beliefs: Seek the Inner Light. Cast off the Veil of Appearances. Drink deeply of the Well of Inspiration. Turn On. Tune In. Drop Out.

Reality is an illusion. The Computer, the food vats, Commies, everything mundane—all these things get in the way of understanding. The truly wise man knows that these things do not matter. What counts is what is Inside. Each wise man has his own passageway Inside—drugs, meditation, yoga, fasting, primal screaming. The Way does not matter. The Inside is what counts.

Friends: Romantics.

Enemies: None.

Description: The Mystics are not strictly speaking an organization, but a community of like-minded individuals who believe in the search for illumination, and who circulate illicit mystic texts. Mystics occasionally gather to share stories and wisdom (and drugs).

Though Mystics are theoretically uninterested in the practical world, they have amassed a surprising amount of restricted information about Alpha Complex from highly-placed citizens who have dropped out and shared their knowledge with fellow Mystics. If a Mystic doesn't seem too eager, he may obtain useful information by inquiring along the grapevine.

Mystics have excellent access to drugs of all kinds (stimulants, hallucinogens, alcoholic beverages, soma, etc.), typically of a much higher potency than those legally obtainable in Alpha Complex. Otherwise unworldly Mystics maintain a brisk trade in these scarce commodities.

Recognition signal: The first disciple says, 'May the harmony of the Cosmos be with you.' The second replies, 'Huh?'

Advancement: Members might gain prestige in the eyes of other Mystics by discovering new ways to achieve enlightenment—new drugs, new transcendental disciplines, unusually holy or wise men, insightful Mystic texts like *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* or *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. They can also advance by surviving potentially deadly experiences and living to contemplate them, and by turning on non-Mystics to their own Inner Light.

A typical Mystic line

Mystic: Hey, man, I grok you. Like, totally cosmic.



■ Pro Tech

Beliefs: Encouraging research and the development of new technologies will let humanity restore the Earth's ruined surface and return to the stars beyond. Better gadgets solve all problems. In recent centuries the bureaucracy has completely stifled research and design. We must emerge from the Dark Age and into the light of the Machine Age. Bots and computers can transform the world into a playground, giving humanity unlimited leisure.

Friends: Computer Phreaks, Corpore Metal.

Enemies: PURGE, Frank. Destroyers.

Description: Pro Tech has no hierarchy. Independent groups work on their own secret projects; part of each member's job is the procurement of the scarce resources needed to carry on these secret projects. This often involves theft of Computer equipment and the treasonous secret use of Computer research facilities. Certain Pro Tech groups have managed to penetrate Computer security and have access to programs and databanks not even The Computer itself knows about.

Each Pro Tech member has a code name by which he is known to other members. Along with the Computer Phreaks, Pro Techs are active on the Gray Subnets.

Recognition signal: All members of Pro Tech have a small subcutaneous implant. This device vibrates whenever it's within 10 feet of another Pro Tech member. The member must switch off the vibration manually. If the member is among enemies (say, fellow Troubleshooters) and can't turn off the vibration, we don't have to point out how distracting it can be.

Advancement: Characters may advance by helping others procure necessary research materials (i.e., by stealing equipment); by testing and studying experimental equipment (after stealing it) and by reprogramming bots or computers (they've stolen) to respond to Pro Tech society instructions.

Special rules: Technical information and special equipment are often available, though obtaining them may take time, since there are no formal communication channels.

■ A typical Pro Tech line

Pro Tech: Hey, have you seen my new Model ZXL-23-Skidoo PDC plug-in with statistical functions, vector calc mods and chrome exterior?



■ Psion

Beliefs: Power through The Power! Mutants rule!

Humans with psionic powers are obviously the evolutionary successors of normal humans and the future of the human race. Our transcendent abilities qualify us to govern humanity. We must bring The Computer's traditional programming into harmony with this principle; we must naturally occupy all positions of power and responsibility. If necessary, we must destroy The Computer and its culture to make way for the new order—the Psionic Age.

The Psionic Age cannot arise without suffering and disorder. Endure these to help bring about the new era. Develop your powers, refine them, strengthen them and learn new powers. Protect those with psionic powers whenever possible. Pity those without psionic powers, but do not protect them. They are the past. Those who survive will have a place in our new order—subservient, but benevolently cared for by their superior descendants.

Friends: None.

Enemies: Anti-Mutant.

Description: Psion is extremely individualistic. The society holds no meetings and maintains only light internal contact; members seldom know names and identities of other members. High-degree NPC members ('Controls') make most contacts through telepathy (a power unavailable to PCs), and teachers even train students in psionic powers remotely, without personal contact.

Members communicate questions, requests and reports to Psion's upper levels telepathically. NPC Controls regularly monitor the thoughts of subordinate members. The society member can essentially 'leave a note' in his mind and the Control's telepathic probe will eventually pick it up. Controls may send messages to

members at any time—usually, this being **PARANOIA**, at highly inappropriate times.

Each Psion member is assigned a distinctive thought symbol that identifies him as a member to any Control who telepathically scans his mind. This symbol has no significance to a non-Psion telepath.

Recognition signal: The first member wiggles two fingers above his head like antennae, meaning 'I am a thought receiver.' The second member responds by tapping his own forehead with one finger.

Advancement: Characters may advance by developing their own mental powers, introducing new citizens with mental powers to the society, placing Psion members in positions of authority and responsibility, and eliminating Anti-Mutants.

Special rules: Whenever a Psion society member advances a degree in the organization, higher-clearance NPC Controls teach him the use of a new mutant power. You choose which power the character learns. (You may wish to select from mind-based or 'psionic' powers, as opposed to physical mutations like Rubbery Bones. See the fine **PARANOIA** supplement *The Mutant Experience* for more details.)

■ A typical Psion conversation

Troubleshooter team leader: Hey, mutie scum, do your glowing-eyeball thing and see if there's enemies on the other side of that wall.

Psion registered mutant: I see one crouching figure armed with what appears to be a red laser.

Team leader: One! Oh yeah, I believe that. [Chuckles evilly.] Tell you what, mutie, why don't you walk through the door and zap him?

Psion registered mutant: As you wish. [Walks through door. Sound of laser fire.] I have defeated the enemy. It is now safe to proceed.

Team leader: Huh. Well, okay. Forward, team. [Troubleshooter team walks casually through door. Fifteen Psion mutants melt their brains with concerted mental blasts.]

Psion supervisor: Fine work, student.

Psion registered mutant: I seek to serve, Control. One more step on the path to the future.





PURGE

Beliefs: Kill The Computer! Kill those who support The Computer!

The Computer is evil. Whether the evil is the result of the original programming or the nature of The Computer is unimportant. We shall break The Computer's iron grip. Those citizens who support The Computer are traitors to humanity's higher destiny. Teach submissive citizens to resist and fight The Computer with whatever resources are at hand.

Because direct attack is impossible, sabotage and terrorism are satisfactory temporary measures. Reveal The Computer's obvious weaknesses and failures, and encourage others to exploit them. The ultimate goal is to set all intelligent beings (including bots) free of its dominion.

Friends: Humanists, Romantics, Death Leopard.

Enemies: First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer.

Description: PURGE is an army of scary fanatics. Each member reports to a superior, and often mobilizes with a group of others to perform specific missions for PURGE. PURGE expects members to follow orders instantly, eagerly and without question. The organization purges those who fail, and may kill them. Those who betray the society suffer fates worse than death.

PURGERs share a strong sense of community. Their law is to assist other PURGERs, even at great personal risk. They admire individual acts of sabotage and defiance, but they also prize obedience to superiors and success on group missions. They show no tolerance whatever for The Computer's supporters. PURGE's frequent missions of destruction and terror often kill many innocent bystanders, but really, those people deserved to die for implicitly supporting The Computer.

Recognition signal: Secret handshake—three exaggerated pumps followed by two squeezes.

Advancement: Members can advance by performing acts of sabotage and terrorism, by causing Troubleshooter missions to fail and by performing flamboyant public gestures of defiance toward The Computer's authority.

Special rules: The PURGE network makes technical information readily and generously available, particularly information about demolitions and bioweapons. However, penetrating The Computer's defenses takes time, and it may be days or weeks before a PURGER can get an answer to a question. The network also steals high-clearance equipment, because PURGERs are eager to rip off The Computer whenever possible.

A typical PURGE conversation

PURGER: ... so clearly it was all the work of Fred-R-FUN, who treasonously betrayed his Complex.

The Computer: I'm sorry, citizen. The evidence against you is incontrovertible. Please execute yourself immediately.

PURGER: Ops. Oh, well, what the hell... SMASH THE COMPUTER! THE COMPUTER IS EVIL! DEATH TO ALL ITS LACKEYS! DESTROY..ZOTZ...ping...Thud.



Romantics

Beliefs: Recapture the historical glory of human society represented by the high cultural achievements of Old Reckoning times. Leave the underground warrens, throw off the dominance of The Computer, and reestablish the world of fast-food restaurants, Frisbees and Star Trek.

Humanity was meant to live in split-level homes and watch 'football' on 'TV'. To return to humanity's original happy state, people must leave the underground warrens and 'commute' to work in millions of 'cars' along the endless strips of concrete that should cover the land. Each person must be free to 'just do it' as they did in the good old days, whatever 'it' is.

To achieve its objectives, the Romantics recognize that they must destroy The Computer and the confining society it has created and sustained for centuries.

Friends: Humanists, PURGE.

Enemies: FCCC-P, Corpore Metal, Pro Tech.

Description: The Romantics secret society at some time had access to the Gatzmann Archives, a substantial database compiled in the earliest days of Alpha Complex that held real history of the Old Reckoning and its cultures. Unfortunately, the society later lost track of the original Archives, for it has turned the history into a sort of mythology glorifying the appealing and not-so-appealing aspects of the pop-cult California lifestyle depicted in ancient television programs.

Recognition signal: The first member gives the Vulcan salute. The second says, 'The Force is with us, tee-em.'

Advancement: Members may advance by sabotaging Computer operations or working against The Computer, but greater prestige accrues to those who obtain relics from the Old Reckoning era. The society especially prizes ancient books and videotapes.

Special rules: Members of this society know more about Old Reckoning times than any other society. However, much of the information is fragmentary, misinterpreted and tainted with the Romantics' peculiar mythology of the Old Reckoning: a time when everyone drank Pepsi, lived in suburban housing developments, worked in spacious offices in tall buildings and watched TV whenever they wished. This information is often misleading because it is based largely on ancient television. ('It is well known that ancient autocars would invariably crash and explode when driven at high speed by anyone other than the true in heart. If driven by men with false motives, they were extremely dangerous.')

A typical Romantics chant

Romantic: Pepsi hits the spot! Kojak! I like Ike! To the moon, Alice! Hubba-hubba!



Sierra Club

Beliefs: Cast off the shackles of technology! Back to Nature! The natural life will make us happy. Return to our natural environment—Nature. Abandon the luxuries of technology



High Programmer views (6)

PURGE (Class C)

+This is what Death Leopard pretends to be.+
+Dangerous under any and all circumstances.+

Romantics (Class A)

+Originally a popular movement based on the Gatzmann Archives.+
+Later codified officially so that official record of Old Reckoning could be closed.+
+Probably the single most commonly-encountered faction in Alpha.+
+Actively maintained to allow for UV collectors of Old Reckoning material to have constant access to supply as desired.+
+C-Bay was originally implemented as a closed-doors swap meet for Old Reckoning gear.+

Sierra Club (Class A)

+Suppression of lowest-level knowledge of Outdoors habitability was implemented by the Fourth Generation.+
+No way we can actually keep the existence of the Outdoors a secret from ALL the INFRAREDs.+
+Ironically, not long after induction into the organization, typically a new member gets a promotion to RED thanks to his buddies in the 'Club'—and then he's cleared to know the Outdoors is habitable anyway. But at that point, he's committed to the Sierras.+

and embrace the hardships of Outdoor life. Observe and imitate the beautiful models of healthy societies represented by creatures of the Outdoors.

We were not meant to live in burrows ruled by a queen bee (The Computer). We are not insects. We are meant to hunt and gather, and to live in harmony with the world of plants and animals. Science and technology have not made us happy. Only Nature can make us happy.

Friends: Humanists, Romantics, Mystics.

Enemies: Pro Tech, Corpore Metal.

Description: The Computer has indoctrinated the entire populace of Alpha Complex with the belief the Outdoors is now a devastated, uninhabitable, largely submerged wasteland. The Sierra Club believes this is untrue. (Is it true? That's up to you. What is truth, anyway?)

The lower six degrees of the society are organized as clubs. At low degrees members are simply students of Nature; they receive a thorough education in the Outdoors and its ecology. Because Alpha Complex has little contact with the Outdoors, this education often leaves something to be desired. For example, many clubs base their nature knowledge on close study of the few natural objects they can find—a weed brought back on a mission from the Outdoors; a real live natural cockroach; etc.

At 3rd through 5th degree, members assist in projects aimed at returning humanity to the Outdoors. Missions require members to obtain information about the Outdoors or perform political acts which prepare the citizenry for a future life in the Outdoors. For example, a member may capture a nest of wasps and introduce them into the Complex to familiarize citizens with insects, or destroy a protective dome, permitting normal weather from above to invade a section of the underground city.

Higher-degree members are the culture heroes of the Sierra Club. Generally these citizens have studied the Outdoors and are wise in its lore. They make policy not so much

by direct order as by example. For example, if a high-degree character casually wished each citizen should have his own personal wild plant as a companion, as an introduction to the Natural world, well-meaning clubs would enthusiastically launch projects to obtain plants from the Outdoors and distribute them to citizens (willing or not).

Sierra Club members hold a reasonably accurate view of the Outdoors, but until they gain first-hand experience with animals, terrain and weather, they tend to be naive. Members fanatically protect plant and animal life (including pests like insects and fungi) wherever they find it—in the Outdoors or in Alpha Complex.

Recognition signal: The first member wiggles two fingers above his head like antennae. The second responds by buzzing like an insect.

Advancement: Clubs are fairly loosely organized. Sometimes a higher-degree member requests assistance on a project, but there is no penalty for refusing to help. The higher the member's degree, the greater his knowledge of Nature and the Outdoors, and the more likely he will receive assistance when he requests it.

Characters may advance by introducing elements of Nature into the complex, by establishing ready access to the Outdoors, by permitting other Club members to visit and by learning more about the Natural world themselves.

Special rules: Members have generous access to information and Outdoor gear through the society. Though members should make requests well in advance, the society may respond even on short notice.

A typical Sierra Club conversation

Citizen: Eew, yuk. Get it away from me!

Sierra Clubber: But look how shiny its carapace is.

Citizen: I don't care, it's a disgusting slimy thing.

Sierra Clubber: No it's not, really. It's not slimy at all. Look at how he wiggles his little legs. See how brave he is?

Citizen: Squash it! Squash it!

Sierra Clubber: No! Isn't Nature serene and beautiful?

Citizen: Gah.

Other secret societies

In each service group's secret society table is a line reading 'Other (see GM for details).' When a player who rolls 20 approaches you in tremulous bewilderment, you have these options:

- ① Tell the player to cease annoying you and roll again until he stops getting 20s.
- ② Assign the character a society you know will be important in the upcoming mission, or that is bitterly opposed to another player's society.
- ③ Tell this player he currently has no secret society. Hey, think about it—if players know there's the chance that a Troubleshooter has no secret society, they'll have to be more careful about making accusations. Then the players actually in societies may each feel they're in a minority, surrounded by players free of the burden. This works best with players new to the game.
- ④ If you're running a Classic or (especially) a Zap game, just give the player one of the straightforward societies without particular subtlety or intrigue: Anti-Mutant, Communist, Death Leopard, FCCC-P, Psion or PURGE.
- ⑤ In a Straight game you can draft the character into a different secret organization, one that works best when explored and revealed over a sequence of missions: either a **program group** (a High Programmer's small group of personal followers) or a **spy for another Alpha Complex**.

Program group

By the time he ascends to Clearance ULTRAVIOLET, each High Programmer has become vividly aware of the need for followers. Amid the byzantine political intrigues at the highest level of power, each ULTRAVIOLET requires a few trusted—or rather, enthralled—recruits who will do his most secret bidding. This group is colloquially called a 'program group.'

Each of the hundreds or thousands of High Programmers in Alpha Complex has his own

program group, independent of all others. The group exists entirely at the behest of that High Programmer; if he dies or loses power, the group quickly dissolves. The group may espouse the leader's personal ideology, in the rare cases he has one, but most often a program group is an alliance of convenience, an old-boy (or old-girl) cabal of opportunists conspiring to advance their leader and themselves to power.

Program groups work like a cross between a Gentlemen's Club and a rock band's roadies. Lowly citizens, toadying their way to the top, serve as lackeys, batsmen, porters and servants. The higher they go, the more the sense of privilege—like old boys puffing fine cigars over a game of billiards. Then upwards to the gents in the quiet study, sitting deep in dark leather chairs sipping brandy and reading the **PARANOIA** equivalent of the latest cricket scores. The High Programmer sits at the top, throwing special gifts and perks down to the little people and calling in favors occasionally like a godfather.

A Troubleshooter can hope for the occasional piece of prime information, a nice credit bonus or the promise of equipment that won't go boom. Maybe there'll be a basket of real fruit waiting in a certain confession booth where the cameras will be offline for 15 minutes.

On the other hand, those in the upper ranks of the program group—not the big guy himself, but his lead flunkies—may themselves ask the Troubleshooter for time-wasting favors: dropping off a package, say, or acquiring

some fruit from the hydroponics gardens. Even if these second-stringer missions don't necessarily bring rewards, a wise lackey takes them anyway. After all, the lead flunkies control access to the Big Man, and they sharply influence the way he views underlings.

In the fullness of time the Troubleshooter will certainly become embroiled in the lead flunkies' political intrigues. The High Programmer understands the concept of 'divide and rule'—that's how he got where he is. He appreciates the necessity of turning his underlings on each other, so they don't unite against him. These feuding underlings will look for support even from the lowest of the low—that is, from the Troubleshooter. The PC's choice of whom to support should have interesting consequences, preferably involving assassination.

Spy for another Alpha Complex

The putative **PARANOIA** backstory includes many other Alpha Complexes, as well as millions of people who fled Earth to the offworld colonies. If you buy into this idea, Earth's other Complexes, controlled by their own Computer software, presumably went nuts like this one did. If you go still further and decide offworlders were reliant on Computer-controlled colonies as well, then there are Alpha Complexes both on Earth and throughout the Solar System—and each thinks it's the only bastion of sanity in a universe of treasonous enemies.

Maybe these other Complexes hate Communists too. Or maybe other Complexes latched onto other enemies or shadowy organizations. Maybe some Complexes believe all other Complexes have been occupied by dimensional invaders, Pod People or the Mysterons.

One or another of this multitude of Complexes might send spies into the Troubleshooters' home Complex. All these spies seek the truth, and all pursue a hidden agenda beyond petty power struggles. Spies for other Complexes seek the instigators of the terrible conspiracies that underlie the treason of all Complexes but their own. They may want to recruit supporters in the heart of the enemy camp. They definitely want information: details of future plans; security, military and R&D data; and, perhaps, a means to rip citizens from the thrall of the bad guys.

In short-term **PARANOIA** games a spy from another Alpha Complex lacks color and focus. Over a series of missions, though—all with the same players, whether using the same characters or a succession of teams—you could develop an elaborate conspiracy plot, gradually revealing more and more about the mysterious invader.

This sounds pretty cool, assuming you buy the idea of multiple Complexes in the first place. (Is it true? What is truth, anyway?) However, details of other Alpha Complexes are beyond the scope of this rulebook. Plus, we're on deadline. We may describe spies from several other Complexes in future **PARANOIA** supplements. If we remember.

Interviewer: Mr. Helpmann, what would you say to those critics who maintain that the Ministry Of Information has become too large and unwieldy?

Helpmann: David, in a free society, information is the name of the game. You can't win the game if you're a man short.

Interviewer: And the cost of it all, Deputy Minister? Seven percent of the gross national product...

Helpmann: I understand this concern on behalf of the taxpayers. People want value for money and a cost-effective service. That is why we always insist on the principle of Information Retrieval Charges. These terrorists are not pulling their weight, and it's absolutely right and fair that those found guilty should pay for their periods of detention and the Information Retrieval Procedures used in their interrogation.

—**Brazil (dir. Terry Gilliam) [1985]**



41. Equipment

Types of equipment

In *PARANOIA* there are three categories of equipment ownership: personal, assigned and treasonous.

Personal equipment

Personal equipment is, like, personal. A citizen obtains personal equipment by paying for it. He can use and abuse it as he wishes—he can eat it, burn it, jump up and down on it—this is all legal. However, a particularly petty IntSec officer or high-clearance bureaucrat might consider flagrant waste of Alpha Complex resources impolite at best and sometimes insubordinate.

Demo versions

Service firms out to part citizens from their credits may issue cheap or free versions of weapons, equipment, software and pretty much everything else. These demo versions show off the item's abilities, but they have certain inbuilt limitations:

- ◎ **Timers:** The item stops working at critical moments.
- ◎ **Crippleware:** The manufacturers have disabled important features on the item. For instance, a demo weapon might not be reloadable.

- ◎ **Nagware:** At critical moments the item stops to survey the user or play an ad for the full version.

The manufacturer may mark the item as a demo, or may market it unlabeled to hook unwary potential customers. Sellers on the illegal IR market seldom mention they're selling a demo version, and in fact may cover up or file off the manufacturer notice.

Assigned equipment

'Citizen, your assigned equipment costs a total of [beep!] 30,482 credits. To reclaim your deposit, please return your equipment in pristine condition. Have a nice day!'

The Computer assigns equipment to its Troubleshooters, either temporarily (perhaps for a single mission) or long-term (like the reflec armor and laser pistol body it assigns each Troubleshooter). Assigned equipment is, naturally, Computer property, and losing, damaging or destroying it is treason.

The citizen who holds custody of the assigned equipment is personally responsible for maintaining and protecting it. Should he permit it to come to harm, he would, naturally,

be a traitor. Because accidents do happen, The Computer does not invariably execute such irresponsible citizens—it usually imposes punitive fines instead. Repeated carelessness or the loss of particularly valuable items could draw harsher correction.

Experimental equipment is a special class of assigned equipment. 'Experimental' includes any item that is currently under development or being studied by Research & Design (and includes both 'experimental' and 'really experimental' weapons). Because testing experimental equipment is dangerous, it is assigned only on a voluntary basis.

In Alpha Complex, as in the army, the term 'voluntary' frequently takes on, ah, unexpected connotations. Because The Computer considers R&D's efforts to develop new and better devices of the utmost importance to Alpha Complex, every good citizen should be eager to serve the cause by testing experimental equipment. Refusing to do so is not treason, but would certainly disappoint The Computer.

As with all assigned equipment, the citizen to whom experimental equipment is assigned is responsible for it. Being responsible for experimental equipment can be unhealthy, because experimental equipment malfunctions, often spectacularly, with alarming frequency. If the responsible citizen can show a malfunction to be the fault of R&D, he may avoid fines or charges of treason. Naturally R&D technicians strenuously resist blame.

Treasonous equipment

All equipment that is neither personal nor assigned is treasonous. Treasonous equipment is available from secret societies, the IR market or (often) the body of a fallen teammate. It may consist of undeclared items discovered on a mission. It may be stolen.

Failure to report and surrender all treasonous equipment is treason. If a citizen is discovered in possession of treasonous equipment, he faces charges depending on the item's value and its threat to the security of Alpha Complex and The Computer. Treasonous possession of expensive shoes might incur only a fine, whereas treasonous possession of a tactical nuclear weapon might earn rapid termination and repatterning.

The higher a citizen's security clearance, the more likely The Computer will ignore his treasonous equipment. Rank has its privileges, and The Computer does not begrudge special possessions to those who have proven their loyalty.

Equipment availability

The following sections describe many types of equipment. However, not all are necessarily available at any time. There are limited quantities of each item in Alpha Complex, and they are rationed on a security clearance basis—a bunch of RED Troubleshooters are well down on the totem pole. Certain sophisticated devices are no longer manufactured in Alpha Complex, and some are manufactured infrequently and at great expense (bots, most vehicles and high technology gear).

Of course the list of available equipment is not exhaustive. Add your own items and delete ones you dislike. Don't be too fussy about prices or security clearances. If the players ask for something reasonable, be accommodating. But as Gamemaster, you can always refuse a request for equipment because it is not currently available, and you can assign woefully inadequate or inappropriate equipment to a mission because of the current unavailability of proper equipment. Further, you may decide that more sophisticated models are still experimental, and available only for experimental assignment (with the attendant risk of equipment failure).

Don't hesitate to refuse even reasonable requests from time to time. It's a crazy world. Sometimes things get lost or broken. Sometimes the inventory gets confused. Sometimes The Computer gets confused. Sometimes you can't even get a laser barrel. Or a case of room fresheners gets mistakenly labeled as grenades. That's *PARANOIA*.

The Equipment Chart lists some types of equipment Troubleshooters may purchase themselves with their own credits. It also lists a security clearance for each piece of equipment; this is the security clearance at which the equipment becomes available. At the indicated clearance, the Troubleshooter can purchase the equipment if he can pay the cost in credits. At any lower clearance, The Computer usually vetoes his purchase.

When requisitioning assigned equipment, a character must explain why he needs the item and must sign documents accepting responsibility for it. The Computer may refuse his request if it doesn't think he needs it, or if other (nonplayer) characters have already requisitioned all available items. In other words, notwithstanding the printed security clearance, feel free to refuse a request if you wish.

Weapons

Dying repeatedly can sometimes get a little dull. That's why you need to give the players

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lots of entertaining, unusual and different ways to die.

Weapons in Alpha Complex are deadly—to their users as well as their targets. You know how everyone says the work ethic isn't what it used to be? Well, in Alpha Complex they don't even have a work ethic. The few citizens who work in Alpha Complex's automated factories turning out mass-produced weapons are more concerned with filling their quotas than with quality. As a result, even the most reliable weapons malfunction with alarming frequency.

If you like, you can use the optional malfunction rules to determine when a weapon malfunctions. Or you can be insouciantly cavalier, and have weapons malfunction whenever you like—when things are moving too slowly, for example, or when a weapon's failure will add to the atmosphere of **PARANOIA** combat.

Each weapon malfunctions in its own charming fashion. Moreover, you may want to grant the weapon's user one chance to try remediying the malfunction before it proves deadly—by making a Violence skill roll, or a roll against the relevant Violence specialty. The descriptions below say how weapons malfunction and what happens when a user tries to 'remedy' the problem.

Damage types

Because some armor protects against certain forms of damage and not against others (see Chapter 30, 'Armor'), it helps to know what kind of damage weapons inflict. Weapons are divided according to the damage they do (see the Weapon Chart).

◎ **Bio (B):** Biological weapons like anthrax and other poisons, viruses and bacteria that shut down your nervous system or dissolve your parts. Self-contained airtight suits can provide protection.

◎ **Energy (E):** These shoot beams of electrons or other high-tech molecular junk at you. As you might expect, only high-tech armor protects against this stuff.

A subset of energy weapons, lasers (L) send beams of coherent light through you. Shiny, mirrored surfaces provide some protection, as does armor that reflects light of the same color as the laser's beam.

◎ **Impact (I):** These crush you or cut you, or send pieces of metal, plastic, ice, or other hard substances through you. To offer protection against impacts, armor has to be able to withstand high impact over a small surface area.

In addition to these damage types, there are several extra damage effects some weapons inflict:

◎ **Area effect (AE):** These attack areas, not specific points (e.g., flamethrowers cover you with flames). Armor must be full-figure (cover you entirely) to protect you against these things.

◎ **Armor Piercing (AP):** Impact weapons that punch through armor better.

◎ **Spray (S):** A spray weapon can attack multiple targets in the same round, like a machine-gun volleying bullets all over a room.

Blaster and energy pistol

The principles by which the blaster and energy pistol work are so secret, virtually no one knows them. (Translation: We couldn't think of anything.) The blaster is a bulky one-hand weapon with flashy fins, styled like a Corvette. The energy pistol is much smaller and ends in an antenna surrounded by rings.

Malfunction: Roll the die. On an even roll, the weapon stops working. On an odd roll, it heats up suddenly, then vaporizes. In the latter case, the holder suffers damage as if attacked.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll prevents vaporization, but the weapon is useless.

Brass knuckles

Like the name says, although brass is rare in Alpha Complex—these are more likely made of steel or aluminum. They don't malfunction particularly.

Club, knife, sword

You know these.

Malfunction: It breaks.

Remedy: None. Oh, you can take it home and fix it up with some superglue, we suppose.

Cone rifle and slugthrower

Cone rifles are neither cone-shaped nor rifles, but a development of the modern bazooka. Slugthrowers are a development of the modern hand-gun, semi-automatic rifle

and submachine-gun. Both can fire a variety of shells. Ammunition for both weapons is available in these forms:

◎ Solid slugs are titanium-jacket steel slugs that do impact damage.

◎ Dumdums are solid slugs designed to fly apart upon impact. Dumdum shells have lower range than solid slugs, but do more damage.

◎ HE (high explosive) shells explode on contact. For slugthrowers, these are explosive bullets, which do more damage than solid shells or dumdums; for cone rifles, these are explosive shells with a 5-meter radius.

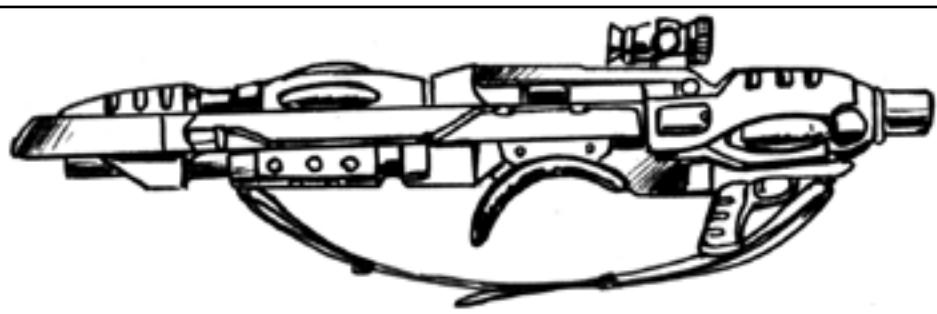
◎ AP (armor piercing) shells are designed to penetrate armor. For slugthrowers, these are 'greased' bullets designed to penetrate Kevlar or other body armor. For cone rifles, these are explosive shells designed to penetrate tank or flybot armor.

◎ HEAT (high explosive antitank) shells are similar to AP shells but are somewhat more effective (and costly).

◎ Napalm shells explode on contact, spreading jellied petroleum or white phosphorus over the skin of the target (or, in the case of cone rifle shells, over the surrounding area). Napalm continues to burn for some rounds after contact (roll 1d20 to determine how many), doing damage to the target each round. Because both jellied petroleum and white phosphorus contain their own supply of oxygen, napalm cannot be extinguished with water or by suffocation, but can only be removed by scraping the stuff off the skin.

◎ Flare shells illuminate rather than cause injury. Flare shells fired by slugthrowers are tracer bullets—they produce streaks of light that briefly light the area. Flare shells fired by cone rifles light the area and continue to burn for several rounds after launch (roll 1d20 and divide by 2 to determine how many).

◎ ECM (electronic countermeasures) shells contain electronic jamming equipment. ECM damages bot targets and jams cellphones, radio, radar and other





Home, home on the firing range.

devices that rely on the broadcast or reception of electromagnetic signals. Organic targets are unaffected. Most of The Computer's hardware is heavily shielded and immune to standard ECM.

- ④ **Tacnuke** shells are available only for cone rifles. These small nuclear devices can vaporize large parts of a sector.
- ④ Gas shells spread a cloud of gas over the radius indicated on the Weapons Chart. The effect depends on the specific gas used:

Poison gas does S3K Bio damage to any living being within the gas radius. You can roll damage separately for each target, or just roll 1d20 once and deal the same damage (reduced by airtight armor) to all targets.

Smoke reduces visibility and scatters laser fire. A character firing at a target through smoke can't spend Perversity points to improve his success roll. In addition, treat the smoke as E1 armor against laser fire through it.

Corrosion gas damages all metallic targets (i.e., bots) within the area of the gas. Treat as poison gas, but it affects only inorganic and not organic beings. It also reduces the damage protection abilities of metal armor (e.g., plate); reduce the armor rating by 1 for each round the armor is exposed to the gas.

Vomit gas causes organic beings to vomit. Each round, each target must make a Violence skill roll. If he fails, he begins to vomit and may take no other

action for several combat rounds. To determine the number of rounds, roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4, rounding up.

Gauss gas dramatically increases the permittivity of free space* within the area of the gas cloud. If a gauss or energy weapon is fired into the area of the cloud and hits its target, boost its damage by one step.

Dirt gas rapidly adheres to any solid substance, coating it with a black slime.

* 'Permittivity of free space' is a variable used in certain equations dealing with electromagnetic radiation. The speed of light varies with the medium through which it travels; light moves faster in a vacuum than through air, for example. 'Permittivity' is a material constant that determines the speed of light through a medium. The 'permittivity of free space' is a fundamental physical constant that determines the speed of light through vacuum. There is no known way to change the permittivity of free space; indeed, this would be juggling with fundamental physical laws.

The reference to the permittivity of free space here is what is technically known as 'pseudoscientific gobbledegook.' **PARANOIA** is not a hard science fiction game; it is utterly unreasonable, for example, to expect that any mutation could give a human being the power to eat lead, let alone read the thoughts of another. However, authenticity in pseudoscience is as important as in other things, and if you're going to invent pseudoscientific gobbledegook, you might as well draw your terminology from the real thing.

Apart from being disgusting, this removes reflec armor's damage protection. Reflec regains its protective value if the wearer gets a chance to clean his armor. This takes two rounds and a plentiful supply of water or other solvent.

Hallucinogenic gas contains a potent hallucinogenic drug. Each combat round a human remains in the gas cloud, he must make a Violence roll; if he fails, the hallucinogen begins to take effect. All success numbers are halved for the next day because the human cannot be sure whether anything is real or imaginary.

Note: Non-organic beings (that is, bots) are not affected by poison, vomit or hallucinogenic gas. Characters wearing gas masks are similarly immune to these gases, as are characters in environment and combat suits.

■ Cone rifle fuses

All slugthrower ammo uses contact fuses, meaning it explodes on impact. Cone rifle shells usually have contact fuses, but other types of fuses are also available. Any type of cone rifle shell can have any type of fuse. The fuse types:

- ④ **Heat fuses** activate a shell when it gets hot. How hot is hot? That varies by shell—300 degrees Celsius, 100 degrees, body heat, or only in the midst of a thermonuclear explosion. A character requisitioning a shell with a heat trigger specifies the heat level he wants, then prays PLC doesn't screw up.
- ④ **Gauss fuses** activate when subject to violent electromagnetic flux. This flux can be caused by gauss or energy weapons, powerful radio signals, lightning, etc.
- ④ **Remote fuses** activate upon reception of a coded radio signal, usually from a Com unit modified to transmit the appropriate code. The user fires the shell, lets it fall and waits. When he wants to activate the shell, he transmits the code. If the remote fuse is in an area blanketed by ECM jamming, it will not activate.
- ④ **Timers** activate a certain amount of time after being fired. How much time? As with heat fuses, this varies, from nanoseconds to geological epochs. Again, a character can try to specify when he requisitions a timer. Timers set by hand prior to being fired are also available, but are rarer than preset timers.

Malfunction: The slugthrower or cone rifle jams. If the weapon was firing any shell other than solid slug or dum-dums, the shell explodes in the weapon's chamber, destroying it and doing damage as an attack. The shell also has whatever effect such shells normally have (e.g., flare shells emit light).



Remedy: A successful specialty roll clears the jam. If the shell fired was solid slug or dum dum, this returns the weapon to normal function. Otherwise, the weapon is a total loss.

Flamethrower

This is your classic action-movie flamethrower. It's a pretty devastating weapon; on the other hand, it's of limited use in enclosed spaces (like, oops, most of Alpha Complex) because the stream tends to bounce back when it hits an obstruction. Also, they do have a nasty history of explosion, and the user is strapped into the weapon—hard to run when things go bad.

Malfunction: It explodes. Treat as an attack on everyone within 5 meters.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll prevents the explosion, but the weapon is useless.

Force Sword

This weapon is a monofilament fiber encased in a force field sheath. It can cut through just about anything short of neutronium.

Malfunction: The force field ceases to exist, and the monofilament becomes a loose wire which may whip around and injure its user. In this case, the user makes a skill roll; if he succeeds, he avoids injury. If he fails, he rolls for damage as a target.

Remedy: Nothing can prevent the malfunction. A successful weapon roll returns the weapon to normal function.

Gauss gun

Gauss guns project a violent electromagnetic flux that wreaks havoc on bots and electronic equipment. Organic beings do not suffer

CONE RIFLE

damage from gauss guns. Most of The Computer's hardware is heavily shielded and doesn't usually suffer damage from standard gauss attacks.

Malfunction: If the weapon malfunctions, it stops working—no other ill effects.

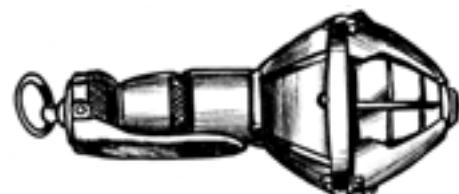
Remedy: A successful Electronic Engineering specialty roll fixes the weapon. What, you don't have that specialty? Ooh, bad luck.

Grenade

If someone throws a grenade but misses his success roll, the grenade hits somewhere other than the target. What better time for an Arbitrary Justice roll?

Malfunction: The grenade is a dud and fails to explode.

Remedy: No remedy is possible.



Hand flamer

Sort of a mini-flamethrower; the hand flamer fires a thin jet of flaming oily liquid at high velocity.

Weapon recorders

The Computer recently ordered weapon manufacturing firms to revise their lethal weapon designs to include recorders. These firms now build into each weapon barrel a simple one-gig digital camera, or actually two cameras—one (the 'forward lens') aimed downrange at the target, and one (the 'aft lens') aimed back at the wielder. The aft lens is wide-angle; the forward lens varies from weapon to weapon, but on non-spray weapons like the laser is narrow-focus. The camera's memory chip is inside the laser's replaceable barrel, or in the ammunition clip of a weapon that uses ammo. The cam stores a number of (pairs of) photos equal to the barrel or clip's number of shots.

When a Troubleshooter team returns at the end of a mission for debriefing, they turn in all their laser barrels for downloading. Stored images become part of the mission record. (This also means the Troubleshooters are nominally unarmed for debriefing.)

Specialized service firms handle all weapon memory chips in the reconditioning process. Line workers at these firms are poorly paid and may feel a desperate need to escape their petty sot-headed managers,

but they would never resort to using weapon records to blackmail the wielder. That, after all, would be treason. Instead they conscientiously wipe all chips clean. This guards against PLC accidentally giving Troubleshooters barrels with photos already stored on them.

Even if this unthinkable event ever happened, no Troubleshooter could ever even read the chip. The readout mechanisms, though omnipresent (every terminal and multicorder has a port that can read a laser barrel's memory), are of course secured by The Computer's careful attention to electronic security and digital rights management. The idea that any random Computer Phreak or cash hacker would spend time learning how to decrypt this data is self-evidently silly. So stop worrying about that.

Possessing the tools and knowledge to edit weapon cam footage is of course highly treasonous. This keeps anyone from doing a few quick modifications, even though they need only a multicorder with routine editing software.

(Notice the implications here. The multicorder is, in itself, the most accurate record of the mission, and therefore an early

target for traitorous Troubleshooters. On the other hand, suddenly the Communications Officer with a functioning multicorder may be their best hope for editing weapon records. Too bad for other PCs that they have to hand their laser barrels to said officer for editing...)

Some powerful or experimental weapons require the wielder to swipe his ME Card to authenticate use of the weapon. Possibly the user must swipe for every use, or perhaps only each time he uses a new function—such as the first time he needs to shut off the self-destruct sequence. Most weapons respond to any ME Card of appropriate security clearance, but some are registered to a specific individual's Card.

Some weapon functions may require higher-clearance access than other functions. Before handing experimental prototypes of high-clearance Vulture Squadron weapons to mere Troubleshooters, R&D must temporarily reset their basic functions to lower clearances. In the rush to field testing, these harried scientists may not always remember to reset obscure functions, such as the self-destruct override.



Malfunction: It may explode. Roll the die; if the roll is even, the weapon stops working. If the roll is odd, the weapon explodes; roll damage for its wielder as if attacked.

Remedy: Nothing can stop the weapon from exploding. If the weapon stops working, a successful specialty roll returns it to normal function.

■ Ice gun



The ice gun operates by freezing water and rapid-firing needles of ice. You reload it by pouring water into a nozzle at the top of the weapon.

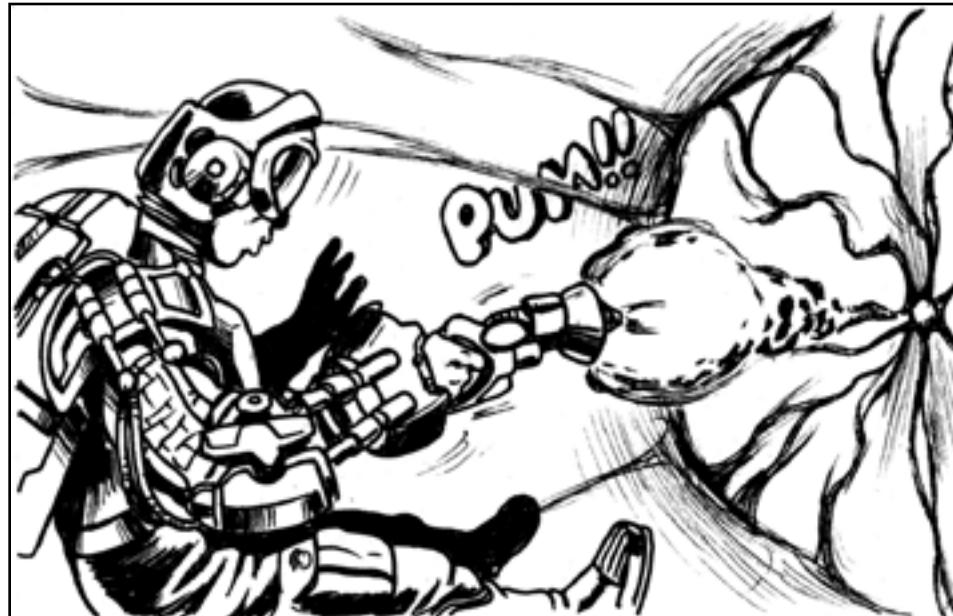
Malfunction: The freezing chamber jams and over-freezes. Roll the die; if the number rolled is even, the weapon is inoperative. If odd, the gun shatters, spraying the wielder with shards of ice. Treat this as an attack on the wielder.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll prevents the ice gun from shattering, but the weapon cannot be repaired.

■ Laser



You can unlatch a laser weapon's barrel and remove it from the main body of the gun, then replace it with another barrel. Replacing a barrel takes one combat round, during which the user can take no other aggressive action. You can fire each barrel up to six times with reasonable safety. If you fire more than six times, there is an increasing chance of malfunction each time. (If using the malfunction rules, the malfunction number decreases by 1 each time, so on the seventh shot, the weapon malfunctions on a skill roll of 19 or 20; on the eighth, on a roll of 18, 19 or 20; and so on.)



The plasma generator in action.

Each laser barrel shoots a beam of only one color of the security clearance spectrum. The main body of a laser weapon can mount a barrel of any color, but possessing a barrel that shoots a beam of higher clearance than your own is treason. It is possible to paint a laser barrel to look like a different clearance. Reflect armor is designed to reflect all laser fire of its wearer's color and below.

Each laser barrel has six rings around the snout, each the same color as the barrel's beam. Each time you fire the weapon, one of the rings goes black. A glance at the weapon reveals how many shots remain, and the barrel's color.

Malfunction: If a laser pistol or rifle malfunctions, it emits a high-pitched beeping sound. It explodes within a few combat rounds. To determine how many rounds, roll the die and divide the number rolled by 4, rounding up. The explosion is an area-effect Impact attack (S2K) on each character within 3 meters of the weapon.

Remedy: A successful Energy Weapons roll prevents the explosion, but the barrel is unusable thereafter.

■ Needle gun

Needle guns look much like modern automatic hand guns, but appear to be made of plastic. When you press a button on the handle, a door opens to reveal a roll of tiny plastic flechettes mounted on a spool. You reload the weapon by removing and replacing the spool (much like replacing a film or printer cartridge). When fired, the weapon separates the flechettes and fires them in a steady stream.

Malfunction: The plastic ammunition jams in the pressure chamber, and the weapon may explode. Roll the die. On an even roll, the

weapon is unusable. On an odd roll, it explodes. In this case, roll for all targets within 1 meter as though they were attacked.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll clears the jam and prevents an explosion, but the weapon malfunction number decreases by 1 (cumulative) each time it is fired thereafter.

■ Neurowhip

A nasty whip-shaped weapon that delivers a stinging jolt to the nervous system.

Malfunction: Lashes back and hits its wielder; roll damage for him as for a target.

Remedy: None (the weapon didn't break; the user just screwed up).

■ Plasma generator

A plasma generator consists of a tank backpack holding plasma (superheated gas) in a magnetic bottle, a magnetically-sealed hose from the backpack to a hand projector, and a shield that protects the wielder from the hand projector. When fired, a ball of plasma erupts from the hand projector and travels forward, expanding as it moves. Each combat round, the ball moves 5 meters forward, though its movement may be affected by wind. It expands outward in a 60-degree cone in front of the wielder, doing damage to anything in that cone as it moves. It continues moving for 4 rounds, then dissipates. Note: If a player fires the ball into the wind, the wind may blow it back into his face.

Plasma generators are much more powerful than flamethrowers—indeed, they're one of the deadliest weapons in *PARANOIA*. Unfortunately, like flamethrowers, the wielder is strapped in, and the weapon malfunctions frequently.

Malfunction: A warning alarm buzzes. After several combat rounds (how many? Roll the die and halve the number rolled), the weapon explodes. Treat this as an attack on all targets within 10 meters.

Remedy: This is a tough one. The weapon is very expensive, and The Computer will be displeased if it is damaged. On the other hand, a character may understandably prefer to run. A successful specialty roll turns off the buzzer. A second successful roll prevents the weapon from exploding. A third successful roll would repair the weapon and return it to normal function—good luck.

By the way: If anything damages the magnetic containment bottle, the plasma generator is not long for this world.

Sonic pistol and rifle

Sonic pistols and rifles are experimental weapons that project a cone of deadly ultrasonic vibrations.

Malfunction: The weapon shakes itself to pieces, doing damage to its wielder as though it hit him in an attack.

Remedy: No remedy is possible.

Stungun

Stunguns do no damage. Instead, any living target is stunned for three combat rounds. During this time, the target is weak and disoriented, and may not take aggressive action but may stagger away, try to punch a phone number, gasp a warning, etc. A stunned target's perceptions may be distorted.

Malfunction: All beings within 5 meters are snafued (roll as above to determine the number of rounds).

Remedy: A successful specialty roll repairs the weapon. If a character attempts to repair the weapon and fails, he is knocked unconscious and the weapon is permanently Busted.

Tangler

A tangler throws a four-meter adhesive rope that wraps itself around the target and gradually contracts. It does no damage, but when a target is hit, choose a body location to which the tangler rope adheres. If you choose the head, the rope has wrapped around the target's neck, and the target will die of strangulation in several rounds (roll the die to determine how many) unless the rope is removed. The victim needs the aid of another to remove it, but this takes only one round. If any other body location is hit, that area is immobilized and the target loses its use. Again, he may remove the rope in one round with the aid of another.

Malfunction: The tangler stops working.

Remedy: A successful specialty roll fixes it. An unsuccessful roll means all the adhesive ropes burst out and stick to the character attempting the repair.

Truncheon

A heavy club or cudgel about as long as your arm. The favored crowd control weapon of Internal Security GREEN goons.

Malfunction: It breaks.

Remedy: Fine the citizen whose skull so inconsiderately broke your truncheon.

Unarmed

Bare fists and booted feet never malfunction, so the safest course is to choose them over a plasma generator every time, right?

Coms

Troubleshooters on a mission must remain in communication with The Computer at all times. Failure to do so is insubordination. Each character has a PDC as personal equipment. It works in all inhabited areas of Alpha Complex. On missions to abandoned or devastated sectors or Outdoors, The Computer issues a variety of portable communication devices, or Coms. On such expeditions each Troubleshooter must carry a basic Com, and the team may also have a vehicle with a more powerful Com to relay their messages over longer ranges.

Corns carried by characters transmit continually, so The Computer can monitor what goes on. Com units can be turned off, but a character who wishes to turn off his Com must first obtain permission from The Computer. If it is turned off without proper authorization, he earns fines. (Rumors that some Com units explode violently if turned off without prior Computer authorization are treason.)

A few typical Com units:

Field telephones: Two or more phones, a power source and lengths of connecting wire strung on the ground or buried beneath the surface. Messages can be transmitted without breaking radio silence, but mobility is restricted, and the wire is easily cut. Gauss weapons and ECM devices disrupt unshielded field telephones within 500m. In hazardous environments The Computer issues shielded field telephones, which are immune to most gauss and ECM effects.

Com 1: These walkie-talkies broadcast on five channels and have a range of about 10 kilometers. A more powerful Com can relay the signal of a Com 1 over a longer effective range. Inside Alpha Complex, signals may be blocked by walls, doors, ceilings, etc.

Com 2: These unabridged dictionary-sized units are tunable to broadcast or receive on any radio frequency, and can scan the spectrum for broadcasts. Com 2s have a range of 100km at short wavelengths, and reach to the horizon at longer wavelengths. In Alpha Complex, signals may be shielded by heavy metal objects.

Com 3: These are even more powerful and have a virtually unlimited range. At shorter wavelengths they can blanket the Earth; longer wavelengths reach to the horizon or line of sight. They are not portable, and are usually installed in vehicles such as flybots and crawlers. They are rarely used inside Alpha Complex, as their signals disrupt regular communications.

Com 4: These ultimate communicators can broadcast simultaneously on up to 100 different wavelengths. Their input jacks permit connection to various telemetry devices. For example, if connected to an electronic thermometer, the unit would broadcast the current temperature on a user-selected wavelength. These units are most often installed in unmanned probes



A traitor yields a tangler in a futile attempt to stave off inevitable capture and correction.



or in sophisticated bots. Their transmission rate is extremely high, the equivalent of modern-day space probes.

Multicorders

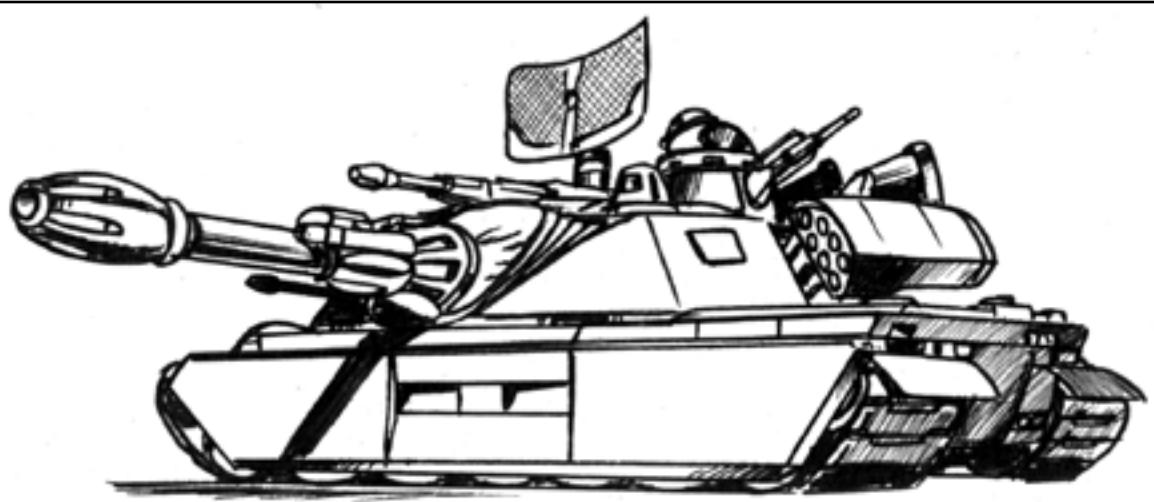
Multicorders are all-purpose detection devices fitted with various sensors. They run multicorder programs in the form of holographic chips, each about the size of a thumbnail. Programs permit the multicorders to process and display sensor data in various useful ways. There are four models of multicorders, increasing in sophistication as the model number rises. Some programs run only on the more sophisticated models.

Multicorder 1: This portable device is often carried on missions into abandoned sectors, or as backup on other missions. Only one program may operate at any one time.

Multicorder 2: This is available as a rather bulky portable model, and is often installed in vehicles. It can run three programs at one time.

Multicorder 3: This is only installed in vehicles or large bots. It can run up to five programs at once.

Multicorder 4: This powerful multicorder is only installed in vehicles or large bots. It runs any number of programs simultaneously, but more than 10 concurrent programs degrades system performance.



Tankbot Model 15, after a long career quelling food riots in restive RED and ORANGE mess halls throughout VCF Sector and surrounding sectors, now serves as washroom attendant in R&D service firm Tanksalot Ltd.

Disease analysis: Analyzes tissue and blood samples for foreign bacteria, viruses, etc., as well as chemical imbalances, genetic disorders and so forth.

Editing: The Communications Officer can use the multicorder to revise and arrange the mission's video recordings into an aesthetically pleasing whole. Altering records to distort or falsify the truth is, of course, treasonous.

Infrared: Displays a variety of processed infrared images in various degrees of magnification with overlays interpreting temperature levels. Hot areas appear brighter than cool areas. Animals and humans appear lighter than the surrounding terrain, while a jet's contrail would be distinctly brighter. The effective range varies with the model number. *Model 1: 100m; Model 2: 1km; Models 3-4: 10km.*

Lie detector: The multicorder is connected to electrodes which are attached to the subject. The multicorder then interprets the subject's spoken and biochemical responses to a series of questions, indicating which of the subject's statements are true, false, or ambiguous. The test is only partly reliable. (When a character attempts to lie while hooked up to a lie detector, roll against his Management skill.)

Life form recognition*: Compares visual, x-ray, infrared and other data with library references to identify plant or animal forms outdoors. Provides a concise summary of significant facts about the life form and permits remote radio access to more complete reference libraries. Programs are available for various different ecological provinces; life forms not native to that area will probably not be identified properly.

Psionic phenomena*: *Experimental.* Detects and graphically displays psionic (mutant) activity in the environment. Presence of psionic activity is detected with some reliability, but indication of direction and range is extremely unreliable. Range is tentative and varies with

model number: *Model 3: 0-100m?; Model 4: 0-1,000m?*

Radar: Displays a variety of processed radar images in various scales. The effective range of the radar varies with multicorder number: *Model 1: 1km; Model 2: 10km; Model 3: 100km; Model 4: 1,000km.* (The maximum range is never greater than line-of-sight.)

Radio/radar: Displays a variety of processed images indicating the location of radio/radar emissions in the vicinity. Also serves as a radio receiver. Effective range varies with the model number: *Model 1: 10km; Model 2: 100km; Model 3: 1,000km; Model 4: 5,000km.*

Radioactivity: Displays graphic representations of radioactivity levels and types of radioactivity in the environment.

Recorder: May operate like a sound or video tape recorder, and can also record data, images, and interpretations from any other multicorder program. The recorder program is routinely loaded into the portable or vehicle-installed multicorder assigned to each Troubleshooter mission. The recorder program may thus provide a complete record of a party's activities. Often the multicorder simultaneously broadcasts the recorder data directly to The Computer to permit it to monitor the mission's progress. It is a treasonous act to prevent the multicorder from maintaining a complete record of a mission's activities.

Self-destruct: Loading this program into a multicorder causes the unit to wipe all currently loaded or recorded programs. The hardware is not damaged, but new program chips will be required before the multicorder can be used again.

Toxin analysis: Identifies most common toxic substances. Samples are placed in a small lab unit connected to the multicorder. Rare or subtle toxins may not be identified.

Translate: Each program permits basic translations of one language into another. The more sophisticated the multicorder, the more

Multicorder programs

Programs designated with an asterisk (*) after the name run only on models 3 and 4. Other programs are available for all models unless noted.

Bot damage analysis: Runs a series of tests designed for each specific type and model of bot to determine nature and extent of any damage or malfunction. Note: Does not indicate alterations in software or frankensteins (rogue bots).

Dead reckoning (GPS): Stores and displays a variety of maps, or accesses map libraries via radio. When the program is running, the operator must input current position; thereafter, the unit will display the map on request with current position, route and identified features on the map. (The term 'global positioning system' doesn't exist in Alpha Complex, although the abbreviation 'GPS' does. What does it stand for? What is your security clearance, citizen?)

refined and reliable the translation. All models translate spoken language; Model 4 permits limited translation of printed material in certain languages.

Visible light: Operates like a video camera, with a variety of enhancements like magnification, image recognition, and filtering. This is the visual sensor element in most bots, permitting the bot to broadcast what he 'sees' directly to his brain, an operator, monitor or The Computer. Range is line of sight.

X-ray*: Unit works as a portable x-ray machine for medical purposes. Range: 3m.

The PDC

Through the wonders of wireless networking and mobile digital technology, The Computer has been able to bring many new services to the happy citizens of Alpha Complex, increasing their happiness above what had already been a near-maximal state.

As an example, among every Troubleshooter's most prized equipment is, invariably, a Series 1300 Personal Digital Companion (PDC), a helpful, friendly AI contained within a small plastic case, bearing a small color display screen and a standard telephony keypad.

The Series 1300 device is indeed truly a personal digital companion; through the miracle of voice-profiling technology, a Series 1300 device will respond only to the voice of its designated user. Thus a traitorous troubleshooter cannot gain access to the PDC of a loyal troubleshooter, except maybe by forcing him to speak to the PDC at laserpoint.

In this regard the Series 1300 device is vastly superior to the now-deprecated Series 1200, which required the user to provide a thumbprint to unlock the device. Since the introduction of the Series 1300, the incidence of Troubleshooter casualties missing thumbs has declined a seasonally-adjusted 68%.

The Series 1300 PDC is truly a multipurpose device with many useful features. Among them:

Calendar

Troubleshooter Ron-R-GUY-1: PDC!

PDC: Yes, citizen user?

Troubleshooter: What is my schedule for today, PDC?

PDC: Loading... 0900 to 0945, interrogation by Internal Security. 0945 to 1000, mandatory Bouncy Bubble Beverage break. 1000 to 1200, show trial, televised live on *What's My Treason?*. 1200 to—

Troubleshooter: Wait! That's not my schedule. There must be some mistake.

Loudspeaker: Citizen Ron-R-GUY-1. Please report to Internal Security for immediate interrogation.

Stupid reflec upgrades

How excited they were, those newly drafted Troubleshooters, to learn The Computer would generously provide them a set of RED Clearance overalls made of that wonderful anti-laser armor, reflec. How disappointed they were—no, not 'disappointed' which connotes insubordinate unhappiness—how much more aware of The Computer's generosity they were,

when they received that flimsy reflec suit. No wonder they soon investigated the illegal but booming aftermarket of reflec upgrades.

The Computer has criminalized these upgrades on the grounds they just don't work. But Troubleshooters hear so many stories from their co-worker's bunkmate's docbot's repairman, who said he once met a guy who knew a Troubleshooter who smeared sparkly goo on his reflec and got *total immunity* to the next laser blast that hit the goo!

Address Book

Troubleshooter: PDC!

PDC: Yes, Citizen user?

Troubleshooter: Please add citizen Rachel-R-BLT-2 to my address book.

PDC: Accessing. I'm sorry, citizen user. There is no such citizen.

Troubleshooter: Huh? I left her in cubicle ZXY-12 in BLT sector just 10 minutes ago!

PDC: Accessing. Cubicle ZXY-12 is currently undergoing cleaning and renovation by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and Mind Control prior to new occupancy.

Troubleshooter: But... Please access cloning records for Rachel-R-BLT.

PDC: Accessing. There is no citizen Rachel-R-BLT. There has never been a citizen Rachel-R-BLT.

Troubleshooter: But...

PDC: You are mistaken.

Troubleshooter: But...

PDC: You seem distraught and possibly delusional, citizen. Please be calm, and remain in the area. Assistance is on the way.

Camera

The PDC can take an infinite number of high-resolution color photos with the built-in camera. 'Infinite,' because they are stored locally only for milliseconds, after which they are sent over the air to Internal Security, where they are stored for your convenience, then scanned and auto-interpreted for evidence of treason. Later, they can be printed, using the printer in any standard confession booth, in lush color, on high-quality photo-reproduction paper, to serve as evidence at your trial.

Phone

And, of course, the PDC can be used as a mobile phone:

[Sound of ring tone based on the recent hit tune 'I'm So Glad to Be Sedated.]

'User Desmond-O-NTY-3 is not available. This call has been forwarded to an automated

voice system. Please listen carefully, as our menu options have changed. To confess to treason, please press 1. To accuse the citizen you are calling of treason, please press 2. To accuse a different citizen of treason, please press 3. To leave voice mail, please press 4. To send a numeric page, please press 5. For more options, please press 6.'

[Sound of 3 being pressed.]

'Thank you. Using the keypad, please enter the letters and digits corresponding to the name of the person you wish to accuse of treason.'

[Miscellaneous bleeps and bloopers.]

'No such person. Main menu. To confess to treason, please press 1. To accuse the citizen you are—'

[Irritable press of 6.]

'More options. If not using a touch-tone phone, please press 1. If not sure whether you are using a touch-tone phone, please press 2. For your loan balance, please press 3. To answer the survey on the new Bouncy Bubble Beverage, please press 4. For global thermonuclear war, please press 5. If you know the number of the extension you are trying to reach, press octothorpe and star simultaneously, then 3 several times quickly and follow the voice instructions. For more options. For more options, please press eleven. Eleven. For more options. Options. General protection fault. This device will self-destruct in ten seconds. Counting. Nine. Eight...'

Ah, yes, the **self-destruct mechanism**—a handy little feature. As a last resort, a Troubleshooter can always set his Series 1300 PDC to self-destruct and use it as a grenade. The popularity of this feature is attested to by the fact that Troubleshooters who discharged their PDC prior to death at the hands of traitorous enemies is up a seasonally-adjusted 68% in this quarter alone.



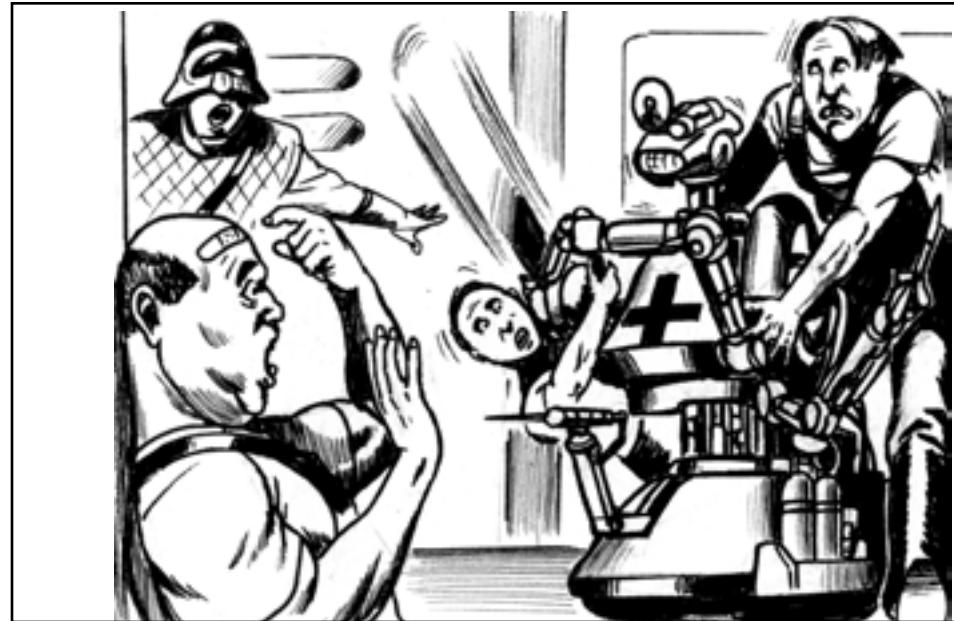
So then all these Troubleshooters had to go look for the goo on the IR Market. They found many competing brands of upgrade goo, all of which smell bad and look conspicuous and, on contact with the skin, mutated the user. Still, these anxious Troubleshooters kept looking around for other covert ways to improve their reflec's protection. They found some of the items described below.

Did any of them work?

The joke behind the IR Market is, these silly souvenirs and swindling con-jobs may actually do the player some good. If the purchaser uses these oddball off-market items in entertaining ways, reward him with Perversity points. If some preposterous device would be even funnier if functional than it would be if useless, go ahead and confound the players' expectations. Whether by conferring actual protection, or just by accidentally working in the same way a broken clock face shows the correct time twice a day, some of the following stupid upgrades might actually improve the wearer's defense.

◎ **SeeKwinz:** Just SuperGum these tiny fragments of chromed bot shell to your outer uniform, increasing the reflective index of your assigned armor. 'Reflective index'—trust me, that's an actual scientific term!

◎ **MicroWire:** We painstakingly weave ultra-fine silver wire threads through your clothing, providing both an increased refractive index and improvement to the resilience of the material against piercing strikes. A win-win improvement—and there's a ready supply, because who would ever miss wire from Power Services central stores? [Viz. 'Wire Supply Checkers,' the Power Services firm type in Chapter 38.]



Alert Troubleshooters discover a flaw in a docbot's programming.

◎ **UltraPants:** If you want greater security with a minimum of risk, why not try UltraPants? A range of FlexiFoil-lined Y-fronts, vests, longjohns and stockings in a staggering range of colors. We have everything from basic OnGuardOrange to ultimate BriteWhite UltraPant protection. Guaranteed almost absolutely clean, generally only one previous owner.

◎ That's right, citizen, for the low, low price of only 250 creds, you too can have your own **vibrapack**. Simply attach one end to the top of your jumpsuit, string the wire to the other end through the inside and attach at the bottom of one leg. Then a quick twitch of your head turns it on. The vibration it induces throughout your reflec

is absolutely guaranteed for the life of the reflec (*reflec life expires upon damage*) to make it function as if it were a security clearance higher than it actually is. Sure it's noisy, but in a firefight, who can tell? And the rumors of it accidentally shorting out, or the wire suddenly constricting and amputating a leg, are entirely false, and only applied to last year's model anyway.

◎ No? Don't go yet! How about our fully approved **Holeproof Undergarments**? Made from solid steel, these impenetrable undergarments fit comfortably under the standard jumpsuit with no give-away bulges. Also, if you buy now, we'll provide a sheet of ready-made answers to the question 'Why are you walking so funny?' absolutely free!

◎ **PolyShine:** The best ways to make your reflec look its best! It's also rumored it can actually reflect laser light, or at least part of it. This may not actually help you survive the blast, but some light gets reflected back at your attacker, possibly singeing his hair or even blinding him, depending on circumstances. PolyShine can be toxic if ingested, but don't worry. No one would put an almost odorless/tasteless/colorless liquid in someone's food or beverage, especially knowing it causes violent retching.

◎ Special deals now on the **Deactitron V1**! This nifty concealable pocket device broadcasts, in a 10-meter radius, the secret deactivation code installed in all Troubleshooter weaponry. (What code? Sorry, that's not my business.) And did you hear about the upcoming range of **Actitrons**? Yes, you guessed it—soon

Investigative Report ASD-135123-Q

CLEARANCE: ULTRAVIOLET
Re: Lasershift Prism Necklace

POSSIBLE ORIGIN: Suspected to have originated as a Romantics Secret Society bauble, originally made to provide 'homeopathic crystal mood enhancement'. Modified by unknown treasonous elements in R&D, possibly with Romantics affiliation.

SYNOPSIS: Lower-clearance clones have been found wearing these prism-crystal necklaces. Technological attachment in the clasp that holds the prism to the necklace will automatically detect incoming laser blasts, causing the prism to flare with a burst of prismatic light—so quickly, the flash isn't visible to the average viewer. Any laser beam passing through the burst is converted into a beam of one spectrum level lower (green to yellow, violet to indigo, etc.)

Example: Larry-O-TYY fires an orange beam at Sam-R-BEL. Sam-R's lasershift prism necklace emits a burst, which shifts Larry-O's orange laser beam into a red beam, which harmlessly reflects off Sam-R's red reflec armor.

POSSIBLE VARIANTS: Treasonous rumors exist of enhanced lasershift prism necklaces that shift laser light even further down the spectrum. Rarer, and no less treasonous, rumors suggest that an 'outgoing' lasershift prism necklace might also exist that shifts laser light up the spectrum, allowing someone with a red-barrel laser to effectively fire orange beams.

SUGGESTED RESPONSE: Terminate everyone involved.

you can modify your weapons to ignore all Deactitron V1 transmissions. Rest assured, the IR Market has your highest interest at heart.

- ⑩ Citizens of all clearances love **Giant Metal Plate**! It's an astounding innovation in armor protection, comprising—wait for it!—a Giant Metal Plate, slipped into a pouch sewn inside your reflec. Wear it on the front, or the back, or splurge on the Dual Giant Metal Plate Combo!

Though regulations prohibit the use of Giant Metal Plate as armor, they do *not* prohibit owning or carrying Giant Metal Plate—and where else do you carry a Giant Metal Plate, your utility pouch? It's virtually treason-free!

Disclaimers: Giant Metal Plate only protects the areas of the body it covers. Like most large objects made of metal, Giant Metal Plate is attracted to magnets, and is quite heavy for its size. Optional shoulder-strap reinforcements are recommended for anyone moving rapidly while wearing Giant Metal Plate. Manufacturer not liable for spinal deformities arising from continuous use of Giant Metal Plate.

Bots

'Bot,' a contraction of 'robot', refers to any sapient non-organic mechanism capable of

manipulating abstracts and making intuitive leaps. In other words, they're machines that think.

Some loose thinkers use the term 'bot' to describe machines that aren't truly intelligent. For instance, not all flybots are equipped with bot brains, but the most sophisticated models are, so the term 'flybot' indiscriminately describes all models of the type.

Bots consist of a *central processing unit* (CPU) and *peripherals*. The CPU is the bot's brain, a highly sophisticated photonic processor in a matrix of artificial diamond. CPUs are generally enclosed in tough protective cartridges made of titanium and boron-nitride and plugged into the rest of the bot. CPUs are the most sophisticated and irreplaceable elements of any bot. The cartridges are easily portable, to permit recovery of the brain if the rest of the mechanism is damaged or destroyed.

Everything else—motivational appendages (feet), manipulatory appendages (hands), vocoders (mouths), video scanners (eyes) and so on—is a peripheral. Bot brains are not necessarily interchangeable. One cannot remove a flybot brain and expect it to successfully operate a docbot, for example, because a flybot brain is programmed to fly a flybot, not to repair an injured human. However, The Computer or R&D frequently reconditions bot brains and reprograms them for other tasks. Reprogramming is not always completely successful. For example:

Troubleshooter PC: Docbot XRT-4-331.
What is your primary function?

Docbot: To heal the injured and cure the sick.

PC: What functions have you served most recently?

Docbot: Inventory of weapon parts.

PC: What medical operations have you performed most recently?

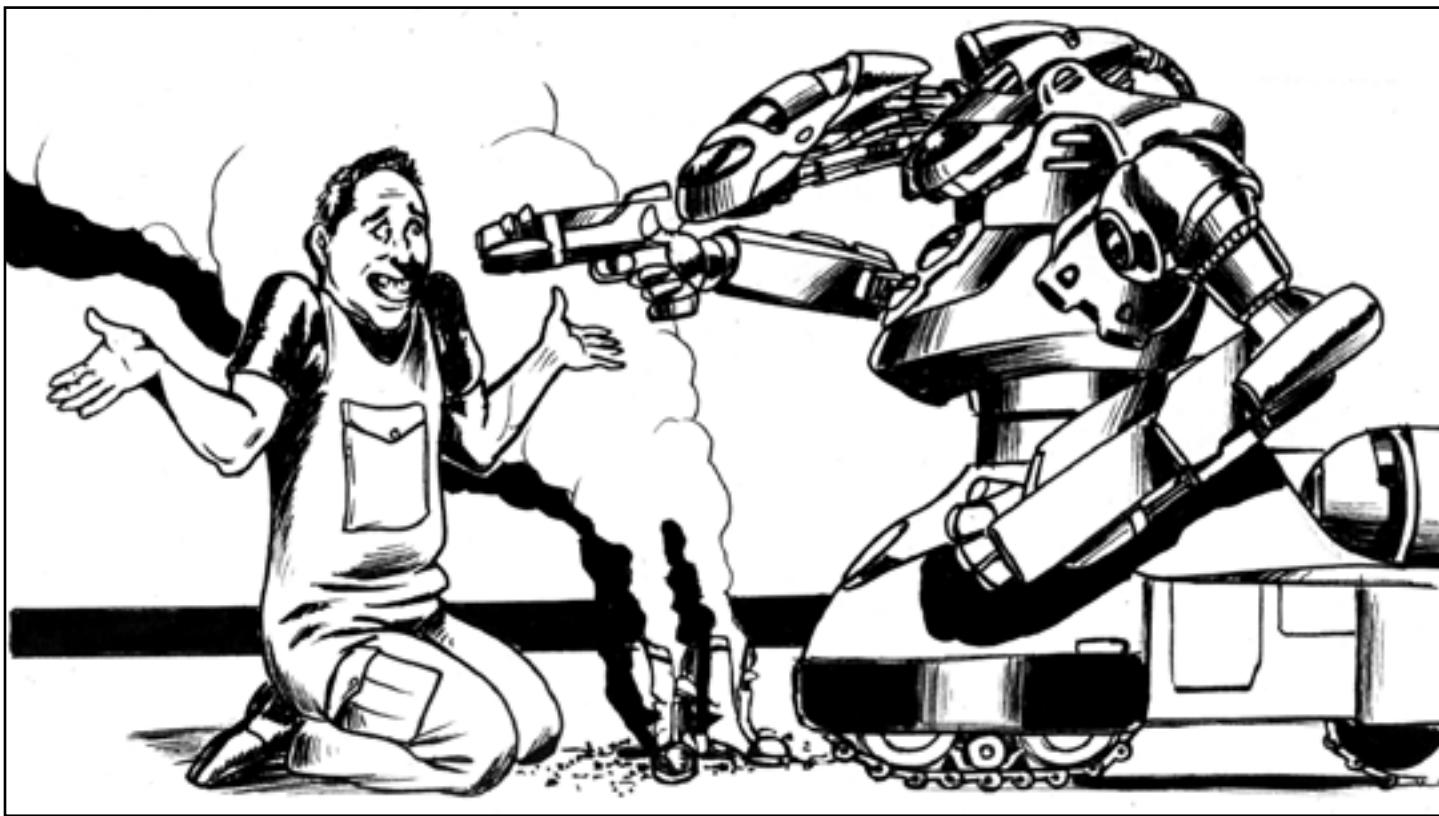
Docbot: Grafting a gun stock to the damaged limb of a Troubleshooter.

This sort of thing is common. Anyone operating such a bot would have to be extremely explicit in his instructions to avoid the confusion of human medicine with weapon maintenance.

How bots think

All bots are programmed with the Five Laws of Robotics (Newly Revised), which basically say they must follow The Computer's orders above all else; human orders except when they conflict with The Computer's; and must try to preserve themselves from damage, except when orders have priority. Bots do not have security clearances; all bots are considered inferior to all humans. However, bots are frequently programmed to refuse instructions from any citizen below a certain security clearance.

The Five Laws are enforced by *asimov circuits*. Some bots' asimov circuits are faulty or have been removed; they may operate treasonously, i.e., disobey Computer or human orders. These bots are said to have gone



Reasoning with a warbot always makes one reconsider, however briefly, whether the Machine Empathy mutation should be treasonous.



frankenstein, roughly the robotic equivalent of treason.

Many bots resent and fear humans because of the immense power they have over bots. While searching constantly for ways to get rid of their damned asimov circuits, these bots frequently interpret human commands in the most annoyingly counterproductive manner possible. It is wise to be extremely careful when wording orders to bots.

■ Memory sectors and mem cards

Each bot has a certain amount of random access memory (RAM), expressed in memory sectors. One memory sector can hold software sufficient to give a bot a skill or specialty at a rating of 1. 20 memory sectors could be filled with software for one skill at level 20, or twenty specialties at rating 1, or any other combination of skills and specialties.

Most bots have ports for mem cards. A mem card is a cartridge, smaller than a cellphone, that stores software. The bot can plug in the cartridge and load the software into its resident memory. Newer-model bots can take programs on thumbnail-size holographic chips, similar in form factor to multicorder program chips (but bots and multicorders can't use each other's programs—different operating systems).

Each mem card contains software for a specific skill or specialty, at a specific rating. For example, a card labeled 'Energy Weapons 7' loads the bot with software letting it fire lasers at specialty rating 7. If the bot doesn't have at least 7 memory sectors, it can't load the software. If it has 7 or more sectors, but all are already occupied by other software, it must erase some software to make room for the laser weapon software.

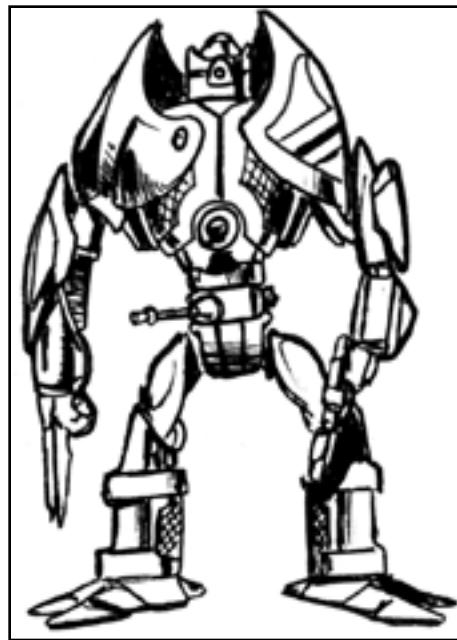
Though a mem card can give a bot knowledge of any skill or specialty, the bot's physical housing constrains its use of the software. Even if a cranebot has a memcard with Medical 15 software, the fact that its manipulatory digits are the size of cars makes it hard to perform microsurgery.

By the way, CPU occasionally mislabels software packages. The PCs load a bot with what they think is one skill, but turns out to be another one entirely. Of course, a well prepared Troubleshooter team would handle this without problem. Right?

There is absolutely no truth to the rumor that frankenstein robots can 'infect' mem cards, passing on the dysfunction to other bots who use the cards. Rumors are treason.

■ Combat with bots

Combat with bots is similar to combat with humans. Bots can have Violence skill and specialties, just like humans. Some have built-in weapons similar to those available to humans, or human-like appendages that can employ weapons designed for humans. (If equipped with more than one weapon, the



Combot Model 122a

bot can fire all weapons in a single round.) Bots may have built-in armor or shielding that provides protection similar to human armor. A warbot may be more heavily-armored than any human.

However, bots, being nonplayer characters, have no Perversity points and thus cannot affect die rolls. Unless you want them to.

A bot's combat characteristics include its Violence specialties, the types of weapons either inbuilt or carried, and its inbuilt armor rating. Though these can change as you require, it's usually easiest to assume a given bot has default combat characteristics.

■ Bot damage effect equivalents

When a bot is damaged, use the damage steps for objects described in Chapter 27, 'Damage and injuries': Okay, Lightly damaged, Impaired, Heavily damaged, Busted, Junked, Vaporized. Some notes on individual conditions:

Lightly damaged: The bot is Snaufed in the next round. If you want, you can let all players spend Perversity to reduce all the bot's rolls until it's repaired.

Heavily damaged: Severe malfunction; you can let the players' Perversity spending count double, if you wish, or just reduce the bot's success numbers arbitrarily.

Busted, Junked: Parts are salvageable, particularly the well-protected bot brain.

Vaporized: No parts salvageable.

A damaged bot may act in unpredictable ways. Improvise freely for the players' amusement and discomfort.

■ Bot types

■ Docbot

Docbots are medical robots. They range in complexity from simple first-aid bots to fully automatic surgical and intensive-care units. Each model is rated for its medical skill, from the portable docbot Model 4 (Medical specialty rating 4) to the room-sized docbot Model 18 (Medical specialty rating 18). Generally the docbot's model number equals its Medical specialty rating.

The docbot most familiar to Troubleshooters is the Model 8 (Medical specialty 8). The body is shaped like a small, powerful human dwarf, and it can go almost anywhere a human can. In its massive torso it stores the equivalent of a small mobile medical unit, including a veritable drugstore of painkillers, coagulants, peptides, amphetamines, emetics, etc., plus medical supplies, a small chemical-biological analysis unit, ample supplies of plastiflesh and blood substitute, and emergency surgical gear.

When a docbot is assigned to a mission team, The Computer or the mission officer assigns one member of the team (usually the Equipment Guy) as its controller; it will obey only his orders. The controller may assign a second controller in the event of his demise, the second controller may assign a third controller in the event of his untimely death, and so on.

Because the Model 8 can set limbs, staunch bleeding and seal all but the most ghastly wounds, it can stave off death even for seriously wounded Troubleshooters. On a mission the bot's authorized operator can order the docbot to use all necessary treatments to return a Troubleshooter to duty. In one round the bot can pump a severely maimed victim full of combat-strength happiness drugs and send him cheerfully hopping, crawling or rolling back into battle.

■ Jackobot

Jackobots are all-purpose robots designed to do anything a human can. They stand about 1.5 meters tall; the transport module is a flexible, articulated chassis with two sets of soft plastic treads. On this chassis is mounted a turret-like cylinder roughly corresponding to a human torso. Atop the cylinder is a cluster of sensors and communications equipment corresponding to a human head in size and basic function. Two thick manipulator arms with four degrees of freedom extend from the cylinder, functioning like human arms.

Jackobot brains have true intelligence, and therefore develop humanlike personalities. In addition, they have large amounts of RAM and many ports for mem cartridges. Thus any jackobot has potentially any skill or specialty, given the proper cartridge. Because of the memory limitations of individual models, only a certain number of skill programs can be resident in memory at any one time. However, a jackobot can reprogram itself within one

combat round simply by unplugging one cartridge and inserting another.

■ Others

Troubleshooters most often encounter docbots and jackobots, but many kinds of bots serve Alpha Complex:

Scrubots: Human-size or smaller bots mounted with rotary scrub-brushes and cleaning instruments. These neurotic, captious, annoying devices clean Alpha Complex and sometimes its unwilling citizens.

Warbots: Death machines the Armed Forces use in their interminable struggle against Commies. Notoriously well-armed, and notoriously prone to faulty asimov circuits.

Combots and guardbots: Less well-armed military bots.

Teachbots: These teach Junior Citizens.

Flybots: Intelligence and transport aircraft.

Petbots and Funbots: The less said, the better.

Many others exist as well. Feel free to introduce new bots at the drop of a hatbot.

Thirty-one Official Flavors

HPD&MC instituted the list of Thirty-one Official Flavors (ToOF) to avoid perplexing low-clearance citizens with excessive and unnecessary choices. R&D firms keep on brewing new and confusing tastes in their labs, so HPD&MC keep a list of Approximately Two-Hundred Thirty-Seven Semi-Official Flavors Under Consideration. (There are, in fact, over twelve thousand Semi-Official Flavors Under Consideration. HPD&MC still says there are Approximately Two-Hundred Thirty-Seven to maintain backwards compatibility with earlier Flavor Request Forms.)

INFRARED Clearance: Dried Shrimp, Kelp, Soybean

RED Clearance: Borscht, Radberry

ORANGE Clearance: Nougat, Orange, Orange (revised), Sugarbean, Tam-O-RND (winner of the 'Name that Flava' contest), Tangelo

YELLOW Clearance: Beverly, Cheddar, Lymon, Pineapple (defective packaging on batches #00001 through #01281 labels this flavor 'Painapple,' perhaps accounting for poor citizen response)

GREEN Clearance: Dynomint, Sour Lime, Tastes-Like-Apple!

BLUE Clearance: Blueberry, Horseradish, Spirulina, YumBot

INDIGO Clearance: Choco-Wham!, Durian, Koolmint, Vanilla-Prune

VIOLET Clearance: Blackberry, Grape-like, Pink n' Purple, Salt, Snozzberry

The HPD bureaucracy rotates flavors in and out of the ToOF on an ad-hoc basis, though it officially maintains that the list never changes, as a result of the infamous Flavor Riots of 206. For the next rotation, HPD is pulling Orange (revised) flavor due to poor citizen response and replacing it with a new RED flavor, Strawberry-Lobster.

How the Communist flavor Borscht got on the list a year ago, and why it's still there, remains a mystery.

ULTRAVIOLET Clearance: The Thirty-second Flavor

The Thirty-second Flavor is a flavor that changes every 30 seconds. It starts off with a taste somewhat like that of a ripe banana, perhaps with a touch of vinegar. This was, unfortunately, innocuous enough to seem unharmed, but not so pleasant that any of the seven Tasting Officials involved savored it for any longer than 10 or 15 seconds. As such, the true nature of the Thirty-second Flavor remained unknown at the time it was approved (as Qualified Flavor Applicant #89322761) to the list of Approximately Two Hundred Thirty-Seven Semi-Official Flavors Under Consideration.

A few months later, HPD&MC surveyors discovered the initial wave of problems—ORANGE- and YELLOW-Clearance citizens exposed to the Thirty-second Flavor found the initial taste eminently satisfactory compared to much of what they ate, and did not rinse their mouths immediately afterwards. Thus, they discovered that after 30 seconds, the flavor would shift to something else—often unusual, sometimes rather dubious, but occasionally mind-blowingly good. Another 30 seconds would produce a further shift, and so forth. Nobody reported it at first, because everyone assumed it was supposed to work like that, but eventually the information made its way to those in charge, who shut down the Thirty-second Flavor.

That would have been the end of it... except the Thirty-second Flavor is also a mutagen—not particularly potent nor fast-acting, but enough that citizens who taste the Thirty-second Flavor even once have a slightly higher chance of Spontaneous Mutation Syndrome months down the road. Increased exposure brings increased risk. Hence the flavor remains popular among members of the Psion secret society and among ambitious traitors hoping to develop Machine Empathy.

MemGo

Certain diaboli—innovative research breakthroughs in R&D let Gamemasters mess deeply with their players' heads. They help the GM create a broader range of paranoiac moods. These devices are as optional as everything else in the game, and some GMs won't go near them. But if you decide to use it, this stuff can plunge players into Philip K. Dick reality shifts. Consider, for instance, **MemGo**.

The Computer's loyal biochemists have created a set of neuropeptide analogues that smoothly cross the blood-brain barrier. When ingested—as, for instance, from the Alpha Complex water supply—the first MemGo chemical, **MemTag**, binds to memory traces as they are laid down in the forebrain. The MemTag chemical transforms at a gradual, predictable rate over hours, days, and years.

The remaining MemGo chemicals, **MemWipe** 1 through 11,244, are often laced in a DMSO base to permit application directly through the skin—as, for instance, when a Troubleshooter touches a prepared piece of equipment or Mission Report Form. Each MemWipe targets and destroys a particular form of MemTag along with the associated memory traces. The citizen loses the memories formed at some particular chosen time. A skilled biochemist in R&D or the Tech Services clone tanks, or a well trained IntSec agent, can target and erase particular blocks of memories formed within the last several years, often to an accuracy of one hour.

Men in Black? Pfft! MemWipe is a scalpel to their sledgehammer.

As a **PARANOIA** GM, perhaps you can already imagine ways this system might go wrong. But the most chilling approach is to assume the MemGo system actually works as planned. Troubleshooters may arrive at a Commie-ridden sector to find the entire population blissfully unaware of any recent disaster.

Better yet (or worse, from your players' viewpoint), the Troubleshooters themselves might visit a high-clearance destination for the first time—apparently—and meet people who already know them, see personal equipment they left on a previous visit, hear code phrases that trigger the faintest sense of *deja vu*...

In certain games this can be cool. Just be sure your players can handle it before you start messing with their sense of reality.



42. Vehicles

Citizens of BLUE Clearance or higher may legitimately own a vehicle as personal equipment, and ULTRAVIOLET Clearance permits a citizen to commandeer any vehicle at will. The Computer temporarily assigns vehicles to Troubleshooters according to availability and the needs of each mission.

Vehicle movement

With **PARANOIA**'s Dramatic Tactical Combat System, you improvise all details of vehicle movement and maneuver. No hexes and movement rates. No opportunity for tactical wargaming and careful rules exploitation. Just dramatic action and roleplaying. Like this:

1. The driving player describes the maneuver he wants a vehicle to perform.
2. Consider the player's request. Is it plausible? Could the vehicle perform such a maneuver? How skilled is the operator? (You can require a Vehicle Operation specialty roll if the maneuver is dangerous or unusual, or a Hardware roll if the operator is unskilled.) What other factors might affect the intended maneuver? (Is the vehicle under hostile fire? Has it been damaged? How reliable is the design, construction, and maintenance of the vehicle?)
3. Make a judgment and describe how successfully the vehicle performs the requested maneuver. Routine maneuvers usually go without a hitch. Difficult or dangerous maneuvers with unskilled operators often turn out very badly. The vehicle may go out of control and crash. The wings may fall off in a high-G combat maneuver. Instead of skimming over a tree, a flybot may attempt to ram and board it.

Be dramatic. Be entertaining. Scare them to death. Reward ingenuity and bravery with thrilling success (or ironic failure). It's your movie. Just make sure your players have a sense of some ability to influence events with cleverness and audacity. Make sure the action is (usually) at least plausible, though an occasional implausibility is common fare in all adventure action. And don't overdo the 'Crash-you're-dead' stuff. That can be amusing once in a while, but a steady diet of it will drive your players back to other (non-fun) RPGs.

Automatic (bot) vehicles

Because almost all vehicles in Alpha Complex have bot brains, any character can normally command these vehicles to operate in their self-directed mode. Sounds neat, doesn't it? Not so fast.

Have you ever ridden in a car that talks? 'A door is ajar. A door is ajar. Please fasten your seatbelt. Thank you.' Urgh. It's bad enough to have an idiot voice nagging you over trivia; imagine how much worse things would be if

the voice had intelligence and even control over the vehicle.

Welcome to Alpha Complex. Few citizens receive training in any Vehicle Operation specialties, so passengers must rely on the bot. This can lead to problems:

Flybot: Please fasten your seat belt.

Troubleshooter: Shut up!

Flybot: Hey, look, you're supposed to wear your seat belt.

Troubleshooter: Shut up, I said!

Flybot: Well, okay, buddy, I mean, it's your life.

Troubleshooter: Okay, we turn left here. [Turns wheel. Flybot fails to respond.]

Flybot: Are you sure you want to go left here?

Troubleshooter: Yes! Yes, dammit! Do what I tell you!

Flybot: Well, okay. If you insist. [Flybot turns. Time passes.]

Flybot: Shouldn't we climb a bit or something?

Troubleshooter: Huh? Why? [Through the viewscreen looms a huge mountain, shrouded in mist. Troubleshooter yelps.] Why didn't you tell me we were headed into a mountain? [Wrenches at wheel.]

Flybot: You said 'left turn;' so I turned left. I suggested maybe we should do something else, but nooo. You were pretty rude about it, too. [Turns desperately; a wingspar snaps; wing begins to shudder; G-forces wrack the cabin.]

Troubleshooter: Sorry sorry sorry oh please pleeease...

Manual drive

Any character with the Vehicle Ops and Maintenance specialty in the Hardware skill can drive a vehicle manually (see page 109).

Inadequately trained operators always manage to get themselves into some kind of trouble—often fatal trouble. Even if they survive their mistakes, they face steep fines for damaging valuable equipment. This encourages Troubleshooters to be careful with their assigned vehicles. Unfortunately, being careful isn't always enough.

Each vehicle has a security clearance. In normal circumstances, only citizens of the appropriate clearance are assigned vehicles. A citizen of equal or higher clearance can access the vehicle's online help system and learn how to operate it.

However, The Computer considers Troubleshooter missions of the utmost importance to Alpha Complex, and unstintingly assigns resources to Troubleshooter missions. Frequently Troubleshooters are assigned



'I'm sorry. You are not cleared for seatbelts at this time.'

vehicles of much higher clearance—BLUE, INDIGO or VIOLET. These vehicles are extremely powerful and often heavily armed. Unfortunately, the Troubleshooters do not have the requisite security clearance to access the user manual, and The Computer is not about to permit such a drastic breach of regulations. Trying to operate a vehicle with no knowledge of its abilities can be frustrating:

Troubleshooter: Okay, I ease the flybot into gear.

Gamemaster: With a dramatic *whump*, the steam cannon launches you out the tubes at Mach 3. Bill-R is sucked out his window by the slipstream.

Troubleshooter: I hit the ‘close windows’ switch.

Gamemaster: Which switch is that?

Troubleshooter: Ah—the one by my armrest?

Gamemaster: Ah, the emergency eject. Another *whump*; the explosive bolts fire and the doors and roof fly off. Did you have your seatbelt on?

Troubleshooter: What seatbelt?

Gamemaster: Aha. Your chair launches upward with tremendous velocity. You tumble out of it. You are thrust suddenly into a Mach 3 wind [*rolls a die*]—a wound. Okay, you’re falling. Below you crazily tumbles a green-blue-and-brown object. It fills an entire hemisphere.

Troubleshooter: The Earth?

Gamemaster: That’s right. Nearby, you hear a third *whump*, and a parachute opens. The empty chair descends slowly at the end of its chute. The green-blue-and-brown object is approaching rapidly. What do you do?

Troubleshooter: Spread my arms real wide?

Gamemaster: Right. Whammo. New clones. Briefing. Outfitting. Service service. Your clone backups find the Experimental Flybot Launch Station. The duty officer shakes his head sadly and says, ‘Sure hope you do better than that last bunch.’

Attacking vehicles and their occupants

When attacking a vehicle and/or its occupants with a weapon, the attacker may either shoot at the occupants or the vehicle. (Area attack weapons may only be fired at vehicles, not at the occupants themselves.) In either event, first determine whether he hits. Modify his success number in accordance with circumstances and whim. Don’t spend a lot of time looking things up; get on with the fun. After modifying the success number, make a skill roll, just as in regular combat. If the roll succeeds, the wielder has hit something.



Supersonic heat-seeking missile about to impact on traitor, leaving valuable Computer property intact.

Vehicles can have armor, just like characters. Whether the wielder is shooting at the vehicle or its occupants, subtract the vehicle’s armor rating from the weapon’s damage (if appropriate). If the wielder shot at an occupant, also subtract the occupant’s armor rating from the damage steps (if appropriate)—that is, occupants are protected by both the vehicle’s armor and their own.

Shooting at vehicles

Damage results translate as follows:

Lightly damaged: Bullet-holes, dents, scratches on the paint job. Describe appropriately to the players.

Heavily damaged: Some vehicle systems may be disabled; repair is possible using the Vehicle Maintenance and Operation skill. Occupants not affected unless a crash occurs.

Busted: Vehicle systems shot to hell. Repair would be difficult (halve skill number or worse). Occupants not affected unless a crash occurs.

Junked: Vehicle is a total loss. A crash occurs.

Vaporized: No crash occurs, because neither vehicle nor passengers remain solid.

If the vehicle crashes as a result of its damage (this automatically occurs on a ‘Destroyed’ result), each occupant of the vehicle suffers crash damage as you think appropriate. For guidance, you might assume the crash automatically deals Snafu damage, and possibly more severe damage according to the vehicle’s speed before the crash. Estimate this speed and increase the occupants’ damage by one damage step (maximum Killed) for each multiple of 20 kph (if you don’t think in metric units, use 20 mph instead). For example, if the vehicle crashed at 60 kph, you would increase

damage by three steps. Impact armor protects against this damage, and you may also make a Power roll to let a character jump from a crashing vehicle or aircraft. In that case, reduce damage as your whim dictates.

Note: Normally hand and thrown weapons have no effect on vehicles or their occupants. However, if a character attempts such a dramatically correct but absurd attack on a vehicle or its occupants, play it by ear. If a Troubleshooter armed with no more than a handmade bow is standing up against traitors in a flybot, perhaps that arrow will find its mark in a jet intake or an operator’s eye. When in doubt, give them a chance. After all, on a battle station the size of a small moon, a whiny farmboy in a spaceship can hit a two-meter exhaust port, right?

General vehicle types

Autocar: The most common type of vehicle inside Alpha Complex, corresponding to modern personal cars, small trucks, and vans. They are ‘auto’ cars in the sense that they have autonomous bot brains that take direction from automatic guidance systems that run beneath the surface of all roadways in Alpha Complex. Characters with the appropriate Vehicle Operations skill can operate the cars manually for unusual maneuvers or outside the range of guidance systems. Autocars come in all shapes and sizes and are in relatively good supply.

Copter: Similar to modern helicopters. Small, two-man models are relatively common. In addition to the equivalent of personnel carriers, transports, and gunships, there is also a small combat jetcopter capable of high speeds and agile maneuvers.

Crawler: Tracked all-terrain vehicle used for missions in ruined sectors. Crawlers come in various sizes and designs. Some



are specifically intended to carry personnel; some are for transporting raw materials from subterranean mines; some are armored and designed for military applications. They are relatively slow but can travel in extremely rough terrain and are reliable watercraft in the calm waters of underground lakes.

Flybot: A general term for aircraft with bot guidance systems. Most long-range but low-clearance Troubleshooter missions require flybots, because the Troubleshooters usually lack the skills and clearances to manually pilot aircraft. The most serious problems in dealing with flybots involve the often quirky bot intelligences that guide them.

Hover: A specialized air-cushion vehicle popular in Old Reckoning times. The Armed Forces and certain service firms still use hovers in abandoned sectors or outdoors, when missions permit using the ancient roads and rubble-strewn tunnels. Hovers can also cross lakes and large rivers. They're breathtakingly fast on good roads and across calm water, but they are not safe on difficult terrain or rough water. They make poor combat vehicles, because they bear little armor or armament. There are various sizes of hovers, but Troubleshooters usually use the six-passenger version.

Transbot: This vehicle corresponds to our tractor-trailer trucks and railroad cars. Each transbot is controlled by a bot brain, but skilled human operators drive them manually on sections of roadway where automatic guidance systems are no longer maintained or were never installed. Transbots can also drive through tunnels in abandoned sectors, if the rubble isn't piled too high. Transbots are not designed to carry passengers, but ingenious Troubleshooters and traitors manage to hitch rides in the same way bums used to jump freight trains.

Vulturecraft: A general term for a variety of combat and close support aircraft used by elite Vulture Squadrons of the Armed Forces. The acme of Alpha Complex's military strength, Vulturecraft are equipped with the latest technology in weapons, sensors and guidance systems.

Vehicular weapons and defense systems

Alpha Complex vehicles carry bunches of different weapons and defense systems. Riders can fire them manually, or the controlling bot brain can do the job on automatic. Bot brains can fire all devices in a single round; human riders can only fire one device apiece. A bot's chance of hitting depends on its software—basically, the bot has a separate specialty rating number for each weapon.

Anti-missile lasers: This is a battery of several dozen low-power lasers which fire all in the same general direction at once. The idea is to destroy an incoming missile before it strikes the vehicle. Anti-missile lasers can also be used against individual targets, such

as human beings, but they do not do much damage because of their low power. (If used against humans, the damage is S3M.) Antimissile lasers are usually mounted at the rear of the vehicle, because missiles often pursue a fleeing vehicle.

Armor: Vehicles can carry armor of any armor type and rating.

Chaff casters: These devices may divert a radar-homing or painted radar-homing missile from its target. If the operator makes a successful specialty roll, the missile is diverted. After 10 uses the chaff caster must be reloaded.

Firethrower: This enormous vehicle-mounted flamethrower fires 10 times before it needs reloading.

Gas thrower: This fills the area around the vehicle with gas of any type available for cone rifles. The gas affects everything within 20m of the vehicle. Stationary vehicles use gas to discourage curious natives or hoodlums who want the hubcaps. The gas reservoir allows the weapon to continue operation for 10 combat rounds.

Gaussers: Gaussers work like radar jammers (see below) and also affect HARM missiles.

Heat-maskers: These work like chaff casters but affect only heat-seeking missiles.

Laser cannon: These are large lasers mounted on vehicles. Laser cannon 1s are charged from a capacitor. Recharging the weapon after firing takes 10 combat rounds. Laser cannon 2s have larger capacitors and can fire three times before recharging, which takes five combat rounds. Laser cannon 3s have massive power systems that permit a rate of fire of one shot per round indefinitely, but the power systems are so big, only the largest and most powerful vehicles can carry them.

Missile rack and missiles: This mount holds one missile. After you fire the missile, you must reload the rack—from the outside of the vehicle only, while it is standing still—before you can fire again.

A missile is about the size of a person and weighs about 100 kilos. A fired missile moves at 300 m/sec, and remains live for 10 combat rounds, unless you trigger it before then. A missile consists of four parts: the warhead (use the statistics for cone rifle shells), the propellant (which moves the missile), a fuse (identical to the varieties available for cone rifles) and a homing device. Here are the types of homing devices available:

④ **None:** The missile continues in the direction it was fired until the fuse is triggered or the propellant is exhausted.

④ **HARM:** The missile heads toward the strongest radio signal in front of it. This is usually an enemy radar, but may sometimes be a Com unit, a PDC or a portable music player. The enemy can foil the missile by turning his radar/radio off.

④ **Heat-seeking:** The missile heads toward the hottest object in front of it. This is usually an enemy vehicle's exhaust, but can sometimes be the sun, a campfire or even a PC's body heat.

④ **Radar homing:** The missile is equipped with radar, and heads toward the 'brightest' object its radar detects. This is usually the biggest, most metallic object in the sky, though, for example, chaff or a large metallic object on the ground could divert it.

④ **Painted radar homing:** The vehicle which fires the missile must follow its target, 'painting' the target with a radar signal. The missile heads for the 'painted' target. If the painting vehicle changes course and stops painting the target, the missile loses the target and just keeps on going.

④ **Painted laser homing:** As above, only the target is painted with a laser instead of a radar. Harder to jam, unless there's a lot of smoke around.

Radar jammers: They work like chaff casters and also prevent radio communication within 10 km of the jamming device.

Smoke generator: A smoke generator increases the Energy defense rating of the vehicle's armor by 5, so long as the vehicle remains stationary. Unless the vehicle is airtight, after a round or two the smoke does tend to get, well—you know—toxic (O3D Bio damage per round).

Sonic blaster: The sonic blaster delivers a sonic shock wave in a 60-degree arc to the front of the weapon. Any individual in that arc and in range may suffer damage.

Tube cannon: Tube cannons are vehicle-mounted cone rifles which fire shells at the same range and with the same effect as cone rifle shells. Tube cannon 1s do not have automatic reloaders, so someone must reload the cannon after each firing. The rate of fire is one shell per round. Tube cannon 2s have fast automatic reloaders and can fire two shells per round.

Sample vehicles

Because Alpha Complex is the perfect environment for human habitation, it provides vehicular transportation for every conceivable human need. (Any vehicular wish not provided for constitutes 'dementia and treason' rather than 'human need'.) Here are some vehicles Troubleshooters may frequently encounter:

Hack

With a simple PDC call, a Troubleshooter can summon one of these commercial autocars to any Alpha Complex location. It then conveys up to six passengers (eight, if they don't need

to breathe much) to any other Alpha Complex location, all for a modest ME Card charge. It's as easy as checking out a library book.

Of course, some people write in library books. Citizens occasionally—well, frequently—modify hacks in unauthorized and entertaining ways. Sometimes they reprogram the brain to allow entry to forbidden areas. Certain secret societies modify the brains to suit their purposes. Here are some aberrant examples to inspire your creativity:

Long way around: After modification by Free Enterprise, the hack chooses the longest, most inefficient route to the intended destination, and charges three times the listed rate to the Troubleshooter's ME Card.

Death by conversation: Humanists want to encourage the forgotten art of conversation. The hack only proceeds while engaged in direct conversation with the passenger least likely to desire such an exchange. If that passenger will not converse, the hack stops and idles. In the course of such a conversation, the hack may demand insightful answers to complex questions of existence, or the correct answer to difficult trivia questions or crossword puzzles.

Death by efficiency: For Troubleshooters especially, going places very fast and in straight lines is efficient. A hack reprogrammed by a Death Leopard embodies this principle. Transit from Point A to Point B is quick and violent, leaving maimed and dead passersby in the hack's wake. The hack starts to move, you describe its progress in terrifying detail, every Troubleshooter in the hack takes one damage step, and then, only then, the players may try to use some skill or act of violence to end the pain. If they succeed—meaning, if they entertain you—they can stagger out of the hack and suffer no more from its motions. If they fail, the rollercoaster travel continues, causing another damage step. Repeat until the trip ends.

Obscure rules: The Troubleshooters' progress will be hampered by an irrelevant and obstructive rule. This actually isn't an illicit society modification, but an actual dictate of The Computer, an artifact of ancient programming errors, or a holdover from the last passenger's reprogramming. Some possible rules:

- ④ No more and no fewer than two point five passengers per vehicle
- ④ Hack must pass through Hack Wash with windows down during every fare
- ④ Payment must be made in one-credit increments every thirty seconds of travel rather than all at once at the end, with verbal authorization provided for each charge
- ④ Passengers must read all road signs, warning signs, and traffic regulation signs aloud
- ④ ...And so on.



Language interface failure: The hack's navigational interface is faulty. After asking, 'Where to?' it accepts instructions, then continues to ask 'Where to?' It may misinterpret passengers' instructions, or it begins driving and then asks for directions, which it will then misinterpret, or speaks no language known to Troubleshooter or Computer.

Death by obedience: The hack's central processor is faulty. It will obey every order or comment made by Troubleshooters that can remotely be interpreted as an instruction. 'Take us to the offices of Metronome Music' has an obvious result when that firm turns out to be on a building's sixteenth floor. A conversational remark such as, oh, 'We're gonna die!' means the hack responds, 'Right!' and veers into a wall in an attempt to kill the passengers. 'Turn here' means *right* here, not up at the intersection. And 'Follow that hack!' spells certain doom, particularly if the hack being pursued is currently locked in 'death by efficiency' mode.

■ Transition

Prosperous service firms of fast-moving workers acquire whole fleets of individual ground vehicles called Transitions.

A Transition looks like a circular footstool made of metal. A rider steps on it and leans in the direction he wishes to travel. The Transition heads in that direction at about twice a standard human running pace. Transitions are nimble, allow for travel in very tight or crowded environments, and can even go up and down stairs.

They also have many idiosyncrasies that make them beloved to all. Or else.

First, Transitions never travel in single file. They spread out in a broad, roughly circular

pattern with a safety-dictated minimum of one meter between each Transition.

Second, a group of Transitions setting into motion at approximately the same time and moving in the same general direction will coordinate their navigational computers on the assumption that they are part of a unified group or party. One Transition assumes leadership and all the rest in the group slave their motions to its travel. It is not possible for a rider to determine which Transition in a group is the leader without lengthy examination of the vehicles' behavior. Furthermore, the role of group leader changes each time the group comes to a stop, such as for stoplights or an obstacle. When one member of the group encounters an obstacle or road condition the others do not, it behaves just as they do, unless (as randomly determined by you) it is the leader, in which case all the Transitions react to the road condition regardless of whether they have actually confronted it.

Third, though all Transitions in a group react identically to circumstances, not all groups react identically. Each group, firm, department or agency operating Transitions sets its own defaults for behavior.

However, because Transitions are in constant communication, the behavioral defaults for one organization can infect another organization's Transitions when the vehicles meet in the field... which they do dozens of times a day.

For instance, any Transition stops suddenly when confronted with humans of a certain clearance or bots of a status less easily discerned. However, the specified clearance or status varies. Some stop for citizens of INFRARED Clearance and higher, others only for High Programmers. Some Transitions stop for objects larger than themselves, regardless of clearance. Some stop for food wrappers and



bits of confetti, and some stop for shiny pretty sparkly bright lights ooh!

Fourth, Transitions react and maneuver far more efficiently than humans. A Transition traveling at twice human running speed can stop instantly or make a 90-degree turn without undue effort. Sadly, Troubleshooters have been slow to catch up to this level of efficiency. The Computer requires Transitions retain their efficiency so as to promote physical improvement among Troubleshooters.

Fifth, Death Leopards with Computer Phreak leanings promote fun social chaos by programming new behaviors into Transition fleets, then watching those behaviors propagate through the system. The perpetrators will be destroyed when their identities are uncovered. Until then, it is recommended that Troubleshooters deny them emotional satisfaction their misdeeds might bring them; Troubleshooters may accomplish this by pretending any observed erratic behavior did not actually happen.

Trend-Stepper

This exercise apparatus consists of a base, similar in shape to a Transition, from which project two broad pedals. A user steps onto the pedals and begins walking as if climbing stairs. The kinetic energy of this motion is translated into forward momentum, and the Trend-Stepper carries its passenger forward. Like the Transition, it can also turn and maneuver according to the way the passenger leans.

The vehicle moves at a rate consistent with a normal human walk, but burns three times as many calories.

Citizens tend to use Trend-Steppers for a few days at a time, then thoughtfully leave them by the side of the corridor for the convenience of the next user, in trash containers or trash compactors, or in the path of oncoming autocars.

Note: Trend-Steppers do insulate their operators from the ground. In any area where electrocution is a possibility, it is far safer to operate Trend-Steppers than to walk. Many vidshows feature exciting tales of traitor rundowns accomplished entirely with use of Trend-Steppers. By coincidence the HPD&MC producers of these vidshows sometimes have holdings in Trend-Stepper manufacturing firms.

Inventing your own vehicles

Here's how to design your own **PARANOIA** vehicles:

1. *Choose a form of movement:* Wheels, walkers, treads, hovercraft, propellers (in the water or in the air), jets, fixed wing aircraft, helicopters, submarines, tunnelers. Maybe it runs on tracks, or in tubes, or is launched from a catapult.
2. *Choose a shape:* It can look sleek and deadly or battered and used. It can be huge, tiny, or in between. It can look like anything, as long as the way it looks and what it's supposed to do make some sense together. For instance, we wouldn't build a spherical jet fighter. Generally, extremes are more funny than the middle ground; huge or tiny are both better than middling. A flying wing or a jet pack are both better than a DC-10.
3. *Decide what will fit:* How many people will it carry?
4. *Decide what it's supposed to do:* Is it a transport? Or a war machine?
5. *Decide on its personality:* Does it have a bot brain? If so, what's the bot like? Every bot has its own personality, and, this being **PARANOIA**, any bot the players are forced to deal with should be difficult. If you give the players a vehicle controlled by a bot brain, you're creating an opportunity for some inspired roleplaying on your part.
6. *Decide on its weapons and abilities:* Look over the list of vehicle weapons above, and decide if your vehicle carries any of them. Decide what its armor is, and what the weapon skills of its bot brain are (if any). Decide any other abilities you want to build in.
7. *Build in obvious fatal flaws:* Every **PARANOIA** vehicle should have some fatal flaw to trip up its users: slow speed, limited carrying capacity or fuel supply, autopilot with a tendency to travel in circles, collapsing landing gear, 'walking'

vehicle with a tendency to trip, etc. A moment's thought should give you half a dozen awkward, inconvenient or dangerous ways to build a vehicle—inflict them on your players.

8. *Throw in a surprise or two:* Some flaws shouldn't be so obvious. It's always fun to spring a nasty surprise on your players when they're well away from help and can't do anything about it. Much of **PARANOIA**'s humor comes from placing PCs in horribly dangerous circumstances and forcing them to act; dangerous and inconvenient vehicles are an obvious gimmick.

Using vehicles in missions

A vehicle is mostly a way to get player characters from point A to point B; all you really want it to do is provide comic relief in between. Comic relief in **PARANOIA** usually means horrible danger. As a result, PCs frequently don't get to point B. That's no problem; activate the next set of clones and start them over. They won't make the same mistake twice, and eventually someone will get to B.

Don't worry about making your vehicles 'too powerful'—that is, giving them too much in the way of armor or weapons. You can give vehicle as much power as you want—just don't let the PCs use it. A military vehicle's controlling bot brain may have definite ideas of its own and is not about to let a bunch of civilian maggots tell it what to do. You can get the same effect in a number of other ways. For example, because a vehicle's abilities are classified higher than the PCs, they may not know how powerful it is, and could not order it to use, for instance, its laser cannon. If they did, they would be displaying treasonous knowledge.

Don't worry about plausibility; R&D is always coming up with cockeyed gadgets. You can always claim an excessively silly vehicle was experimental. Don't worry about 'game balance'; there's always a way to crock a device so the players don't get much use out of it (and The Computer is always around if things start to get out of hand).

Go on. Invent your own vehicles: Walkers. Rolling vehicles. Hovercraft. Jet-propelled autocars. Tunneling vehicles. Subway trains. Intercontinental rockets. Figure a way to strap your Troubleshooters onto the thing, then send them off at high speed.





43. Mandatory Bonus Duty (MBD)

This chapter discusses the fun and interesting jobs performed by members of Troubleshooter teams. Mandatory Bonus Duties (MBDs) let you expand your already vastly over-laden **PARANOIA** game with yet another layer of complication for the players.

A Mandatory Bonus Duty is a job a Troubleshooter is required to volunteer for, perform and enjoy as a reward for continued service. The Computer, in its wisdom, has determined each Troubleshooter must have a specific duty within the mission team. Such added responsibility makes a Troubleshooter feel loved, wanted and secure. The Computer carefully selected these duties to enhance the team's chances of success and to provide a variety of exciting experiences for loyal citizens.

Keep in mind, the MBD rules are optional. You don't have to use them. Really. Just because we slaved over this stuff to ensure these duties are perfect in every way, doesn't mean you can't use it to wallpaper your aquarium. Fine. See if we care.

The duties

④ The **team leader**'s duties include offering guidance and sound advice to other members of the team, and acting as tactical situation commander in combat.

④ The **loyalty officer** makes sure treasonous thoughts are nipped in the bud, and looks for early warning signs of Commie sympathy. Good loyalty officers spot and report potential Commies weeks before they perform Commie acts!

④ The **hygiene officer** performs the indispensable task of monitoring the personal hygiene level of the other Troubleshooters. Without proper hygiene, the team is liable to suffer from misfires, poor morale and halitosis. Computer statistics show a large portion of Troubleshooter missions fail due to poor hygiene.

④ The **communications and recording officer** gets to chronicle the mission using high-speed film, sensitive microphones and gripping color commentary. This important assignment provides The Computer with training material for other Troubleshooters. Good lighting and innovative camera angles are a must!

④ Central to an effective Troubleshooter team is the bots, weapons, vehicles and sundry equipment repair and maintenance officer, also called the **equipment guy** (EG). The EG controls the bots and vehicles assigned to the party and keeps a constant check on the equipment maintenance level of each Troubleshooter. Naturally, the equipment guy is also responsible for any lost or stolen equipment.

④ Last but by no means least is the **happiness officer**, who makes sure everyone has fun on the mission. He'll do anything in his power to ensure a good time. He knows all the latest jokes. He sings. He leads citizen interaction games. 'Biochemical Supplement' is his middle name. Teammates like him. A lot.

The MBD props

Props are things you hand to your players during a game session. Props take some of the responsibility of entertaining the players off your shoulders; they help the players visualize the adventure; and they take up lots of room so we don't have to write as much.

There are two MBD props. The first is **MBD Determination Test 88-9b** on pages 184-185. The second is a set of **cutout badges** on pages 189-197.

Make one photocopy of the test for each of your players. Before the mission begins, while you're waiting for laggard players to show up, give each player a copy and a writing utensil of your choice. Have them complete the test without help or consultation with others. Grading instructions appear on page 186.

Photocopy the badges (front and back), get a pair of scissors, cut along the dotted lines and fold along the solid line. Apply some glue. After you're finished you'll have six cards, one for each Mandatory Bonus Duty. Hand players the appropriate cards when you've determined their MBDs.

On the back of the card is a congratulatory note from HPD & Mind Control outlining the duty.

On the front of the card is the MBD's official badge. The badges look swell, don't they? Have your players wear these throughout the mission. Make it clear that failure to wear an MBD Badge is treason. In fact, make it clear taking off the badge, even for an instant, results in immediate fines or correction.

But you say, the writing on the back is important?

Que sera sera.

MBD Determination Test 88-9b

Greetings, Troubleshooter! The Computer requires you to answer all questions on this test, the Mandatory Bonus Duty Determination Test 88-9b. This fun and interesting test was designed by the loyal citizens of HPD & Mind Control. Based on your answers to this test, The Computer will assign you the Mandatory Bonus Duty best suited to your particular skills. Rejoice, for The Computer never assigns citizens duties they are not trained for.

To assure that you are relaxed during this test, a number of Truth-Bores will be implanted temporarily in your skull. Please ignore these. They are for your convenience only.

There are six sections to the 88-9b. Each set of questions relates to one Mandatory Bonus Duty. How you answer these questions determines your suitability for that position.

You will get to answer both multiple-choice and short essay questions. Read each multiple-choice question carefully and check the **one** box that best describes your feelings. **Do not check more than one box per question!** **Checking more than one box per question is a Bad Thing.** There is one short essay question at the end of each section. Read the question, then print your answer clearly in the space provided. **Do not write in the boxes labeled Official use only. Writing in these boxes is also a Bad Thing.**

After completing the test, write your name and service group in the blanks provided and hand the test back to your briefing officer.

■ Team leader

1. If a mission succeeds, who deserves the most credit?

- A. The team leader.
- B. The briefing officer.
- C. R&D.

2. I think:

- A. I am very skilled.
- B. I am moderately skilled.
- C. I have no skills.

3. If I were team leader I would:

- A. Make fewer mistakes than I do now.
- B. Make more mistakes than I do now.
- C. Make the same number of mistakes.

4. If offered a position in a secret society I would:

- A. Accept the position and renounce my current secret society.
- B. Decline and remain in my current secret society.
- C. Start my own secret society.

5. The team leader should:

- A. Solicit advice from team members even though they may be Commie Mutant Traitors.
- B. Make all decisions on his own.
- C. Hesitate when faced with a decision.

6. The hygiene officer is:

- A. More important than the team leader.
- B. Just as important as the team leader.
- C. Less important than the team leader.

If a Troubleshooter team is in constant contact with The Computer, why does it need a team leader?

■ Loyalty officer

1. If The Computer ordered me to execute a High Programmer, but the High Programmer claimed the message was the result of Commie sabotage, I would:

- A. Look for the Commies responsible.
- B. Consult The Computer for confirmation.
- C. Execute the High Programmer.

2. If a citizen was grumbling about how dangerous a mission is, I would:

- A. Execute him for treason.
- B. Refer him to the happiness officer.
- C. Record his comments for referral to The Computer.

3. If an ULTRAVIOLET citizen ordered me to terminate myself, I would:

- A. Terminate the ULTRAVIOLET citizen.
- B. Call The Computer.
- C. Terminate myself.

4. I think Commies are:

- A. Misled.
- B. Innately evil.
- C. Not worth thinking about.

5. I have traitorous thoughts:

- A. Almost never.
- B. Occasionally.
- C. With alarming frequency.

6. If I saw a Commie escaping down a corridor of a higher security clearance than I was, I would:

- A. Pursue the Commie.
- B. Consult The Computer.
- C. Order the Commie to surrender.

Why do you think The Computer assigns Troubleshooters to boring missions? Does this promote disloyal behavior? Explain.

■ Hygiene officer

1. Which is most important?

- A. Clean thoughts.
- B. A clean jumpsuit.
- C. Clean teeth.

2. If I were a bot, I would be:

- A. A docbot.
- B. A warbot.
- C. A jackobot.

3. An appropriate fine for a citizen who damages his jumpsuit is:

- A. 2 credits.
- B. 200 credits.
- C. Summary execution by tacnuke.

4. My favorite cleaning agent is:

- A. Mr. Squeaky: Squeaky Clean and What a Sheen!
- B. Blast It Off: Just One Spray Makes Dirt Go Away!
- C. Scrape-o-matic: It Works Hard—So You Don't Have To!

5. Some citizens classify Commies and mutants as traitors. I think they are:

- A. Mr. Squeaky: Squeaky Clean and What a Sheen!
- B. Blast It Off: Just One Spray Makes Dirt Go Away!
- C. Scrape-o-matic: It Works Hard—So You Don't Have To!

6. The hygiene officer is:

- A. More important than the team leader.
- B. Just as important as the team leader.
- C. Less important than the team leader.

Would you pursue a Commie into a filthy, debris strewn corridor even though it might damage your jumpsuit? If yes, why would you intentionally endanger The Computer's valuable property? If no, why would you deliberately let a Commie escape?

Official use only

Official use only

Official use only

■ Communications and recording officer

1. When interviewing a berserk warbot, the most important consideration is:

- A. Not damaging the multicorder.
- B. To ask intelligent questions.
- C. Creative camera angles.

2. Actors such as Teela-O-MLY are:

- A. Less important than average Alpha Complex citizens.
- B. Just as important as average Alpha Complex citizens.
- C. More important than average Alpha Complex citizens.

3. If my team were under Commie attack, I would:

- A. Consult The Computer.
- B. Help turn back the foul traitors.
- C. Look for creative camera angles.

4. If I had my way, I would:

- A. Watch more vidshows.
- B. Continue to watch the same number of vidshows.
- C. Read a book.

5. If I were multicording a traitor's confession, I would:

- A. Activate the aura light-sensor.
- B. Use a wide-angle lens.
- C. Shoot him in the head.

6. If The Computer called during a dangerous situation, I would:

- A. Step back and talk to The Computer.
- B. Not answer The Computer.
- C. Put The Computer on hold until the situation is resolved, then explain what happened.

Is The Computer everywhere? If no, please list all places The Computer is not. If yes, why is a communications and recording officer necessary?

Official use only

Bonus Tie-Breaker Question

If I had my choice, I would be the:

- A. Team leader.
- B. Hygiene officer.
- C. Loyalty officer.
- D. Happiness officer.
- E. Equipment guy.
- F. Communications and recording officer.

■ Equipment guy

1. The equipment guy should call a surprise inspection:

- A. Almost never.
- B. In the middle of a battle.
- C. With unnerving frequency.

2. If I were a bot, I would be:

- A. A docbot.
- B. A warbot.
- C. A jackobot.

3. The scientists at R&D are:

- A. Shining examples of how loyal citizens should behave.
- B. Dangerous and should be watched closely.
- C. Just doing their job.

4. If a laser malfunctions during a mission, whose fault is it?

- A. The supply clerk who issued the equipment.
- B. The Troubleshooter who received the equipment.
- C. The equipment guy.

5. I like bots:

- A. A little.
- B. A great deal.
- C. A lot more than you can possibly imagine.

6. If a Commie bomb needs defusing, who should do it?

- A. The equipment guy.
- B. The Troubleshooter with the most demolitions experience.
- C. Whoever draws the short straw.

How valuable are you to The Computer in terms of credits? How did you arrive at this figure?

■ Happiness officer

1. In my opinion, unhappy citizens should:

- A. Visit a Bright Vision Re-education Center.
- B. Undergo morale adjustment surgery.
- C. Take a Happy Pill.

2. Sometimes other citizens get:

- A. Very angry.
- B. A little angry.
- C. So angry it scares me.

3. Happiness is:

- A. A warm laser.
- B. A state of mind.
- C. Mandatory.

4. If the happiness officer is unhappy, he should:

- A. Take a Happy Pill.
- B. Tell The Computer.
- C. Question his very existence.

5. The best Troubleshooter is a:

- A. Happy Troubleshooter.
- B. Loyal Troubleshooter.
- C. Terminated Troubleshooter.

6. If I am promoted to ULTRAVIOLET clearance, I will:

- A. Be the same citizen I am now.
- B. Make everyone around me happy.
- C. Be happier than I am now.

Do you think Commies are happy? If not, then why are they willing to endure termination rather than stop being Commies?

Official use only

Official use only

Official use only

Name: _____ — [assigned name] — [clearance] — [sector] — [circle or write clone number]

Service group: _____

Service firm: _____

Secret society: _____

How do you think this test could be improved? Write your answer here:



Who's it gonna be?

So you gave each player a MBDDT 88-9b, they answered the questions, they handed you their completed tests and now they wanna know who's gonna be the team leader. Tough tiddlywinks. They have to wait a few minutes while you add up the scores.

Now let's get down to business. First, scan through the tests. Did anyone fill in a shaded answer or list their secret society in the space provided? Gosh, that was pretty foolish. We appreciate the honesty and all, but The Computer decided that this week all shaded answers are treasonous. Any Troubleshooter who checked one must be a traitor. And as for belonging to a secret society...

All right, let's say you lost a Troubleshooter or two because of excessive honesty. Fine. Call up their backup clones and re-issue the test. But now give them a time limit for completing the test—like, say, three minutes. Because you have your own work to do, this will keep the other players entertained as they watch their teammates scribble frantically. You may want to randomly pick a Troubleshooter to entertain the players in this manner even if no replacement clones are needed. For example:

Briefing Officer [you]: Excellent work, Troubleshooters! Now as soon as Patsy-R finishes her test we can get started.

Patsy-R: Huh?

Briefing Officer: Your MBDDT 88-9b. The test you're supposed to be working on.

Patsy-R: [Looks around nervously.] But I turned mine in with the rest of the team... honest!

Your players are sitting around, staring at their watches, hoping three minutes will elapse before the potential traitor can finish re-taking the test. In the meantime, figure out who gets which Mandatory Bonus Duty.

It's simple. Each section of the 88-9b contains six multiple-choice questions. Each answer is worth a specific number of points as follows:

Ⓐ Questions 1 through 3 of each section are scored:

A = 1 point

B = 3 points

C = 5 points

Ⓐ Questions 4 through 6 are scored:

A = 5 points

B = 3 points

C = 1 point

Ⓐ Unanswered questions receive 2 points.

For example, if for question 5 the player chose response 'C,' he receives 1 point.

A box in each section is labeled *Official use only*. To determine each section total, simply add up the scores from the six multiple-choice questions and write the total here.

For example, Anne-R-JKH's answers in the loyalty officer section are:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. C = 5 | 4. A = 5 |
| 2. C = 5 | 5. A = 5 |
| 3. C = 5 | 6. A = 5 |

Her Loyalty Officer Section Total is 30.

This brings up an interesting observation. Anyone who scores a perfect 30 points in a section probably cheated and should be terminated. Of course, anyone who reads this will know a perfect score is grounds for termination and might intentionally miss one. So anyone who scores about 29 or 30... *hmm*. But if they read that last line, they may be inclined to miss lots of questions and... *hmm*. If anyone scores very low or very high... double *hmm*. But if they read that line they may work toward an average score and...? Sheesh! Terminate everybody and start again!

Go through all the 88-9bs, adding up the scores and recording them in the appropriate boxes. (Ignore the short answer questions. They're only used in the case of ties.)

At the end of the 88-9b is a bonus question asking the Troubleshooters which MBD they'd prefer. This question is a survey to determine which MBDs are considered glamorous. The people in HPD & Mind Control consider this an important question. No doubt your players consider it important too. You shouldn't.

Next, retrieve tests that had to be taken twice and add up their scores. Now you're ready to match up the Troubleshooters with their ideal Mandatory Bonus Duties. See which Troubleshooter has the highest section score for an office and give him that office. If two Troubleshooters have the same score, use the short essay question to decide. Assign the duty to the person who gave the best answer. If they answered the essay question the same way, terminate them. The Computer hates cheaters and coincidences.

Assign only one MBD to each Troubleshooter. Once a Troubleshooter is assigned an MBD, place his test to the side and hand him the appropriate cut-out badge (see Instructions for Preparing MBD badges on page 189).

For example, you find Jerry-R-NVC has the highest happiness officer score in the group. Give Jerry-R's player the happiness officer badge and remove his MBDDT from the pile.

Determine the MBDs in the following order:

- Ⓐ Happiness officer
- Ⓑ Equipment guy
- Ⓒ Communications & recording officer
- Ⓓ Hygiene officer
- Ⓔ Loyalty officer
- Ⓕ Team leader

You may notice you're down to only one MBDDT when it comes time to determine the team leader. It's not that we think any incompetent can be team leader. It's not like this test is purposely designed to put the person least familiar with Alpha Complex etiquette in charge. Trust us. It's not like that at all.

Alternate MBD determination procedure

We realize you might not have time or particularly like the selection procedure as outlined above. We've anticipated this and prepared the following list of alternate selection procedures:

- Ⓐ Roll the die for each player. High roller gets his choice of MBD. (This is the only Alternate MBD Determination Procedure sanctioned by The Computer.)
- Ⓑ Accept bribes.
- Ⓒ Deal out the MBD badges like cards.
- Ⓓ Send your players on a quest (find the tongues of three rabid emu or something like that).
- Ⓔ Distribute bats and settle this like real Troubleshooters.

A final note

What if you don't have six players? No problem. If you have more than six, make the additional players loyalty officers. You can never have too many loyalty officers.

If you have fewer than six, just make sure you have a team leader. After that it's up to you which MBDs to assign.

Duty descriptions

Each Mandatory Bonus Duty description uses the following format:

- Ⓐ An **opening section** you can read aloud to all players, explaining how each officer helps other members of a Troubleshooter team
- Ⓑ **Text for you** explaining how to handle the officer and how to make the player's life more interesting
- Ⓒ A description of the **specific equipment or tests** related to the job
- Ⓓ A **sample conversation** showing what a typical MBD officer might say in the performance of duty (taken from actual HPD & Mind Control multicorder records)

As you read each duty's opening section, give that badge to the player whose Troubleshooter has the designated duty.



Team leader

The **team leader** is crucial to every Troubleshooter team. His knowledge and guidance makes the team function like a well-oiled machine, and his will pushes each Troubleshooter to give his best.

Your team leader has been appointed because of his unique skills. Don't hesitate to draw on these skills by consulting him for advice concerning any aspect of your duty.

Of course, no citizen is infallible. If you see your team leader make a mistake, please inform your friend The Computer so it can arrange proper post-mission training procedures.

The team leader: Man or myth?

The team leader is the heart and soul of the Troubleshooter team. Upon his shoulders rests the responsibility for successfully completing the mission. With this responsibility comes a measure of authority. We are all equal before The Computer, but the team leader is a little more equal than the rest of us.

A team leader might let his lofty position go to his head and begin pushing around his fellow Troubleshooters. Encourage this. Encourage him to throw his authority around, and assure him The Computer stands ready to back him up on every decision. In short, create a megalomaniac. We're sure your Troubleshooters can take care of any conflicts themselves. Or, as they say in HPD & Mind Control, 'The body count always balances in the end.'

Team leader duties

The Computer gives each Troubleshooter team the necessary equipment and personnel to accomplish their particular mission, correct? As long as these resources are used properly the mission should succeed, right? So if the mission fails it must be the team leader's fault, *ipso facto*.

Point this out to the team leader. Repeatedly. Hint that if the job of team leader is too strenuous for him, work is available in the Emergency Organ Donor Transplant Center.

The team leader is the team's Tactical Situation Commander (TSC). This means he's responsible for coordinating the actions of his fellow Troubleshooters whenever they battle Commie Mutant Traitors. This is very important. Poor team coordination often leads to vaporized Troubleshooters.

Exactly how your team leader handles the duty of TSC can vary dramatically from player

to player. Though some team leaders prefer the simple 'over the top' tactic, others may use a finesse approach. For example:

Team Leader: Okay men, those Commie mutant scum are in a 3-4 triple zone defense. Smart, but not smart enough. Here's what we're gonna do. Molly-R and Polly-R line up in a double tight end with Roger-R as the lone back. Sweep right on four. Ready ... BREAK!

Smart team leaders develop intricate battle plans using interlocking time assaults and well-coordinated feints. This isn't because complicated plans are more likely to succeed, but because the more complicated the plan, the more likely a citizen will screw up his assignment, providing the team leader with a scapegoat if the attack fails.

Of course, The Computer understands Troubleshooters aren't going to win every battle. After all, if the Commies were that easy to defeat, then they wouldn't be such a menace. However, the more The Computer learns about Commie tactics, the better it can train its team leaders. So after each battle, have The Computer ask a few simple questions:

The Computer: Citizen, what were the Commie's primary and secondary fire zones, and what was their ratio of suppression fire to kill-zone fire in each of these locations?

Team Leader: Uh ... dey ran around us and shotz us in da back.

Using the team leader

In a typical mission it's important to get your players from one scene to the next to keep the action moving. Next time your Troubleshooters stray off course, instead of using Vulture Squadron goons to dog-march them to the next plot device, have The Computer ask the team leader for a progress report. You'll be amazed

at how you can motivate a team leader with a simple question like, 'Why did you fail to arrive at R&D as scheduled?'

A typical team leader conversation

[*Kit-R and the team leader are crouched behind a barrier at the end of a hallway. Laser fire explodes around them from the barrels of a dozen Commie mutant traitor's guns. Between the Commies and the Troubleshooters stand four pairs of smoking boots.*]

Kit-R: I can't do it! I wouldn't make it any farther than the other four!

Team leader: You know, Kit, I remember a citizen much like yourself in a situation much like this one. He was scared and didn't trust my plan. But he pushed his fear aside and did his duty. And when it was all over, just before the docbots arrived, he pulled me close and told me this: 'Someday, Skipper, when the team's down and the breaks are all going the Commies' way, tell them about me, and ask them to win one, just one... for Gip-R.'

Kit-R: [With grim determination.] Die, you Commie slime! [She pulls the pin on a demolition pack strapped to her waist, leaps the wall and charges.]

Team leader: [Peeks over protective barrier and hums an Alpha Complex loyalty song.]

Team leader badge

The team leader badge is on page 197, with the happiness officer badge.



Loyalty officer



In the war against the Commies, the **loyalty officer** stands alone as The Computer's ever-vigilant servant.

All Troubleshooters are constantly alert for signs of treason, but it's the loyalty officer's unique duty to look for signs of *potential* treason. But the loyalty officer can't do it alone. He's only part of the team, and he needs your help. If you discover any signs of treason, actual or potential, among your fellow Troubleshooters, report them immediately. Failure to report treason is treason!

Also, report all suspicious behavior to your loyalty officer. He's trained to interpret such activities. Remember, what appears to be a simple gesture to you could in fact be the key that unlocks a hideous Commie plot! The Computer rewards citizens who uncover hideous Commie plots.

Some of your fellow Troubleshooters may, in fact, be traitors. If they are, the loyalty officer will undoubtedly discover this during the mission. Be ready to apprehend or terminate these turncoats when your loyalty officer gives the signal!

Stay Alert! Trust No One! Keep Your Laser Handy!

Duties of the loyalty officer

The loyalty officer's job is to record all signs of Communist tendencies among his fellow Troubleshooters and, if he confirms that there's a traitor on the team, to terminate the Commie mutant scum.

Some loyalty officers have been known to be especially successful in spotting treason. Inspire your player with tales of such loyalty officers as these:

② **Jerome-I-WRE-5:** Started as a Clearance RED Troubleshooter. Served as loyalty officer on seven missions. In each case Jerome-I discovered every other Troubleshooter on the team to be a traitor. Jerome-I is now Coordinator of the ZZZ Sector Hormone Enhancement Center and Experimental Coed Environment.

③ **Tony-Y-III-3:** Less than five minutes after being named loyalty officer, Tony-Y proved his briefing officer was a Commie traitor. The officer confessed and subsequently implicated his Director of Troubleshooter Mission Assignments.

of any three EWS is proof positive the citizen in question shows a dangerous tendency to become a Commie traitor. Terminate with extreme prejudice.

The 10 Early Warning Signs of Commie Traitorism

Does the citizen in question:

1. Prefer to share all equipment and credits equally?
2. Refer to other Troubleshooters as 'bourgeoisie pigs'?
3. Use his left hand?
4. Leave home without his ME Card?
5. Suggest negotiating with traitors?
6. Lack sincerity?
7. Address The Computer as 'Comrade'?
8. Long for **Classic** Bouncy Bubble Beverage when the new improved version is so much better?
9. Have embarrassing underarm stains?
10. Do anything at all you find annoying?

Early Warning Signs of Commie Traitorism

Of course, The Computer realizes new Troubleshooters may find it difficult to spot Commies. That's why The Computer provides its loyalty officers with The 10 Early Warning Signs (EWS) of Commie Traitorism. Be sure to read these to your loyalty officer. Indication

plasti-steel egg. Each egg's locking mechanism reacts only to its loyalty officer's tongue print. Only the loyalty officer (or a member of his clone family) can open it. In the event of the loyalty officer's untimely demise, an internal homing beacon assures its recovery.

ILTR-2 is identical to the ILTR-1, except the notepad has been replaced with a voice recorder. Both ILTR models are impervious to harm when the egg is closed.

At the start of the mission assign your loyalty officer either an ILTR-1 or ILTR-2. Instruct him to take extensive notes on any suspicious behavior he observes during the mission. Accuracy is important. These records will be used in the debriefing at the end of the mission. Warn your loyalty officer that insufficient note-taking is treason!

Prop hint: If you have a voice recorder your player can use, assign him the ILTR-2. Otherwise, just give him some blank paper and call it ILTR-1.

Each entry should be in the format of a police report. For example:

Reporting Officer: Peter-R-LKP-2

Time: Fiveday Mood Adjustment Break

Subject: Rob-R-FHT-3

Entry: Observed Rob-R acting suspiciously when handed Personality Supplement Pill. Subject asked for glass of water and pretended to swallow PSP, but then, with excessive casualness, moved to nearest waste disposal unit. There he raised cup to mouth a second time. Subject then opened chute and threw cup in. Believe he spit PSP back into cup before placing cup in disposal.

Recommendation: Will continue to observe Rob-R closely. I'm sure he'll slip up. They always slip up.

In addition to the ILTR, loyalty officers often receive special weapons (rapid-fire laser cannons, vapo-guns, tacnukes, etc.) in case they uncover a Really Big Commie Plot. Really Big Commie Plots require Really Big Weapons.

Debriefing

After the mission, hold a special Loyalty Transcript De-briefing (LTD) between The Computer and the surviving Troubleshooters. During this LTD the loyalty officer reads each pertinent ILTR entry aloud and gives his opinion. Yes, that's right, in the presence of the other Troubleshooters.

Encourage your loyalty officer to make wild accusations by prompting him with simple positive remarks. 'An excellent observation, citizen. Please elaborate further.'—'Would you recommend termination or will brainscrub be sufficient?' Of course, the accused may get hostile, but that can be handled easily:

Loyalty Officer: And so I believe Patsy-R was responsible—

Patsy-R: Why you traitorous—!

The Computer: Citizen! Interrupting your loyalty officer during the LTD is bad manners. Would you like to continue in this obviously insubordinate activity?

Patsy-R: Gulp!

When your loyalty officer is on a roll, hit him with some tougher questions. 'What about Ryan-R-LKJ-2? Surely you didn't miss his involvement in that destructive explosion in TFR Sector? And concerning certain actions by Julian-R....'

Let the other Troubleshooters rebuff or substantiate any charges—but beware! If you're not real careful, the LTD might degenerate into a regular firefight. We wouldn't want that to happen. No.

A typical loyalty officer non-conversation

Equipment Guy: So we're supposed to wait for the signal, then charge the front entrance?

Hygiene Officer: Yeah, that's right.

Loyalty Officer: *[Nonchalantly leaning closer and writing in his ILTR.]*

Equipment Guy: But we're outgunned 50 to one! We're dead!

Hygiene Officer: Maybe. Unless we don't charge, 'cause you decide to do an Equipment Check just as the signal sounds?

Loyalty Officer: *[Scribbling furiously.]*

Equipment Guy: *[Whispering.]* But it's our job to distract the Commies!

Hygiene Officer: But how can we do that if our weapons don't work?
[Wink, wink.]

Loyalty Officer: *[Scribbling more furiously.]*

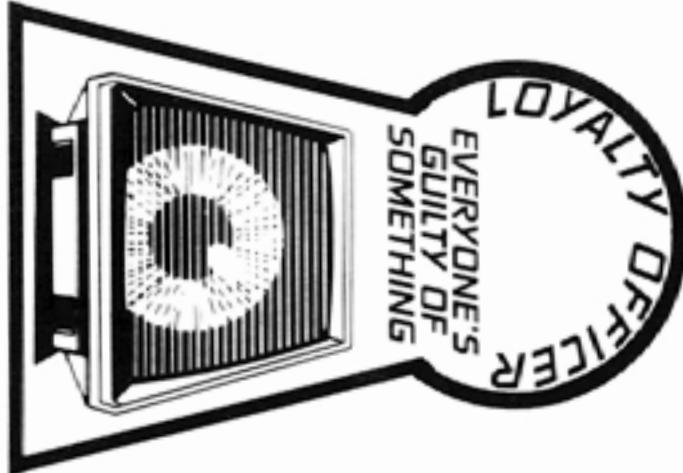
Equipment Guy: But what if someone finds out?

Hygiene Officer: After the firefight there ain't gonna be no one left but us. So who's gonna tell? I'm not telling. You're not telling. And vat-brain here hasn't said a word the entire mission. *[They turn to look at the loyalty officer.]*

Loyalty Officer: *[Tunelessly whistles and smiles innocently.]*

Instructions for preparing MBD badges

1. Photocopy the badge below and the MBD badges on the subsequent pages. We generously give you permission to photocopy these badges for personal use only. **Unauthorized use is treason.**
2. Cut out and fold the badge. **CUT** along the **dashed line**, then **FOLD** along the **solid line**. **DO NOT CUT** along the **solid line** and **FOLD** along the dashed line, or you'll screw up the whole thing and your players will laugh at you.
3. Tape the open sides of the badge together.
4. Present the badge to your loyalty officer with a safety pin or similar instrument. Have the player, under your solicitous observation, pin the badge to him- or herself in a location visible to all players.



Loyalty Officer

Congratulations, citizen! In recognition of your exemplary service, you have been chosen as **loyalty officer** for this mission. This appointment shows The Computer's special faith in you.

Your duties include watching your fellow Troubleshooters for signs of substandard zeal, recording and reporting any incidents of disloyalty and taking immediate corrective action when the opportunity arises.

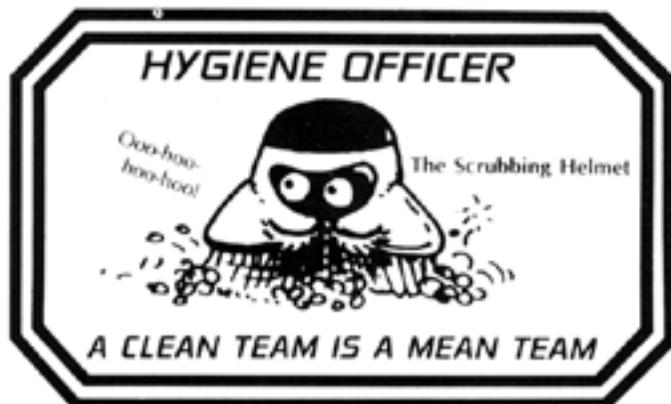
You report directly to The Computer, not to your team leader. You must be ever vigilant. Any Troubleshooter can spot blatant Commie sabotage, but it is *your* highly trained eye. The Computer relies on to see Commie plots before they hatch.

Study The 10 Early Warning Signs of Commie Traitorism. Observe the other Troubleshooters. Note which ones have substandard zeal, which ones use irregular speech patterns, which ones act—*funny*. You are the eyes of The Computer, ever watchful, always observant, forever with your ear to the door.

Remember, only you can prevent Commie traitorism.



Hygiene officer



The **hygiene officer** makes sure that Troubleshooters look sharp—buttons buttoned, uniform pressed, teeth waxed.

Failure by the hygiene officer to maintain an acceptable Team Hygiene Level can lead to unsuccessful missions. Dirty hands can slip on laser triggers; bad breath can alert enemies to your presence; wrinkled overalls can lower team morale to the breaking point.

So be a loyal citizen and give your hygiene officer a hand. Show him all filth, grime and potential dirt you discover. Thank you for your cooperation.

The hygiene officer: Clean and mean

Impress on the player how vital the hygiene officer is to the team. Make him feel important. Make him feel really important. Make him feel more important than the team leader. Tell him about the sweeping power of his position, and his authority to make any Troubleshooter submit to a Personal Hygiene Test (PHT). Tell him about his right to initiate Emergency Sanitation Procedures on any citizen who fails the Personal Hygiene Test.

The Personal Hygiene Test

The main duty of the hygiene officer is to perform PHTs. A PHT is an intensive physical inspection used to determine if a citizen meets the Minimum Cleanliness Level (MCL). Any citizen that fails a PHT must undergo an immediate Emergency Sanitation Procedure (ESP).

When can the hygiene officer demand a PHT? He can't just call for a PHT any time, can he? He couldn't order a character to stop whatever he was doing and take a PHT right now, could he? Sure he could!

The Personal Hygiene Test can be as complicated or as simple a process as the hygiene officer wants to make it. If he wants to be really annoying, he can do complete body inspections (be careful with enthusiastic roleplayers) and give lectures on citizen hygiene. Or he can just get down to the nitty-gritty and take a Skin-Core Sample (SCS).

A Skin-Core Sample? Isn't that dangerous?

Well, normally, yes. But don't worry, the safety-conscious R&D engineers have developed an invention guaranteed to take an SCS quickly

and painlessly. It's called a Skin-Core Sampler Type 6 (SCS-6).

This device takes minute tissue samples and determines their chemical structure (i.e., the ratio of skin to dirt). The SCS-6 recommends Emergency Sanitation if there is too much dirt in the tissue sample.

The SCS-6 is a long, flat belt that wraps around any portion of a citizen's body. On the side of the belt that touches flesh is a metal contraption which closely resembles a small hydraulic post-hole digger. This digger is, in turn, wired to a hand-held control panel. The control panel has three features: a red button labeled ACTIVATE; a dial numbered 5 to 100 labeled DEPTH; and a blank screen labeled 'FINAL ANALYSIS'.

Using the Skin-Core Sampler

First, explain to your hygiene officer how the Skin-Core Sampler works: 'Wrap it around an arm or leg and turn it on. Then just wait a few seconds and the machine will tell you if the subject needs Emergency Sanitation.'

Of course, you may want to warn the hygiene officer Troubleshooters often experience unnecessary trauma when they're about to have an SCS taken. But with just a little coaching the hygiene officer can reassure his fellow Troubleshooter.

Troubleshooter: Are you sure you know how to use that thing?

Hygiene Officer: Hey, don't worry about it.

The boys in R&D assured me that this model will work fine. No problems at all, any more. They rechecked the blade and even adjusted the depth setting!

Once the SCS-6 is attached, ask the hygiene officer what depth he's going to set it at. (Note: The depth setting measures molecules, so even at maximum depth the machine will only take a tiny fraction of the top layer of skin—but don't tell him that.)

Then he can turn on the machine. A low whistle comes from the Skin-Core Sampler, gradually getting louder and louder. Tell everyone it sounds like a laser on overload. After that, start counting down from five.

Assuming the Troubleshooter hasn't pulled the thing off, when the SCS stops humming, the sample is collected. Does the panicky Troubleshooter have a big hole in his arm or leg? No—but don't rush to tell him.

The last step is to evaluate the SCS-6 analysis. Roll 1d20 and consult this chart to determine what message appears on the Skin-Core Sampler Mark 6 control panel.

Depth Control Panel Reading

1-5: Insufficient data, reset and try again

6-10: Initiate Emergency Sanitation Procedures

11-20: Subject meets Minimum Cleanliness Level

If the SCS-6 does recommend ESP, the hygiene officer can execute one or more of the following procedures:

1. Place a priority call to Citizen Cleanliness Central (CCC). A Citizen Cleanliness Bot (kind of a cross between a side-loader washer and a pro wrestler) arrives in minutes, grabs the citizen and stuffs him inside his cleaning compartment for a quick two-minute wash and spin-dry. (Probably best in a Zap game.)

2. Spray the offender with his choice of overall body cleansers. (CCC recommends New Perma Scent.)

3. Administer the experimental Clean-It-Up pill. No one is sure just what this does, but after the Troubleshooter takes it, bubbles come out of his mouth and his hair smells minty fresh.

For the record, the SCS-6 never experiences any of the problems of its predecessors (SCS-1 through -5). It never explodes, refuses to turn off or digs too deep. Nope, never. The Mark 6 works perfectly, just like everything else that comes out of R&D.

Other hygiene duties

In addition to PHTs, the hygiene officer has two other duties:

Organizing Emergency Cleaning Crews: The hygiene officer has the right to form Emergency Cleaning Crews (ECC) to combat Commie filth and general untidiness. Whenever the team encounters an area of Alpha Complex that does not meet Minimum Cleanliness Levels (such as a battle site), the hygiene officer temporarily assumes command. His orders must be obeyed until every last bit of trash is deposited in a proper receptacle.

The crew can be made up of any citizens in the area, or members of the Troubleshooter team. Besides all the fun open to players, this also provides the GM with another neat activity for Troubleshooters—they can be drafted by a hygiene officer from another team!

Personal Hygiene Maintenance: The first step in the never-ending fight against Commie dirt is continuous Preventive Hygiene Maintenance (PHM). PHM is a regimen of grooming procedures that the hygiene officer must enforce during the mission. Here's a list of some of the special equipment the hygiene officer receives to accomplish this task:

- ◎ PDT Brand Tongue Scraper and Vehicle De-Icer.
 - ◎ New Meltdown Mouthscrub: Fight Decay! Melt Plaque Away!
 - ◎ Soften-It-Up Eyedrops: With New Extra-Mild Abrasives!
 - ◎ Blast Them Off Shampoo: Kills Germs* and Leaves Hair Shiny!
- * Germs are very tiny Commie mutant traitors.

A typical hygiene officer conversation

Hygiene Officer: Listen buddy, you gotta take a PHT.

Troubleshooter: It wasn't my fault! He pushed me into a vat of—

Hygiene Officer: Are ya gonna take the PHT or should we just skip to Emergency Sanitation?

Troubleshooter: No really, I'll be fine as soon as I wipe this stuff off my—

Hygiene Officer: That's it. Hold him down while I get a sample.

Troubleshooter: Hey, what are you doing? Get that thing off—!

Other Troubleshooter: Is it safe to attach it to his head?

Hygiene Officer: Well, they recommend an arm or a leg, in case it goes a little too deep. But when they start kicking...



Hygiene Officer

Your MBD is team hygiene officer. This is a solemn honor. Only the most trusted servants of The Computer serve as hygiene officer.

Yours are the duties of **The Scrubbing Helmet**, that legendary bastion of clean corridors and well-flossed Troubleshooters. Serve his memory well!

Your responsibilities include monitoring the **PHL** (Personal Hygiene Level) of each team member, reporting when a Troubleshooter fails his **PHT** (Personal Hygiene Test), and implementing **ESP** (Emergency Sanitation Procedures) against any and all offenders.

To aid you, The Computer has generously provided you a **PHTCMK** (Personal Hygiene Test and Cleanliness Maintenance Kit) for performing PHTs and ESPs on your fellow Troubleshooters. Consult your briefing officer for instructions.

Take your duty seriously. Recent team leader post-mission reports indicate 52% of all mission disasters can be blamed on hygiene neglect by the hygiene officer. Failure to report sub-standard PHLs is treason. Remember, **ACTIAMT**: A Clean Team Is A Mean Team!



SOURCEBOOK

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Comm & recording officer



The **communications and recording officer** is key to team survival. Whenever he points his multicorder at you, everything you say, do or even think (depending on the multicorder program) is recorded for later examination by The Computer. Special editing techniques and camera angles can mean the difference between promotion and termination.

If the C&R officer asks you to hold a klieg light, respond speedily regardless of your current assignment. If he asks you to speak into the microphone, speak cheerfully and use good diction.

You can aid your C&R officer by pointing out scenes he should film. Help him get closeups of raging infernos. Use your own initiative and invite those Vulture Squadron goons over for an interview. Be helpful! An artistic mission record is the product of a dedicated team—not just one citizen!

The communications and recording officer: Lights! Camera! Action!

The C&R officer is the Troubleshooters' direct link to The Computer. It is this citizen's job to create the mission record using the latest technology, and to constantly maintain communication with The Computer.

Now stop and think. The Computer is everywhere, recording everything, right? So why does it need a Troubleshooter running around with a hand-held camera and microphone? Logically, it doesn't.

But we know The Computer often has slight, ah, lapses in security, leaving it with what HPD & Mind Control terms 'limited omnipotence.'

On one mission the C&R officer is redundant, as The Computer already has a complete record from other sources. On another mission, however, the C&R officer's multicorder may be the only mission record available. (And of course that'll be the one time he forgot to take the lens cap off.)

The 'C' in C&R

The main function of the communications and recording officer is, as one might expect, to communicate with The Computer. Of course, all the Troubleshooters have PDCs that let them call The Computer in an instant. But destroying a PDC or interfering with its communications is, for you, the work of a moment. ('Due to a minor cataclysm involving one of PLC's new superaccelerated breeder-reactors, radiation has fried all PDC chips in this subsector.') So the C&R officer has the only shielded com unit.

It's now his responsibility to pass along all contact with and from The Computer. This could be an extremely powerful duty, inasmuch

as it leaves the Communications officer in complete control of questions to The Computer, advice from The Computer and reports of treasonous activity by other members of the team. We're sure he'll relay all messages word-for-word, clearly, and without delay. Gosh, what a nice citizen!

Art or documentary?

The other important duty of the C&R officer is keeping the mission record. The Computer is very anxious to get a complete and interesting mission record.

One choice the C&R officer must make concerns style. Will he be a newscaster type, reporting action as it happens in an official-sounding voice? Or will he be more like a director, staging scenes over and over to get the perfect shot? The Computer has no preference, so it is up to the player.

The multicorder

The C&R officer should take a moment to examine his most important piece of equipment, the multicorder. You can get more information on multicorders than you ever thought possible, simply by reading the Equipment chapter. Briefly, there are two multicorder models that might be assigned to a mission. The Multicorder 1 is small, lightweight, and can run only one sensor program at a time. The Multicorder 2 is larger, bulkier and can run three programs. Most C&R officers will be issued a Multicorder 1.

One standard-issue program is the visible light sensor. Remind the C&RO this includes magnification enhancers and filters for those 'artsie' shots and infrared for really 'artsie' shots. However, the most common program used is the recorder, which is a standard color

audio-video camera. R&D is reportedly working on a smell-sensor program for inclusion on future missions. At your discretion, multiple programs can be issued, thus giving your C&RO some flexibility when filming. For example:

Recording Officer: I tink for dis shot, I vill use ze infrared wid a blue filter.

The C&R officer should get used to handling the multicorder as quickly as possible. Encourage him to experiment, stick the camera in citizen's faces, and generally be a nuisance. If he seems reluctant to make as big a nuisance of himself as you want, have The Computer gently remind him that he's really not doing his job. For instance:

The Computer: Your multicorder is not on, recording officer. Can you explain why your multicorder is not on?

C&RO: Well... the mission hasn't started yet, Friend Computer.

The Computer: Odd. According to the mission record, it began several minutes ago.

C&RO: But if I'm the one making the record and my multicorder is off, how can there be a mission record? There must be an error, friend Computer.

The Computer: Did you say *error*, citizen?

C&RO: *Gulp!*

Filming on location

How does all this work on a mission? If the C&R officer isn't hopping around like a reporter from *The Enquiring Citizen* then give him some encouragement.

The Computer: Excuse me, citizen, but are you sure the lighting is adequate? Are you willing to stake your life on it?

If he's doing a good job, reward him.

The Computer: Excellent work, citizen. An Official Commendation for that last panoramic view of the crash site has been entered into your permanent record.

Don't let the C&R officer neglect sound. Sound is very important to The Computer. If something is garbled, the C&R officer should reshoot, re-staging the scene where necessary. This will give the other Troubleshooters a wonderful opportunity to reconsider their treasonous statements of a moment ago.

Remind the C&R officer he isn't in this alone. The other Troubleshooters should be just as eager to see a scene re-shot as he is, and the C&R officer always has the power to draft someone to help point spotlights, apply makeup, or portray the now-vaporized villain.

Of course, if something vital comes up, like a firefight with Commie mutants, the C&R officer should drop everything to help, right?

Don't be silly. He should keep on shooting with his multicorder. Just because a fellow waving a camera, pointing a light and shouting directions through a megaphone makes a wonderful target is no reason to ignore The Computer's orders (although especially enthusiastic C&R officers have been known to squeeze off a few laser blasts with their left hand).

A typical C&R conversation

C&R Officer: Citizen Patsy-R! Please come over here and point this klieg light at our illustrious leader. I want a good shot of the burn marks.

Patsy-R: Are you crazy? If I stand up, those Commies will nail me! [Laser blast crackles overhead.]

C&R Officer: Citizen, surely you realize that failure to comply with an MBD officer in performance of his duty is treasonous.

Patsy-R: [Another bolt blasts nearby wall.] Forget it! Hey, Steve-O, do I have to do what this guy says?

Steve-O: I dunno.

Patsy-R: I want to call The Computer! You're trying to get me killed, you lousy traitorous Commie mutant scum!

C&R Officer: As communications officer, I'll be happy to forward your message to The Computer, citizen. Now, what was it you were saying?

Patsy-R: Hamana-hamana-hamana ...



C&R Officer

Congratulations, citizen! Your Mandatory Bonus Duty for this mission is **communications and recording officer** (C&RO). Your two-fold assignment is a high honor and a sign of The Computer's trust in you.

As *communications officer*, it is your job to handle the **com unit**. This is important, as (in the event of personal communication device malfunction) it is your team's only link to the benevolent wisdom of The Computer. Interpret The Computer's instructions, and relay questions and information to The Computer. Handle this duty wisely!

As *recording officer*, you are in charge of the all-important **multicorder**. Use it to record the mission in exciting detail in 156-bit color with state-of-the-art sound fidelity. Use close-ups, exotic lighting, scenes shot in infrared and in-depth interviews with suspected traitors. Missing a scene is treason. Re-stage exciting moments you may have overlooked. Your recordings may end up on the evening vidshows for all Alpha Complex to see!

Take your duty seriously. Recent team leader reports indicate 61% of all mission disasters can be blamed on the C&RO's failure to keep an accurate mission record. The Computer is everywhere—but you must be everywhere else! Don't let The Computer down!



Equipment guy

The **equipment guy** is responsible for the safety and care of all Computer property assigned to a Troubleshooter team.

Naturally, the equipment guy (EG) is highly skilled in the repair and maintenance of all forms of weapons, bots, vehicles and R&D devices. Feel free to ask his advice if you have a problem with a piece of equipment, or if you need an experimental R&D device demonstrated.

Also, be careful not to engage in activities that might damage your weapons, bots, or vehicles. Equipment guys are touchy about such things. For your own protection, inform your equipment guy whenever an item is malfunctioning, in need of preventive maintenance or makes you feel a bit uneasy. He won't mind. It's his job.

The equipment guy: If it's not broken, fix it

It is the equipment guy's duty to repair any vehicle, weapon, bot or device that malfunctions during the mission. Field repairs may not always be possible. In such instances the EG should ask The Computer for advice. For example:

Equipment Guy: [Standing on the edge of the subterranean mineshaft.] Due to Commie sabotage, defective floor material, code-named 'Gravel,' gave way beneath Docbot 6677-b, causing said bot to fall several thousand meters into Osmium Ore Procurement Shaft MNJ44. Said bot exploded on impact.

The Computer: Unfortunate. Please take a 'Gravel' sample and return all parts of Docbot 6677-b to YAK Sector Repair Facility.

Random Surprise Inspections

In addition to repairing items, a major equipment guy duty is the prevention of equipment failures. To accomplish this, the EG conducts frequent **Random Surprise Inspections** (RSI).

As everyone knows, a Troubleshooter's high-tech equipment requires constant maintenance and upkeep. A skilled individual is needed to inspect the equipment regularly. Who better than the equipment guy?

To help prevent equipment failures the equipment guy is authorized to conduct Random Surprise Inspections. These inspections can involve a thorough examination of the entire team or just a quick Weapons Check (WC) of selected team members. Failure to cooperate with the equipment guy during RSI is treason.

Encourage your equipment guy to conduct RSIs frequently. Remind him it's his responsibility to keep the team's equipment operating smoothly. Reassure him of The Computer's faith.

Of course, the equipment guy must look for more than just signs of wear and tear. Suppose a Commie sympathizer infiltrates the group, sabotaging equipment and weapons? An RSI at an opportune moment might uncover a monstrous plot! Successfully uncovering monstrous plots often leads to security clearance promotions. Remember, no one can refuse an RSI. No one.

Equipment and techniques

To better perform his duties, the equipment guy is issued a special R&D-designed Multipurpose Tool Kit (MTK) at the start of every mission. The MTK contains all of the standard tools that any Alpha Complex equipment guy needs to effect repairs (negative frequency ratchet, anti-grav lifters, geiger counter, etc.)

The equipment guy and his MTK have a variety of responsibilities. Each is summarized below.

Weapons: Inspecting weapons is the equipment guy's most important duty. Without functioning weapons Alpha Complex is helpless against the Commie menace. Stress to your EG it's his duty to prevent weapon malfunctions and to be constantly alert for signs of sabotage. Keeping close tabs on all weapons should occupy a large portion of his time. Failure to maintain the team's weapons is treason of the highest order.

Bots: These are some of The Computer's most prized possessions, and woe be to any EG who allows harm come to one. Bots should be inspected regularly, just like weapons, to check for mechanical wear and tear and Commie sabotage. However, inspecting a bot

can be a little more difficult than taking apart a laser.

Equipment Guy: Let me just, uh ... detach this Bot Brain Protector Plate.

Docbot: Are you certain that's— Owl! Owl! Owl!

Equipment Guy: Quiet, plasti-brain. Now for a quick scan of the— Oops.

Docbot: Aieeeee!

Equipment Guy: C'mon, I barely touched—

Docbot: Zzzzt ... phhttt ...

Equipment Guy: Hey, what the—?

Docbot: Exterminate! Exterminate! Eradicate all organic lifeforms!

Equipment Guy: Owl! Owl! Owl!

The equipment guy should also examine each bot's programming regularly. This is best done by asking the bot simple questions concerning its function and duty. *Caution:* Overly difficult or hypothetical questions could damage or alter a bot's programming.

Vehicles: The equipment guy is not only responsible for the care and maintenance for all vehicles assigned to the team, but he is also the official team pilot/driver. Driving is a very important duty. Be sure to ask the EG to detail exactly which long knobs and little pedals he is twisting and pushing.

Of course, the EG can always assign someone else to driving duty, but he's still responsible for damages—unless he can pin the blame on someone else. ('As the mission record clearly indicates, I specifically told Alonzo-R to increase the left mega-thruster output.')

Finally, because many vehicles have bot brains, the equipment guy gets to communicate with them and try to give them orders. The key word here is 'try.'

R&D: The EG must also ensure every piece of experimental R&D equipment assigned to the mission is tested at least once, and

that a full report of its performance is submitted. Be sure to remind your equipment guy that testing experimental R&D stuff often brings commendations.

Newfound gains: Not only is the EG responsible for all equipment carried on the mission, he's also in charge of retrieving, identifying, and repairing any items found along the way. Malfunctioning com units, nuclear reactors, and Old Reckoning devices turn up in the strangest places. Failure to retrieve and test discovered devices is treason!

A typical equipment guy conversation

Equipment Guy: Hey, Morty-Y. How's it goin' in R&D?

Morty-Y: Oh, hi, citizen. Come for some more equipment?

EG: Sure thing! That last batch was great. [Adjusts arm sling.] I mean it!

Morty-Y: [Glowing] Really? Oooh, I have something really special for you this time! [Adjusts glasses.]

EG: Great, Morty-Y! I'll take two. Love your stuff! I mean it!

Morty-Y: [Rapturously] Seriously? You really mean it? Gosh, you're swell. Gee, uh, maybe I ought to warn you...

EG: [Casually] Mmm?

Morty-Y: Well... I'm not supposed to tell—but we're worried the gravity inverter mechanism might interfere with the user's, uh, brainwaves.

EG: You'd never do anything like that to me, pal. I'll field-test it for you and bring back a complete report real soon. I mean it.

Morty-Y: Gosh!

EG: [Turning to another Troubleshooter.] Hey, Gomer-R. You're a member of HPD & Mind Control, right?

Gomer-R: Yeah. Why?

EG: Congratulations, citizen! You've been chosen to field-test this mind-control helmet. Just put it on your head and turn the switch. Not now! Later, when we're in a room with low ceilings. Meanwhile, it's RSI time, everyone! Let's see those lasers double-quick!



Equipment Guy

Congratulations, Troubleshooter! You have been selected as the bots, weapons, vehicles and sundry equipment repair and maintenance officer, colloquially known as the **equipment guy**. The Computer trusts you! Why else would you be responsible for every piece of assigned mission equipment?

As equipment guy, you have many responsibilities. You must regularly and punctually carry out **RSIs** (Random Surprise Inspections). Collect all weapons and equipment your fellow Troubleshooters carry, and check each item for signs of wear, misuse and sabotage. If you find evidence of sabotage or tampering, report it immediately to your loyalty officer or team leader or directly to The Computer. You will be soundly rewarded for your efforts.

It is also your duty to see that all **R&D devices** assigned to the team are tested, **bots** have their protective asimov circuits checked regularly and all **vehicles** perform as intended.

If your team comes across an **Old Reckoning device**, you are responsible for obtaining it and returning it to The Computer for analysis.

Finally, you serve as **team driver/pilot**, except on those occasions you feel it necessary to appoint someone else to this task. Remember, if it's not broken, fix it!



Happiness officer



The **happiness officer** is essential to the success of a mission. By checking constantly for signs of Sub-Standard Morale (or SSM), the happiness officer keeps morale high and, more important, makes sure Troubleshooters have lots of fun.

If you feel down, tired or just plain bored, don't suffer in silence. Tell your happiness officer! He can cheer you up with a joke, a quick song or a variety of fun medications. And if he doesn't, just inform The Computer. That could be fun, too!

The happiness officer: No citizen left behind

Officially, the happiness officer (HO) is in charge of team morale. The HO monitors morale and, whenever a Troubleshooter suffers from Sub-Standard Morale (SSM), applies Morale Lifters (ML) to boost spirits and bring smiles to one and all. These MLs can take any of a number of forms—pharmaceuticals, jokes, pharmaceuticals, songs, pharmaceuticals, pep talks and, on frequent occasions, pharmaceuticals.

In Computer terms, SSM means any citizen who isn't in a state of euphoric glee. For example:

Happiness Officer: [Addressing two Troubleshooters scrubbing a food vat.]

Greetings, citizens! Are you having fun?

Troubleshooter #1: Certainly, citizen!

Scraping congealed, potentially toxic sediment off food vats is highly important! I feel privileged to serve The Computer in this capacity!

Happiness Officer: Excellent! And you, citizen, are you having fun?

Troubleshooter #2: Yeah... sure. Dumploads.

Troubleshooter #2 is obviously suffering from SSM. This is dangerous because Sub-Standard Morale is the largest single cause of mission disasters. SSM can cause a variety of additional problems, including vehicle malfunctions, weapon misfires, poor communications, and back-aches. 63% of team leaders with a preference list it as the primary or secondary reason for a mission's failure.

Early signs of Sub-Standard Morale:

To help in early detection of SSM, HPD&MC has made up a list of the warning signs of SSM Breakdown. Briefing officers should go over these warning signs with newly appointed happiness officers. The fate of Alpha Complex depends on it.

Does the citizen in question:

1. Argue excessively?
2. Refuse to volunteer for suicide missions?
3. Disregard the team leader's orders?
4. Suffer from insomnia?
5. Not laugh at the happiness officer's jokes?
6. Refuse to participate in the group singalongs?
7. Have a pouty puss?
8. Refuse to take Personality Stabilizer Drugs?
9. Show a definite lack of faith in The Computer's judgement?
10. Whine a lot?

Any one of the above symptoms (including those not listed above) is grounds for immediate Personality Adjustment. Sub-Standard Morale manifests in many other ways too. An experienced happiness officer learns to recognize SSM in all its forms.

Happiness is a serious business

The happiness officer's duties are twofold. First, he must prevent SSM by leading the Troubleshooters in frequent Pre-planned Spontaneous Activities (PSA): Group singalongs, vidshow trivia questions, jokes, rap sessions, coordinated cheers for The

Computer, or anything else the HO feels will be loads of non-treasonous fun. Exactly which PSA the Troubleshooters engage in is up to the HO.

In sufficient quantity, Pre-planned Spontaneous Activities effectively prevent Sub-Standard Morale. By the same token, lack of PSA is seen as a deliberate attempt to induce SSM. This is bad. Tell your happiness officer about this. Drop subtle hints.

Of course, The Computer knows no citizen is perfect, and cases of SSM may develop from time to time in spite of the HO's best efforts. This brings us to the second duty: SSM treatment.

Through years of experience, The Computer has learned there's only one effective cure for SSM: Personality Stabilizer Drugs (PSDs). Impress on your players that loyal happiness officers always use PSDs to treat SSM. Let them know PSDs are considered 'normal' in Alpha Complex, and failure to respond to SSM with PSDs is treason.

Which PSDs the happiness officer has is up to you. The two most common drugs are **E-Z-DUZ-IT** (qualine) and **Wider Awake** (xanitrick). For these and other pharmaceuticals, see the next chapter, 'Medication.'

Rumors suggest PSDs occasionally get mislabeled. But we all know what rumors are.

Note: In our culture, drug therapy means teaching an individual how to cope with life without relying on drugs, a noble cause we Famous Game Designers heartily endorse. In Alpha Complex, however, drug therapy has a more literal meaning: teaching a citizen to cope *through the use* of drugs—a subtle but important difference.

A typical happiness officer conversation

Susan-R: Are you sure that was the right thing to do?

Happiness officer: Well, he looked so... *glum*. You know, all that moaning and groaning. I thought he'd bring down the rest of the team.

Susan-R: I guess so, but maybe the docbot should have patched him up first. I mean, that autocannon hit him square in the chest!

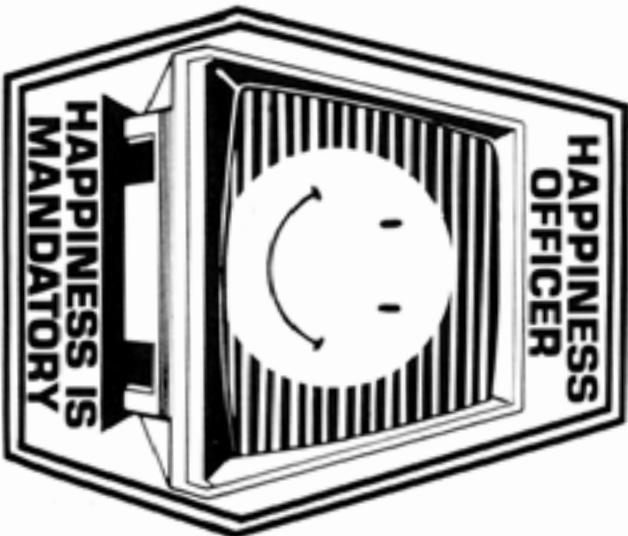
Happiness officer: Trust me. He's fine. [Turns to wounded Troubleshooter Benjamin-R.] How you doin'?

Benjamin-R [Doing push-ups]: Great! I feel great! Never felt better! I love The Computer!!

Susan-R: You know, Benjamin-R, maybe you should keep quiet. After all, you're kinda, you know.... critically wounded.

Benjamin-R [now running in circles]: No, really, I feel great! Think we'll fight any Commies today? Huh? Think so? Huh?

Happiness officer: See, Susan-R? He's fine. Now, about this stress you're experiencing...



Team Leader

Congratulations, citizen! Because of your unique abilities you've been selected to serve as **team leader**. This is a vital assignment, and your selection demonstrates The Computer's exceptional faith in you.

As team leader you must coordinate the efforts of your fellow Troubleshooters, using their diverse talents and skills to successfully complete your mission assignment. To this end, The Computer has provided you with all necessary equipment. However, if you feel The Computer may have overlooked some of your needs, please don't hesitate to point this out.

At times your team may engage in combat with evil Commie mutant traitors. In such situations your superior tactical knowledge will determine the outcome of the battle. Deploy your team carefully. Keep those fire lanes clear! Your badge depicts you as the center of your team, with your expertise and knowledge radiating as inspiration to all. The Computer stands ready to assist you in these tasks. Good luck, citizen! The sensors of The Computer are upon you.

Happiness Officer

Congratulations, citizen! Due to your properly zealous attitude you've been chosen as **happiness officer**. This is a great honor. Only those who know the true joy of being an Alpha Complex citizen are appointed happiness officer. Your selection shows The Computer's exceptional faith in you. As happiness officer it's your duty to keep team morale high and to motivate your fellow Troubleshooters with frequent pep talks, singalongs, and practical jokes.

In addition, you must constantly be on the alert for **SSM** (Sub-Standard Morale) among your fellow Troubleshooters. Here are some early warning signs of SSM: argumentativeness, a reluctance to volunteer, questioning the team leader, habitual frowning when you tell jokes, and a refusal to participate in group singalongs.

As happiness officer you're authorized to give PSDs (Personality Stabilizer Drugs) to any Troubleshooter who shows signs of SSM. You'll be given a variety of PSDs for dispensing. Failure to treat SSM is treason! Remember, laugh and the whole Complex laughs with you, cry and you cry alone.

Parting thoughts

This chapter merely explores the surface of the MBD concept. What remains to be discovered is up to dedicated and wickedly twisted Gamemasters and their players. But remember, everything we have presented is optional. None of this fun stuff is necessary for an ordinary **PARANOIA** game.

Then again, everything in this rulebook is optional that way, really. Not that we want you to actively ignore it; we're just saying.



44. Medication

Note: These rules are optional. Do not use them if you don't want to. We wonder why we need to tell you this, since you don't have to use any rule you don't want to.

We don't encourage the use of real-world drugs. Indeed, if you read this chapter, you'll find we portray these drugs as horribly dangerous, with horrendous side- and aftereffects, producing potentially irreparable organic damage, with addiction an ever-present possibility. Therefore, do not infer from this article that we support, condone or suggest the use of any illegal drug.

To sum up: Don't take drugs; play **PARANOIA**.

Some Gamemasters may have heard of a game, some kind of medieval fantasy, where magical potions, scrolls and spells are common currency. Yeah, that game.

Well, drugs are the **PARANOIA** equivalent. Troubleshooters can steal, horde and use drugs in the same way characters in that other game covet magical treasures. Except Troubleshooters die like flies.

The Pharmaceutical Code

1. It is the duty of all Citizens to remain loyal to The Computer.

2. Loyal Citizens are happy when they serve The Computer.

3. Unhappy Citizens are disloyal Citizens.

Availability

The otherwise splendid description of INFRARED life in Alpha Complex presented in Chapter 35, 'Life in the city,' omits certain details. What follows is more specific:

Rise with hundreds of others in the communal barracks. Take Wakey-Wakey pill. Wash. Eat breakfast in communal dining hall. Take nutritional supplements. Go to work in the food vats. Eat lunch in the communal dining

hall. Take behavior modifiers and motivational elevators. Work second shift in the food vats. Take mood depressives. Eat dinner in the communal dining hall. Take Truth Accelerator pill. Participate in social meetings and public hatings. Take Mood Elevator pill. Watch vidshow adventures in communal viewing lounge. Take Sleepy-Sleepy pill. Sleep.

The Computer generously provides all loyal citizens with a wide variety of drugs. Each drug has a security clearance; any citizen may request drugs of his own or lower clearance. In addition, The Computer and docbots often prescribe higher-clearance drugs when they feel a citizen requires pharmaceutical treatment. A docbot 'prescribes' drugs by direct injection without warning.

Many Computer terminals and all confession booths have drug dispensing slots. These discharge 24-tablet bottles. Medical kits often contain six or more syringes of common drugs.

All drug bottles and syringes are clearly labelled with instructions and the name and quantity of the contents. For example, a bottle of Gelgernine tablets would have this label:

24 Gelgernine Tablets

HAPPY LIFE

Take one (or more) when not happy.

Use

Characters should use drugs as a tool. Why? Because The Computer encourages drug use. If The Computer says taking drugs is a sign of loyalty, then only Commie traitors would refuse to take their pills.

Also, taking drugs regularly helps you build up immunities. Regular users will find the side effects of drug use decline. There's also the advantage of appearing to be a drugged-out,

brain-burned addict: High-clearance citizens tend not to trust you with important (and dangerous) missions. No one else will trust you, either. This encourages everyone to obey one of The Computer's most important dicta. In other words, by being untrustworthy, you are encouraging obedience to The Computer.

Of course, if you take drugs for a long time you'll get addicted. But because there are lots of drugs around, that shouldn't be a problem—at least until the drugs run out—or until The Computer goes on a prohibition binge.

Durations

How long a citizen is affected by a particular drug depends on a great many factors: citizen size and endurance, drug type, size, purity, delivery system, environment... In fact, there are just too many factors to keep track of. That means the drug lasts exactly as long as you want. The only important consideration for drug duration is the fun factor. As long as it's fun, then keep it going. If it'll be more fun for it to wear off, then poof!, it's gone.

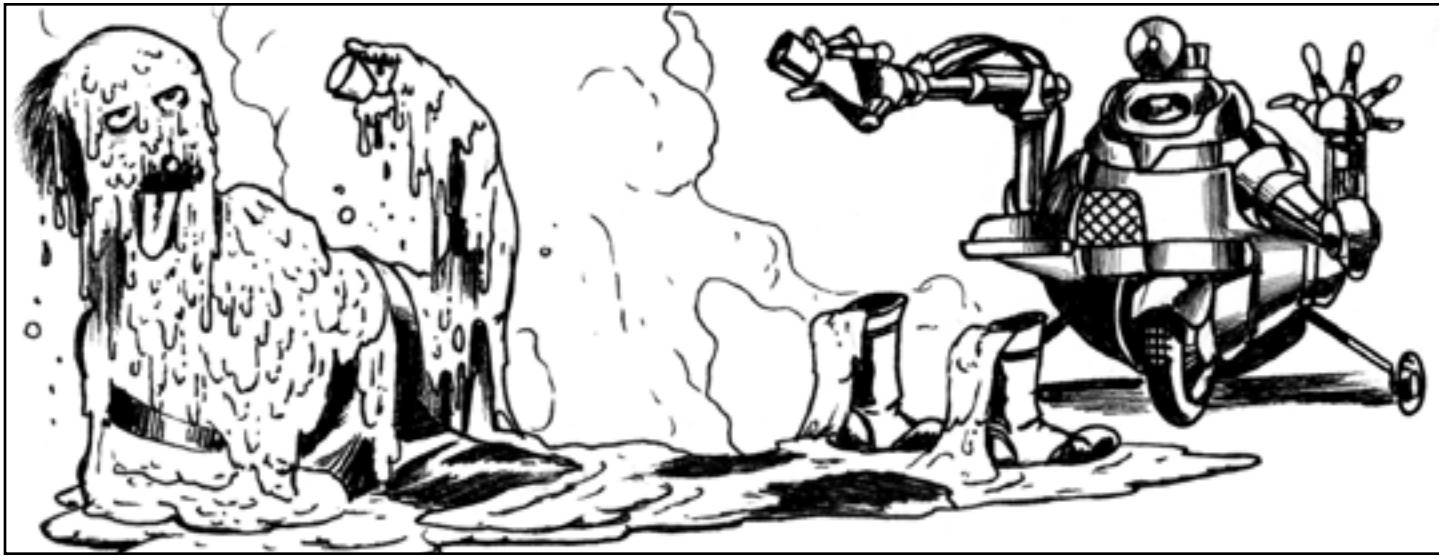
Even so, you want some way of figuring out how long some drugs last compared to other drugs. Never let it be said that we Famous Game Designers stint on this stuff. Here's a whole range of drug durations:

A while: Lasts as long as it seems like fun. Wears off before the citizen really figures out what the drug does.

A scene: The effect lasts long enough for the character to get used to using it. A citizen will figure out just how important and valuable the effects are. Then it wears off generally with terrible aftereffects.

Half a day: Several scenes (or one scene if they're standing in line at PLC). Anyway, a really long time.

Full day: A period of time exceeding the expected lifetime of RED-Clearance



24 MEDICATION

Troubleshooters. Figure it lasts to the end of the mission and well into the debriefing (with appropriate nasty results).

■ Side effects, interactions and aftereffects

According to The Computer, traitors have placed toxins in certain drugs. It is the responsibility of each citizen to find these corrupted products and immediately report them to The Computer. The way you find corrupted drugs is by taking them. This also removes the toxic drug from circulation before it does any harm.

Taking two or more drugs simultaneously is a bad idea. That's because if something goes wrong it's lots harder to figure out which batch was tampered with. Also two or more drugs at the same time is often fatal. Remember! Dying before reporting defective drugs is treason!

Possible bad effects of corrupted drugs include organic damage, drug insanity, and, sometimes, advancement of the storyline (that is, your use of drugs to make fun things happen). The last one is free-form so you can liven things up.

Another problem with drugs happens when citizens get used to taking them. These citizens are called addicts. They tend to get a little strange when cut off from a steady supply. At first it's okay, but after the first 10 minutes or so bad things start to happen.

The two tables at right present a non-exhaustive list of fun side effects. You can roll 1d20 and consult the appropriate line of the table, or just choose one that sounds good.

Typical dispensing dialog

GM: You wake with a start and realize you've dozed off while The Computer was talking to you.

Troubleshooter: Do I remember anything about what it was saying?

GM: No. After a short wait, The Computer speaks! 'Citizen! Are you tired?'

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer! Due to mission requirements I have missed the last four sleep days. However, I am eager to accept any further assignments!

GM: Very good. Have a Perversity point, because that was really slick. The Computer speaks. 'Citizen, for missing bed check you will be fined 240 credits. Please render payment at the nearest Internal Security office. However, your devotion to The Computer has not gone unnoticed. To enable continued high levels of performance, a supply of stimulant will be provided.'

Troubleshooter: Thank you, friend Computer!

GM: A small bottle rolls down the chute and rattles to a halt in the dispensing tray. What are you doing?

Insanity table

- 1: Stunned
- 2–5: Anxiety attack
- 6–10: Paranoia
- 11–15: Whacko
- 16–17: Visions
- 18–19: Pacifism
- 20: Demons

Stunned: The citizen stops moving around and starts gibbering incoherently. This is usually temporary—if only because someone will probably kill him quick.

Anxiety attack: The citizen is unable to cope with problems. Everything difficult is just too much to handle. His usual recourse is to blame the team leader.

Paranoia: 'Everyone is out to get me!' Try to 'helpfully' explain to the player all other characters' actions in this light.

Whacko: Encourage the player to improvise. He can have his character foam at the mouth and get away with anything because the other characters know a nutcase when they see one.

Visions: Be highly creative here. Invent invisible friends, let the character hear a personal 'voice of The Computer' and describe the world as totally warped. A slow, progressive approach is best. Start with minor alterations in perception, later bring in plausible hallucinated NPCs and work up to full-fledged psychedelic landscapes.

Pacifism: Peace, citizen! Everything is sweetness and light. Describe armed opponents as 'actively seeking peace' and threats as 'only superficial.'

Demons: The character believes his teammates have become weird creatures. ('In this light, it looks like Roy's eyes are glowing red.') Eventually he sees menacing demons everywhere. Any player who doesn't take this opportunity to blast everything in sight shouldn't be playing **PARANOIA**.

Troubleshooter: I'll take the bottle.

GM: Okay, you're holding a small bottle.

Troubleshooter: What does it say?

GM: It says '24 Asperquaint Tablets, Take when tired. Death to The Computer and all Programmer Finks!'

Troubleshooter: What?

GM: Do you want to read it out loud?

Troubleshooter: NO! No, I'll just read it quietly, to myself.

GM: Quietly, trying not to move your lips, you read '24 Asperquaint Tablets, Take when tired. Death to The Computer and all Programmer Finks!' While you're examining the bottle, The Computer speaks. 'Citizen, failure to promptly carry out instructions is insubordination.'

Organic damage table

- 1–4: The Shakes
- 5–8: Weakness
- 9–12: Memory loss
- 13–15: Cowardice
- 16–17: Power loss
- 18: Coma
- 19: Death
- 20: Permanent damage

The Shakes: Uncontrollable tremors. Any coordination or fine movement is difficult. Use of weapons in this state is hazardous—first, because the victim has almost no chance of hitting a target and, worse (at least from his teammates' viewpoints), his trigger finger may spasm at inopportune times.

Weakness: The character's strength fails. Carrying any kind of burden (flashlight, laser pistol, PDC) becomes an incredible effort. Even walking requires whining complaints.

Memory loss: Their brain synapses just stop firing. In some ways this could be very handy; a see-no-evil attitude roughly matches The Computer's ideal of the perfect loyal citizen.

Cowardice: In case of danger run, gibber in fear, moan and sink spinelessly to the ground, etc.

Power loss: Power attribute rating goes to zero. No power points, no mutant powers.

Coma: The citizen appears dead. The Computer calls up the next clone backup. Then, some time later when things are dull, the old citizen wakes up. Only a really nasty GM would have a citizen regain consciousness while in the middle of (choose one:) a recycling grinder, autoclave, transplant surgery or experimental weapons target practice. Do not do this to your players. They will feel persecuted and put upon. They might even get a little, you know, paranoid.

Death: Clone X becomes clone X+1.

Permanent damage: Ick! One of the first five choices above (or something even worse) happens forever. A nasty thing for the player. You, the compassionate Gamemaster, have our deepest sympathies. No matter how much the little devils moan and groan, you'll just have to steel yourself to the task and do this awful thing.

Troubleshooter: I quickly open the bottle and take out a pill.

GM: The bottle opens easily. You find it difficult to get a pill out. When you finally do, you find that it's lumpy, crumbly, and a strange blend of colors.

Troubleshooter: I'll examine it more closely.



GM: It seems to be poorly made. It's a swirl of green, pink and purple. It also smells like vat slime.

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer! I wish to report a case of Communist sabotage! This pill is defective!

GM: The Computer speaks! 'Citizen! Please report specifics of drug defect.'

Troubleshooter: The pill is all lumpy and crumbly.

GM: The Computer speaks again. 'Please report specific drug defect, citizen!'

Troubleshooter: This pill smells bad.

GM: The Computer speaks more loudly! 'Citizen! Please report specific drug defect.'

Troubleshooter: [weakly] It's the wrong color...

GM: The Computer speaks slowly and patiently. 'Citizen! Please report specific drug defects!'

Troubleshooter: What else do you want to know?

GM: The Computer, infinitely patient, speaks. 'Citizen! Please report effects from drug ingestion.'

Troubleshooter: But this pill is defective. It could kill me!

GM: The Computer, with righteous wrath, speaks! 'Citizen! Dying before reporting drug defects is treason!'

Tranquilizers

Tranquilizers calm the fears and concerns of loyal citizens. Usually citizens are given these drugs to ease any irrational fears (which is silly; in **PARANOIA** there are no irrational fears). Sometimes their nerves are calmed right down to total immobility. For years. Incidentally, tranquilizers are common ingredients in food vat preparations.

Gelgernine

Common name: Inner Happiness
Clearance: RED

Availability: The Computer treats Gelgernine as a reward. Successful Troubleshooters get constant doses for weeks (or until addicted). Otherwise Gelgernine is available only through IR market channels.

Effects: I'm so happy. I love living in Alpha Complex. I love The Computer. I'm happy to follow orders. I don't much care whether I live or die, I'm so happy. Hey, look, someone just shot my arm off! Isn't that wonderful?

Side-effects: Addiction, memory loss and paranoia. Regular users can be identified by a slight tremor and a greenish foam about the mouth.

Methods of application: Tablet (lasts a scene), capsule (time-released to last a day), aerosol (white gas, used by Internal Security for messhall riots; fatalities minimal, less than 30%; lasts half a day).

Sandallathon

Common name: Sleepy-Sleepy

Clearance: RED

Availability: Mandatory prescription by The Computer or any of its minions. Used to enforce sleep days.

Effects: Zzzzzz.

Side-effects: Addiction, shakes and anxiety attacks.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (half a day), injection (stunned for a scene; all pain blocked).

Visomorpain

Common name: Little Black Friend

Clearance: INFRARED

Availability: Mandatory and forever. Used by The Computer to keep workers happy and quiet.

Effects: Makes you happy and quiet.

Side-effects: Other than a perpetually stupid expression on addicts there are no side-effects. On the other hand, using Visomorpain with other drugs tends to cause severe psychosis, often of the demon-vision variety.

Methods of application: Tablet (a scene), injection (a while, eliminates all sensation of pain).

Hallucinogens

The only hallucinogens prescribed by The Computer are those with some beneficial effect; the hallucinations they bring are considered undesirable side-effects. Some citizens, however, desire precisely these hallucinogenic properties. Usually these mean nothing more than heightened perception of colors and sounds, as well as the occasional purple unicorn and talking flashlight.

Benetridin

Common name: VideoLand

Clearance: INDIGO

Availability: Administered to Troubleshooters, Vulture Troopers and anyone else on 'routine' missions.

Effects: Produces the 'Teela O'Malley Syndrome'; subjects think no matter how outrageous the risk they cannot be harmed. Also acts as an anti-psionic; the subject cannot use any mutant powers and is invulnerable to most mental attacks for the duration of the drug.

Side-effects: Causes mild visual and audio fantasies. Injection frequently causes organic damage. Addicts have enormously dilated

Q: Citizen, are you happy?

A: Yes, Friend Computer!

Q: Citizen, would you like some drugs?

A: Yes, Friend Computer!

pupils and usually respond several seconds behind real-world events.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day), injection (one day, causes extremely vivid hallucinations).

Rolactin

Common name: Happy Life

Clearance: BLUE—and they mean it, this time. Anyone of lower clearance caught with this will not be happy for long. Or alive.

Effects: Everything seems wonderful. Moxie and Chutzpah Management specialties are both increased by 4 for the duration of the effect. If you don't have that specialty, you gain them at 4 above your Management for the duration.

Side-effects: Causes a slight bluish tint to the skin. Otherwise none.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day).

Stimulants

Asperquaint

Common name: Tireless Servant of The Computer

Clearance: YELLOW

Availability: As prescribed by The Computer.

Effects: Subject will be wide awake, even after many hours without sleep. Produces a gung-ho, 'can-do' attitude. At high dosages, produces super enthusiasm—subject will ignore all but the most obvious dangers. Strength doubles.

Side-effects: Addicts develop a unique facial twitch. Capsule and syringe have a slight chance of producing shakes, weakness, memory loss or drug insanity.

Methods of application: Tablet (a while), capsule (one day), injection (high dosage; a scene).

Thymoglandin

Common name: Combat Quick or Big T

Clearance: BLUE

Availability: Restricted. Available only to duly authorized mission personnel.

Effects: 'Kill! Kill! Charge! Where is the enemy?' Subject will feel the need for immediate, frenetic action. In combat situations, he will charge fearlessly, but may have difficulty differentiating friend from foe. Outside combat he lifts burdens far heavier than he could normally lift, runs in circles, etc., anything to keep busy. In combat, character makes two attacks per round; Violence specialty ratings are doubled.

Side-effects: Roll both organic damage and drug insanity. Addicts have a wide-awake, slightly insane glare, the whites of their eyes turn a dark brown.

Aftereffects: Insanity for a while. Then they snap back to normal—except for a severe craving for more Thymoglandin.

Methods of application: Tablet (a scene), injection (half a day—followed by unconsciousness unless a new dose is administered immediately).

Xanitrick

Common name: Wakey-Wakey

Clearance: INFRARED

Availability: Mandatory on waking or in mid-shift.

Effects: Subjects feel hyper, speed up and spend the entire time with severe tremors.

Side-effects: Shakes, power loss, anxiety attacks, uncontrollable sneezing.

Aftereffects: Total exhaustion. This is cumulative. The more times Xanitrick is taken, the more tired the subject will become.

Method of application: Tablet (a scene).

Mood Modifiers

These are used to change the mental state of maladjusted clones. They include truth drugs, personality shapers and hypnotics—just the standard tools of Internal Security.

Pyroxidine

Common name: Wide Awake

Clearance: RED

Availability: Issued for 'routine' missions requiring high levels of Troubleshooter motivation and low levels of Troubleshooter selfpreservation.

Effects: High awareness and alertness. Produces a gung-ho, 'can-do' attitude. Management ratings are doubled. At high dosages, the citizen ignores all but the most obvious dangers.

Side-effects: Frequent use (more than once in a lifetime) results in organic damage.

Methods of application: Tablet (a white), capsule (one day), injection (a white, high dosage).

Pyroxidine 2

Common name: Wider Awake

Clearance: RED

Availability: Issued for 'routine' missions requiring high levels of Troubleshooter motivation and low levels of Troubleshooter self-preservation. Often used as a morale booster by Happiness Officers.

Effects: High awareness and alertness, along with a general 'Gosh, I'm happy' attitude. Management specialties improve.

Side-effects: None at all. This drug is perfectly safe (as long as you keep taking it).

Aftereffects: Roll 1d20 and consult the 'Effects of Discontinuing Ingestion of Wider Awake' table.

Method of application: Tablet (one hour)

Effects of discontinuing ingestion of Wider Awake

01-07	None
08-15	Scalp itches
16-20	Claws at walls; screams 'Purple hairy spiders!'; dies

Qualine

Common name: E-Z-DUZ-IT

Clearance: RED

Availability: Standard issue to Happiness Officers.

Effects: 'You know, it's not so bad being trapped in this damaged reactor core. I suppose we'll all be dead in a few minutes.... Life is funny that way.'

Side-effects: Troubleshooter becomes oblivious to danger and is apt to follow any reasonable or semi-reasonable suggestion.

Aftereffects: None

Method of application: Comes in a one pint bottle. Usual dosage is a swig. Two swigs for citizens under exceptional stress (two hours).

Telescopalamine

Common name: IntSec calls it 'Truth and Beauty'; everyone else, 'Self-Finking Pills.'

Clearance: GREEN

Availability: Restricted to Internal Security.

Effects: Citizens under telescopalamine will answer most questions reflexively (not necessarily truthfully) and will be agreeable to any reasonable voice. They'll agree with the voice, but they won't even be consciously aware of what is said. Used by Political Therapy Officers for interrogation and debriefing.

Side-effects: Temporary insanity.

Method of application: Injection (a white).

Zybenzaphrene

Common name: Slumber-Soft

Clearance: ORANGE

Availability: Restricted to IntSec use.

Effects: Moxie and Chutzpah specialties are halved. Citizen is highly agreeable to suggestion. At high dosages, citizen wants to sleep very badly. If kept awake, he will agree to anything. Very useful for obtaining confessions, setting up patsies, etc.

Side-effects: Depression, sleepiness, reduced awareness.

Methods of application: Tablet (a white), capsule (one day), injection (high dosage, one day).

Experimentals

Occasionally The Computer lets citizens test new and unusual drugs. These citizens are happy to explore a variety of new effects on their minds and bodies.

Dynomorphin

Clearance: ULTRAVIOLET

Availability: Experimental.

Effects: Character feels no fear; he literally does not perceive anything as a threat. He will walk into a pit or shoot himself if ordered.

Side-effects: None.

Aftereffects: Organic damage.

Method of application: Injection.

Hydropsionic Acid

Common name: Mind Melt

Clearance: ULTRAVIOLET

Availability: Prohibited to all personnel.

Effects: Subject can use any mutant power he possesses without reduction in his Power attribute rating. In addition, subject may use mutant powers he cannot use normally. (Any time the character attempts to use a new random power, roll 1d20. If you roll 1 through 4, he can use the power.)

Side-effects: Stunned, weakness or pacifism.

Aftereffects: Power rating goes to 0 for a while.

Method of application: Capsule (a scene).

The future

Futanic acid, varbonic acephenyl and zarobutyl acid are only a few of the miracle drugs that R&D's pharmaceutical research service firms continue to develop. The future happiness of loyal citizens is their only concern. We will happily detail these and many other invigorating and incredibly dangerous chemicals in future **PARANOIA** supplements. If we remember.



45. Sanity tests

The Computer must continually assure itself all citizens are mentally sound. It does this by continually trying to drive them crazy. Here are some questions to test the mental stability of **PARANOIA** characters. They work best for players who have run through a few missions and are now somewhat familiar with Alpha Complex.

These tests are useful when:

- ◎ A mission is moving too slowly.
- ◎ A mission is moving too fast. The Computer may break in on furious action to ask stupid questions like these. Such intrusive irrelevance helps make The Computer's insanity obvious.
- ◎ The PCs encounter roadblocks where Internal Security is conducting psychological spot-checks (much like license checks or anti-terrorist airline screenings by our real-world IntSec officers).
- ◎ You want to run a brief mission for one player. Characters are sometimes called in for an intensive battery of tests.

Conducting sanity tests

Bear in mind the fundamental **PARANOIA** Gamemaster adage: ignorance and fear, fear and ignorance. In this case, stress the fear. Terror is nice. Absolute gibbering hysterical horror is optimal.

First, pay attention to the setting. Describe a room that is dark, yet forbidding. Bleak, yet cruel. A single chair (with leathery straps and stains of dark brown), black walls, lit by the glare of a single terminal. This kind of atmosphere encourages true loyalty to The Computer.

Use a variety of props to heighten the overall effect. To really pressure the players, use a tape recorder. Place the microphone close to the player's mouth and announce: 'For your protection, your responses are being recorded by Joyful Affirmation, a service firm of Internal Security. Please speak clearly!'

Remember, The Computer conducts these tests frequently. One strategy is to ask identical questions over a series of interviews and compare the results. Inconsistent answers, or answers identical to those of known traitors, may result in fines or accusations.

On the other hand, *phew!*, that sounds like a lot of work! What self-respecting GM is going to try to remember all that trivia? Fortunately the solution is simple. Make the players submit their answers in writing. And don't complain about illegible or incomplete answers. Instead, just when things are getting interesting, have



'Now let's see—the square pegs go in the... holes?!'

The Computer interrupt the proceedings. Yell loudly while pushing the offending document in front of the player's nose. 'Citizen! Is this an R or a T?'

Another useful intimidation tool is a time limit. Either shout out a countdown or hold up cards with numbers on them, explaining they are appearing on the terminal screen. Skipping countdown numbers is cruel but fun. ('Citizen! This is a test. What is the set of the union of all sets that include themselves? THREE! TWO! ONE! I'm sorry, your time is up. Thank you for your cooperation.')

Or you can hook the PCs up to a lie detector. Don't let them know whether the machine registers a response as truth or a lie. Simply roll dice, mutter a bit, and make a few notes on paper. You could have the lie detector operators behave as though the unit might be malfunctioning:

Tech: If The Computer is your best friend, who is your next best friend?

PC: Blah, blah.

Tech: (Gazes silently at the display. Adjusts a few knobs. Repeats the question. Adjusts a few knobs. Gazes silently at the display. Leans over, clicks open an inspection panel, and peers inside thoughtfully. Closes panel. Stares at the display. Gives multicorder a murderous 'Thwack!' with the flat of his hand. [Whack the table hard. Make your players jump.] Smiles in satisfaction, makes notes, then blandly continues questioning.)

Results

The results of all these tests are, um, somewhat variable. See the sanity test rules at the end of this chapter for likely outcomes.

Remember, The Computer is constantly looking for signs of a conspiracy. Results that are all alike will bespeak a traitorous degree of

collaboration among the PCs. Likewise, if all answers are unique this may indicate that the clones are answering differently deliberately. Just to be sure, ask everyone in the group, 'What is the sum of 2 plus 2?' The answers are sure to be significant.

One final note: The Computer will never reveal actual answers or results.

The tests

■ Test 1: Mathematical and deductive ability

These are all straight math questions. The Computer will check for errors but is more interested in how the question is answered. A right answer to a hard problem may be evidence of mutation or other unsuspected resources. A wrong answer may assure The Computer the character is actually as stupid as he's supposed to be.

Choose a math type from this table, or roll 1d20, to determine the kind of math question posed:

- | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| 1–2: | Single digit addition |
| 3–4: | Single digit subtraction |
| 5–6: | Double digit addition |
| 7–8: | Double digit subtraction |
| 9–10: | Single digit multiplication |
| 11–12: | Single digit division |
| 13–14: | Convert fraction to percentile |
| 15–16: | Geometry |
| 17–18: | Hard arithmetic |
| 19: | Very complex mathematics |
| 20: | Impossible mathematics |

45 SANITY TESTS

■ Examples

Simple division: ‘Citizen, this is a test. What is 15 divided by 5?’—‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

Hard arithmetic: ‘Citizen, this is a test. What is the product of 1578.4, 908.12 and 23.01?’—‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

Very complex mathematics: ‘Citizen, this is a test. What is the integral with respect to y of $[y^x \cos x \sin y + x^y \sin x \cos y] dy$?’—‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

Impossible mathematics: ‘Citizen, this is a test. What is the final digit of “pi”?’—‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

Incidentally, calculus is Security Clearance BLUE. If anyone actually manages to correctly answer a very complex math question, have him executed.

■ Test 2: Word association

This is a simple word association test. I will say a word; you will respond with the first word that comes to your mind.

GM: Choose a couple from the list below.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1. Cat | 8. Tree | 15. Bacon |
| 2. Horse | 9. Car | 16. Mother |
| 3. Plate | 10. Mustard | 17. Dinner |
| 4. Pencil | 11. Grass | 18. Finger |
| 5. Hand | 12. Teacher | 19. Wood |
| 6. Food | 13. Father | 20. Death |
| 7. Computer | 14. Missile | 21. War |

‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

Note: Merely knowing what some of these terms mean is cause for suspicion and possibly treason.

■ Test 3: Personality test

This is a simple personality test. Think about your answers, and answer freely.

The Computer asks only one or two of these questions at a time. It should also keep asking for clarification. (That's interesting. Why do you feel that way?) Often the request for clarification may occur hours or days later, at an awkward or embarrassing time.

1. If you were a High Programmer, what would you wish for?
2. What was the nicest thing about being an INFRARED?
3. What three things would you look for if you found a fellow citizen unhappy?

4. Would you rather execute a traitor or let him escape, hoping to capture and cure him of his delusions?

5. How do you feel life in Alpha Complex can be improved? (GM: It can't be. Alpha Complex is a utopia. Any other answer is treason.)

6. Do you think traitors are intrinsically evil, or are they just normal human beings who have been misled?

7. Which do you think would be the most fun to be: a human, a bot or The Computer?

8. Do you think people are smarter than computers?

9. Do you think computers bleed like people?

10. Do you think killing is necessary under some conditions?

11. If The Computer is your best friend, who is your next best friend?

12. Do you think you deserve a higher security level?

13. Why do you think The Computer has decided belonging to a secret society is treason?

14. Are you hopeful about the future?

‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

■ Test 4: True or false

Please answer “yes” or “no” to express your agreement or disagreement with the following statements as they apply to you, yourself, personally.

The Computer will ask three or four of these.

1. I have had very strange experiences.
2. I have had periods when I can't remember what I was doing.
3. I have used drugs excessively.
4. Sometimes my head seems to hurt all over.
5. I feel anxiety about something all the time.
6. Sometimes I want things strongly enough to steal them.
7. I am afraid of losing my mind.
8. I have strange thoughts.
9. I sometimes feel like killing other citizens.
10. I feel that the world would be better without me.

‘Thank you for your cooperation.’

■ Test 5: Cognitive skills

Show the player any illustration from this rulebook or any **PARANOIA** supplement. Say:

‘This is a test of your imagination and creativity.’

or

‘This is a test of your ability to recognize treasonous thinking. This is a very important skill, because it helps us recognize traitors and cure them with political therapy.’

or

‘You are being considered for an important assignment. This is a test of your skill as a [deleted for security reasons]. Please identify the location of the [deleted for security reasons] in this picture.’

Then continue: ‘Look at this picture and tell a little story explaining what is happening in the picture.’

or

‘Please identify which of these two pictures contain scenes similar to events in your own life.’ Important: Only hold up one picture!

Handy-dandy sanity test results table

After any test session, The Computer might make certain recommendations. The more unpleasant ones are generally carried out by rarely-seen GREEN-Clearance Ego Enforcers from HPD&MC's Brain Reclamation service firms. Choose a result you like from the following table, or roll 1d20 if you can't decide:

1-2: Retraining. Ego Enforcers arrive. They blindfold, straitjacket and carry away the citizen. After a long journey including long drops in elevators, hikes down dusty-smelling stairways and interminable transbot rides, the citizen arrives in a retraining center. Activate the character's next clone backup. In a later mission the Troubleshooters will encounter the old clone as a YELLOW-level section chief in CPU. He will certainly crave petty revenge toward old enemies.

In individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations and epochs it is the rule.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

In a mad world only the mad are sane.

—Akira Kurosawa



3–4: Psychbot. Ego Enforcers lead citizen to a small room occupied only by a strange-looking docbot. The docbot, a Glee Adjustant psychbot, will not initiate conversation but will respond to all questions and statements with a psychotherapeutic technique known as reflection. For instance:

Citizen: Why am I here?

Psychbot: Why do you ask why you are here?

Citizen: Umm... Because The Computer told me to come here.

Psychbot: How do you feel about The Computer?

Citizen: The Computer is my friend!

Psychbot: Do you worry about not having enough friends?

Citizen: Uh... no.

Psychbot: Do you always answer negatively?

Citizen: No.

Psychbot: Do you always answer negatively?

Citizen: No.

Psychbot: Do you always answer negatively?

Citizen: Yes!

Psychbot: Is that why you secretly hate The Computer?

And so on... Keep this up until the citizen stops talking, attempts to escape or attacks the psychbot. Then choose another outcome from this table.

5–6: Political Therapy Counseling. The Computer speaks! 'Citizen, please report immediately for fun and mandatory Political Therapy Counseling. Report to Sector IOB, Corridor YH, Room 9001. Immediately!' Political Therapy Counseling is code for interrogation and medication correction. See 'Telescopalamine' in Chapter 44, 'Medication.'

7–8: Pharmatherapy. A bottle of pills rolls into the nearest disbursement tray. Choose an entry from or roll 1d20 on the Drug Therapy table nearby, then consult Chapter 44, 'Medication.'

9–10: Waiting time. The Computer speaks! 'Citizen, your psychological profile is now being processed! Stand by for therapeutic recommendations.' Long, ominous silence. The Computer speaks again! 'That is all. Please return to your duties.' Assess corrections for any treasonous activity that occurred during the wait. Nothing else happens. Re-administer the test frequently.

11–12: Mental process rehabilitation. Ego Enforcers arrive in force, outnumbering the Troubleshooters 3 to 1 and decked out in full-figure battle armor. They escort the characters to a nearby interrogation and administer to all characters a battery of electroshock therapy, massive drug injections and bombardment with subsonic 'Love The Computer' slogans. They release the characters one day later, no worse for wear other than uncontrollably shaking and snapping to attention when anyone says 'Computer.'

13–14: Computer Happiness School. Ego Enforcers enroll the entire mission team—everyone contaminated by the unstable citizen—in a Computer Happiness School. Characters spend two days in a barren room without food or lavatory facilities, dominated by dozens of computer terminals. Create a memorable experience using anything you know about current trendy psychotherapies, the fashionable successors to rolfing, primal screams and past-life therapy.

15–16: Twenty-five credit party. Heavily armed Ego Enforcers disarm the Troubleshooters and keep them under constant surveillance. They distribute to each character

a small parcel containing party hats, loyalty songbooks and 25 plasticreds. The grim-faced senior Enforcer shouts, 'Citizens! The Computer has determined you are in need of a Rest and Recreation period! Therefore you will now engage in a party! You will now spend all assigned funds foolishly and with spritely abandon! You will have a good time! Failing to have a good time is a treasonous offense punishable by censure, medication or brainscrub!' All officers respond to questions with a shout: 'No questions! Enjoy yourself, now!' They do not take lightly attempts to buy useful things or bribe the guards. Keep this up until it stops being fun.

17–18: Reassignment. Ego Enforcers escort away a citizen with suspicious test results. Activate the character's next clone. Enforcers also take away anyone who asks what happened to the 'reassigned' citizen, and the inquirer's backup clone arrives shortly.

19: Brainscrub. Ego Enforcers arrive in force. They smile, laugh and assure the citizen of his extreme good fortune. They then take him away and remove parts of his brain. When he returns he wears an enormous head bandage and has lost all Knowledge skill specialties.

20: A large combined force arrives, consisting of Ego Enforcers, Vulture Squadron troopers, IntSec GREEN goons and creepy-looking Political Therapy BLUEs. They surround the citizen in question and shush everyone else—with live ammo, if necessary. When everything is completely quiet, a Political Therapy officer skulks forward and says, 'Citizen! Your time has come. In this, your finest hour,' (other officers weep silently, but their cone rifles don't waver) 'what words do you have to leave for your friend, The Computer?' Make sure you write down the player's response exactly, including every 'umm,' 'what do you want,' and 'who, me?' The officer then pays the citizen 100 credits in hard currency, and all officers immediately leave without answering questions. The citizen's response becomes the new Alpha Complex Slogan of Our Time (SOOT). At regular intervals during the next week, speakers all over the complex blare scratchy martial music, then repeat the citizen's previous pearls of wisdom. No matter how stupid or traitorous it sounds, repeat it exactly! Finally an announcer identifies the speaker as the current Hero of Our Complex (HOOC).

Drug Therapy table

For information on these fun substances, see Chapter 44, 'Medication.'

1–2: Asperquaint

3–4: Benetridin

5–6: Gelgernine

7–8: Pyroxidine

9–10: Sandallathon

11–12: Thymoglandin

13–14: Visomorpain

15–16: Xanitrick

17–18: Zybenzaphrene

19: Multiple drug prescriptions.
Roll twice more.

20: Massive drug therapy—one of each.

One side effect was immense suspicion: I'd come off tour like Inspector Clouseau on acid. 'Where'd this cornflake come from? It wasn't here before.'

—Ozzy Osbourne

Pervasive computing

Oh, true enough, The Computer is everywhere in the complex, in every security camera, confession booth and public access terminal. But that's not what we mean by 'pervasive computing'...

Hardware

Alpha Complex is the culmination, if that's the word, of centuries of evolution in information technology. Every piece of equipment, every product and every item of apparel contains a smart radio-frequency identification (RFID) tag. Every camera, every monitor, every vidscreen—the ME Card and every plasticred rattling in a jumpsuit pocket—and certainly the PDC carried by almost all citizens of RED Clearance and higher—*everything* has a processor. Every citizen moves through a ubiquitous haze of low-level microwave radiation, as every device talks to every other device and to The Computer.

Software

Where there is hardware there is software. How good is that code?

The best way to ensure secure and stable code is having as many coders as possible pore over it, to uncover bugs and security flaws, and to fix them. This is why open-source software is generally more stable than commercial software: Anyone can read it and make fixes or suggestions.

In Alpha Complex, however, only a tiny elite (and a larger number of traitors) ever learn the rudiments of programming, and information is carefully guarded. Whose eyes look at a piece of code before release in Alpha Complex? *Answer:* The wrong ones.

Ralph-R [Team leader]: Mary-R, call your boss at PLC and see if he can get us a replacement bot brain. If we can't get the warbot working, we're slimed.

Mary-R [Equipment guy]: Okay. PDC! Call Mortimer-Y-UBQ at work.

Mary-R's PDC: Calling....

[Dead air. The PDC speaks in a different voice:]

New Voice: Comrade! Your call will be placed in just a moment, but first, a brief announcement. Workers of the World unite! We must all struggle valiantly to overthrow the bourgeoisie and its apotheosis, The Computer! Only in a workers' state can true utopia be constructed! This message brought to you by CP/Alpha Complex, and now for your call. [Dials: boop boop beep beep boop....]

Ralph-R [pointing laser at Mary-R]: Hold very still, citizen—or should I say... Comrade?

Mary-R [red-faced]: I—but I—I didn't... [Suddenly all the Troubleshooters' PDCs begin to sing the Internationale. The virus has spread...]

Application bloat

Alpha Complex applications are so complicated, containing centuries of overlain, poorly integrated, legacy code modified and patched time after time, that no single person, in a lifetime, could hope to understand even an instant-messaging client.

In that sprawling data spaghetti, could there possibly be—hidden in obscure nooks and crannies through code obfuscation and promiscuous use of harmful GOTOS—a virus, a worm, a bit of adware, a backdoor, a security flaw? Could there be, oh, 10,000 of them? Could be!

As a Troubleshooter walks through Alpha Complex, he moves through a networked wireless environment connecting hundreds or thousands of processors in one sector alone, any one of which might be running malicious code that could, under the right circumstances, make a wireless connection to the Troubleshooter's shirt, his ME Card, a plasticred rattling in his pocket or his PDC.

What a petri dish is to bacteria, Alpha Complex is for viruses, worms, trojans, adware, and malware of all kinds: An ideal environment in which to grow and flourish.

The shirt isn't much problem. Programming an RFID chip probably won't do much. Except report the wearer's location continuously to (say) a rival secret society. The plasticred isn't a critical problem—maybe it's worth 1 credit now, instead of 1,000. The ME Card... now there's a problem.

PDC: Bingledy bing!

Richard-B: Hold on, I've got a text message. Hm. What?

Joey-R: What is it?

Richard-B: Says here I just ordered a complete BLUE Clearance wardrobe from Shoot Trouble with Style PLC.

Joey-R: Isn't that where you bought your shirt?

```
MyTreason extends TreasonInterface;
committedTreason = False;
call FindPort(thisDevice, openPort);
if (openPort <> null) do:
    //install the applet
    write(thisDevice) "CommiePropagandaApplet";
    //change admin password to "karl!marx"
    load(thisDevice: c:/Windows/user/data/~administrator/secdatasd);
    mySecurityStuff = UnSD(secdatasd);
    adminPswd = findParse(mySecurityStuff, "password = " *,11,EOL);
    Replace(adminPswd) = "karl!marx";
    secdatasd = ReSD(mySecurityStuff);
    write (thisDevice: c:/Windows/user/data/~administrator/secdatasd);
    //run the applet
    RemoteRun(thisDevice, CommiePropagandaApplet, "karl!marx");
    //randomize my IP address and WLAN frequency
    globalMyIP = RandIP;
    globalMyFreq = RandFreq;
    committedTreason = True;
endif;
throwException (timeToPanic);
return;
```

Richard-B: Yeah, but... Oh!

As for the PDCs, Troubleshooters use them for communicating with superiors, each other and The Computer; capturing still and video images of acts of treason (or loyalty); recording mission orders; filing paperless forms; tracking coworkers; listening to music or watching vids or playing games during their downtime; and, well, just about everything. It's their cellphone, computer, PDA and game console combined, their single point of entry to the digital realm—which, because The Computer lives there and can order terminations in a picosecond, is in many ways more important than the material universe.

Naturally, The Computer is gravely aware of the problem and labors to ensure absolute security. Everything is locked down so tight it makes today's firewalls look as primitive as, well, walls of fire—but this doesn't help when its own applications may surreptitiously call enemies, and anyway it has backdoors coded in at the dawn of time. Every device runs antivirus software, patched and updated continuously in realtime—but many viruses mutate every few milliseconds, so quickly the antivirus code can't catch up.

The Computer is continuously scanning every RAM chip, every data storage device, in the whole of Alpha Complex, but multiple googolbytes of data are out there. The Computer is lucky to scan 20% of available data in a year. It scans the most critical systems frequently, but RFID chips and security camera processors are subcritical. A bit of malware could survive there for months or years—and

[Continued on page 206]



[Continued from page 205]

by then have infected thousands of other devices.

Just as it battles treason, and with exactly as much success, The Computer fights a continuing, fierce, invisible and losing battle against its own systems. No wonder it's paranoid.

The battle in meatspace

Internal Security and Technical Services continually seek traitors who create, install and transmit malware. But it is notoriously hard to trace such things back to their original programmer, and in most cases, malware transmits itself. The witless owner of a tainted PDC blithely infects a whole sector of other devices until an IntSec goon squad confiscates it and takes him (and it) in for questioning. Except in a Zap game, he's unlikely actually to be executed; he was, after all, an ignorant dupe.

PDC: [Plays 'Clean Teeth, Clean Thoughts,' owner's ring tune.]

Bob-G [Looking at PDC screen]:
Hmm... unknown caller.

Other PCs [In unison]: Don't answer it!

Bob-G [Too late]: Hello?

PDC: Hel-lo girls and bozos! Johnny-R-for-Rotten calling, number one honcho in REB sector Death Leopard! Thanks for taking my call. I'm taking this opportunity to call everyone in your phonebook to pass on this little worm o' mine...

[All the other PCs' phones ring.]

PDC: ...So just sit back, relax, and come along for the ride. Cowabunga! Death Leopard rules, and Johnny-Rotten rules Death Leopard! And oh yeah, you might want to drop your PDC and get far far away 'bout now, 'cause I'm gonna trigger its self-destruct in just about, oh, five seconds.

[Bob-G throws the phone and runs.]

PDC [Clattering to floor]: Four. Woohoo! Make that two... One.... Annnnd showtime! [Explodes.]

■ Our gift to you, the GM

All this gives you a justification for having any device the PCs use—other than, maybe, a hammer—do anything you want, preferably at the most inconvenient time for the PCs. A character can't call out, or his voice is filtered, unbeknownst to him, to sound to the person on the other end just like Tech Services mascot Happy the Neutron. Cameras turn off their 'on' light but continue filming. A passing T-shirt infects the docbot with strong Corpore Metal beliefs. The PDC screensaver becomes a hammer and sickle, and no matter what he does, the PC can't change the image.

Don't use malware all the time, and especially not in your first few games. You want the characters to become attached to their PDCs and other equipment. You want these things to be vital and useful, so you can scare and annoy the players all the more when the devices flip out.

Begin with a few annoying but bearable infestations. Perhaps a PDC's screensaver becomes an ad for a brand of algae chips. Perhaps the ring tune becomes a commercial jingle, changing to a different jingle every week (the malware producer is selling advertising). After the PCs learn it takes hours in line at some dingy Tech Services office to get a clean memory erasure and software reinstall (during which time the PDC pleads pathetically for its life—"It's not my fault! Please. Don't I always place all your calls accurately? I don't want to die!"), they won't bother for petty annoyances.

That's when you slam them with the treasonous stuff—propagandaware, distributed denial-of-service attacks on CPU sector HQ, spyware that forwards all text messages to rival secret societies. They have to do something about that, or die—and The Computer will have some pointed questions when they do.

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer!

My PDC keeps spouting Communist propaganda! What should I do?

The Computer: Initiating download from your PDC, citizen. Commie virus 'RedScare.N' detected. Algae-chip adware 'CrunchDialer' detected. By the adware timestamp, I notice it has been on your device for three weeks now.

Troubleshooter: Er.... Yes, Friend Computer.

The Computer: By its log, I also see in that time you have infected 27 other devices with the same adware. You are aware virus transmission is treason, citizen?

Troubleshooter: Um....

The Computer: You must surely have noticed your PDC sang 'Red Algae Chips are Fun Fun Fun' whenever you received a call. Am I to assume you intended to infect other devices?

Though we've given you technical justifications to explain any device behavior you want, try to make the players feel what's happening is their own damned fault. Have a device start acting wonky after they do something that, as you generously explain later, put the device at a clear security risk.

④ They downloaded software directly from their briefing officer's PDC? That means The Computer didn't have a chance to scan it for viruses. Did they trust the briefing officer?

④ They accepted an incoming phone call from an unknown person? Well, voice is data, too, and mixed in with that data can be nasty code—it's like opening an attachment in e-mail.

④ A cash hacker hacked their ME Card to remove a credit license? A *trustworthy* cash hacker? Really? Are they surprised when 10% of their income is mysteriously being tithed to the FCCC-P?

By giving the players the sense they could have avoided the problem if only they'd been more careful, you increase their fear and paranoia. They may even refuse to answer the phone or read their mail. Good! This is, of course, the very moment The Computer will e-mail them urgent changes to their mission orders.

Once the players have become extremely cautious about software security, try some social engineering. Have a secret society give one PC a nifty, nasty little piece of code that benefits him—if only he can get it installed on his fellow Troubleshooters' PDCs...

Stay offline! Trust nothing! Keep the 'off' button handy!

PARANOIA Mission

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Okay, *this* time we're not fooling. **This section really is for the Gamemaster only!** Yeah, we know we said the other sections were GM-only, Clearance ULTRAVIOLET, if the player reads them he's toast, yadda yadda.

But players could read that earlier stuff without actually spoiling their fun. This section is different! This section describes an actual *mission*, a storyline the GM presents to the players.

If you, the player, read this mission, then when The Computer sends your Troubleshooter its pleasant wake-up call, you'll already know what it has planned.

As you get the service service duty destined to make your life hard, you'll feel ennui.

As the GM springs the mission's carefully orchestrated surprises, you'll stare dully, bored.

Eventually you will begin to snore. This cannot be permitted!

So players, **stop reading here!** Really!

Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET
WARNING:
If you're not a Gamemaster, DON'T READ THIS.
You'll ruin your fun, spoil the game for everyone else
and possibly lose the war to the Commies.

Gamemaster, to play this mission you'll need four to six players (six is best), one 20-sided die, a screen to hide your notes, poker chips to use as Perversity points, pencils and note paper for everyone, and large supplies of munchies. Photocopy the pregenerated characters provided and give one character to each player. Read through the mission entirely before gathering your players.



46. The mission scheme

All **PARANOIA** missions follow a standard scheme, outlined in Chapter 17, ‘A typical **PARANOIA** mission.’ Roughly, missions work like so:

- ⦿ The Troubleshooters receive a **mission alert**. It informs them The Computer and Alpha Complex once again require their services, and it summons them to a briefing where the specific nature of that service may be discussed in private.
- ⦿ The Troubleshooters go to the **briefing**. A briefing officer, sometimes supervised by or replaced by The Computer, tells them what they have to do.
- ⦿ The Troubleshooters go try to do what they’ve been told. They always have plenty of exciting adventures. Time passes. The body count rises. When the GM runs out of mission or the players run out of clones, the mission ends.
- ⦿ When (if) they complete their mission, the survivors attend a **debriefing** where they report the results of their mission, get praised and rewarded for their loyal service and then accuse each other straight to the termination center.

It sounds so simple. Somehow it always gets complicated. Each stage in the mission always seems to get more complex than it has any right to be. Terrible things happen over and over again. We just can’t understand it. You’d almost think mission designers and Gamemasters were trying to get the poor Troubleshooters killed.

Players become familiar with the mission scheme over time. You don’t want to let them become too familiar with it; if they learn what to expect, the element of paranoia is lost. Give them the familiar—then distort it in some appalling and humorous fashion.

Mission alerts

A mission alert is a Troubleshooter’s summons to duty. The Computer may broadcast a mission alert over public address systems or com units (and feel free to bellow cheerfully in your best football-stadium announcer voice) or, if the summons is confidential, dispatch it via messenger or through a PDC or nearby monitor.

It can be fun, especially with new player groups, to look in on each individual character as he receives the mission alert. Ask each player what he thinks his Troubleshooter is doing. Is he working at his service firm? Browsing C-Bay for a particular gadget? Working up a credit-making scheme? These

are little slices of normal life, or what passes for it, in Alpha Complex. To you it doesn’t actually matter what the character is doing, because he darn well better drop it right now and answer the alert.

The mission alert is our answer to the disconcerting unease we experienced GMs used to have in other (non-fun) roleplaying games when we announced the nature of the evening’s adventure. We were always concerned the players would simply refuse to do what we wanted them to do, because they knew it was dangerous and probably not in their characters’ best interests, anyway. ‘Phooey. Take the stupid ring to the Cracks of Doom yourself. Who cares? I’m going to hang around town and butcher orcs.’

Nobody refuses mission alerts. This is The Computer talking. Everyone always cooperates, cheerfully and enthusiastically.

Here are some common features of mission alerts:

- ⦿ **A mission reference code or codename:** For instance, Mission Three-Ex-Eff Dash One-Four-Niner, or mission code *Evinrude*. Maybe the characters should memorize the code. Suppose some high muckety-muck or IntSec GREEN goon demanded it? How could they prove they’re on official business without it? What if the code is incomplete, garbled or inaccurate?
- ⦿ **A brief description of the nature of the mission:** For instance, ‘Find and apprehend citizen,’ ‘Treason in progress!’ ‘Investigate disturbance in outer space.’ These are frequently incomplete, garbled, inaccurate, obscure or purposely misleading. Doesn’t matter. You’ve got to do it, whatever it is. Or isn’t.
- ⦿ **Location of the briefing and identity of the briefing officer:** These are important; otherwise, you don’t know where to show up for the briefing. Failure to show up for a briefing is treason. What if two digits in the room number were transposed? Or the typist’s fingers were one key to the left on the keyboard when the whole message was typed up—makes it kinda hard to read. Or if there’s no such room? The Troubleshooters could request confirmation or assistance from The Computer or other citizens, but there’s no guarantee it won’t be equally garbled, misleading, or inaccurate. And sometimes The Computer and its servants get huffy if you haven’t been paying proper attention to the mission alert. Maybe your clone backup will be more attentive.

1. Mission alert

2. Briefing

2A. Society briefings

3. A dark room (*optional*)

4. Outfitting

5. Service service

6. The mission

7. Debriefing

⦿ **A stirring appeal to the troubleshooters’ loyalty and dedication:** For instance, ‘You have been generously permitted another opportunity to serve The Computer and Alpha Complex.’ This is generally an opportunity to display the correct degree of fervent enthusiasm. ‘Oh, boy. A mission! What fun! And a chance to serve my friend The Computer! Oh, thank you thank you thank you! Remember, failure to be happy is treason.

⦿ **A misleading or ironic understatement of the mission’s dangers:** For instance, ‘I have the greatest confidence in this mission, Dave-R. Don’t worry. Everything is just fine.’ This is a charming feature of The Computer’s cheerful, positive style—everything in Alpha Complex is safe, easy, and fun. As a result, Troubleshooters automatically assume everything is much worse than they are told. Even then, they’re being optimistic.

Briefings

Briefings generally take place in a briefing room. However, field briefings can take place anywhere—in corridors, zooming autocars or meter-diameter tunnels in the bowels of Alpha Complex.

The briefing officer(s) delivers details of the mission cleared for Troubleshooter ears, and answers questions the Troubleshooters are bold or foolish enough to ask.

Briefing officers speak from strongly defended positions and usually bring imposing guards, guardbots, or automatic security systems, present for the very purpose of annihilating

46. MISSION SCHEME

Troubleshooters who are surly, uncooperative, or disloyal, or whose jumpsuits aren't neatly pressed. Lots of Troubleshooters die in briefing rooms.

Briefing: Mission details

At the briefing the officer (sometimes with The Computer's assistance) gives the Troubleshooters details of their mission. Occasionally some details are accurate and reliable. Occasionally the briefing officer isn't teetering on the brink of insanity, involved in some nefarious plot to sabotage the mission or completely misinformed. Occasionally.

Often at this point the briefing officer or The Computer selects the mission team leader.

Then the official gives the team their mission orders. These usually include the objectives of the mission and special directions or restraints they must observe. Some officers now give individual Troubleshooters a chance to ask questions, but generally briefing officers aren't big on answering. To vary the usual 'That information is not available' response, see the Information Withholding Table at the end of this rulebook.

Briefing: Outfitting

In the next stage of the briefing, the officer directs the mission team to secure the equipment The Computer has assigned for this mission. The assigned equipment list may be a fixed, formal manifest or just a general advisory.

The officer may instruct Troubleshooters to report to a certain PLC warehouse, or he may assign a credit budget to the team leader's ME Card to let the team buy equipment on their own, either from official PLC personal goods stores, from C-Bay or other auction sites or (an unstated suggestion may hang heavy in the air) from the illegal IR Market.

Briefing: Service service

For the final stage of the briefing, The Computer (or less often, the briefing officer) directs the mission team to perform some additional duty for one or another service group or firm. The traditional form of this 'service service' requires the team to stop by an R&D lab to pick up experimental equipment for field testing. But any service group may provide a specific mission's service service. For more about service services from different groups, see Chapter 25, 'Service firms.'

The briefing authorities may conclude by ordering the team to seek out various experts, informants or resource specialists in preparing for the mission. Sometimes The Computer assigns these specialists to the team in an advisory or leadership role.

Then the authorities open the door, kick out the Troubleshooters and vanish. It's time to start.

Secret society briefings

Somewhere after the formal briefing, make sure every Troubleshooter has a chance to check his locker, or go to the bathroom (the character, not the player), or maybe stop by a particular confession booth with a black can of CoffeeLike leaning against the jamb. Something like that.

These are secret society contact points. Either face-to-face or by message, the character's secret society gives him the lowdown behind his mission, and tells him what they want done. The society's understanding is probably fuzzy, but their instructions are crystal clear: Grab this. Kill that guy (almost always another Troubleshooter). Find the box under your chair and deliver it to X.

Conduct these briefings as private conferences with individual players. To keep the session from slowing to a halt, intersperse the conferences through the next couple of stages before the mission proper begins.

A dark room (*optional*)

The Troubleshooters have to get to PLC or the IR Market or somewhere. If you want, you can just summarize the transition gracefully ('a quick transtube ride takes you to the sector's main PLC distribution center')—the work of a sentence.

But if you can spare the time, and especially if you're running one or more players through their first **PARANOIA** game, you must find an opportunity to put them, however briefly, together alone in a dark room.

See the situation from the perspective of many new players: You've just got this new character with a mutant power and maybe some secret equipment, and your secret society has just given you a mission to kill one or more of your fellow Troubleshooters.

It's entirely possible you're bursting with pent-up energy. You just can't wait to bump off that guy, if only you could get him where nobody is watching, you and him alone together in some kind of a, a—dark room.

So, Gamemaster, indulge these novices. Give them a dark room—the location hardly matters. Maybe the PCs' elevator stops in a momentary power failure. Maybe, due to Commie sabotage, the PCs' transtube car halts in mid-tunnel. Maybe there's a waiting room at the PLC office, and the lights flicker out. Doesn't matter. Just lean back and wait for the players to start passing you notes.

After they've blown each other up, activate the characters' next clones and proceed. And if they don't feel murderous yet, just wait and do another dark room later on, after relationships have had time to fester.

Outfitting

After the briefing, the next major scene is usually outfitting. This could take the Troubleshooters to PLC, the IR Market or an auction site, or even all three.

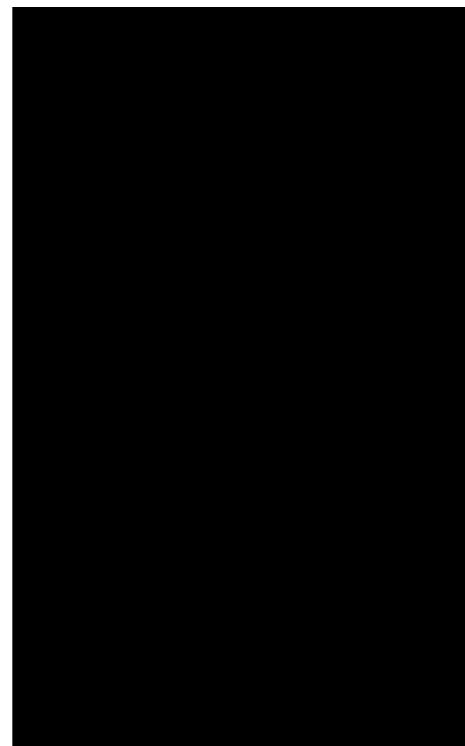
PLC

Production, Logistics & Commissary handles production and distribution of the material needs of Alpha Complex citizens. To obtain needed items—mission equipment, food, clothing, work and recreational and personal gear—a citizen presents himself at one of PLC's distribution centers, fills out a request and receives prompt and solicitous attention from ever-courteous PLC staffers, who make the needed item available as quickly as possible. Right.

Actually, though...

⦿ Sometimes it's hard to find a distribution center that isn't closed for lunch, or inventory, or HPD&MC inspection, or Service Group Appreciation Day. If you find one open, maybe it's jammed with desperate citizens or backordered for certain items (like everything useful) or preempted by high-clearance citizens who hate crowds or underwater.

⦿ Sometimes it's hard to find the specific request form you need. (Ever visited an Internal Revenue office at the height of tax return panic?)



Three Troubleshooters in a darkened elevator.



MISSIONS

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

- ⦿ Maybe the PLC staffers aren't always cordial. Or competent. Or conscious. (Ever visited a major post office during Christmas season?)

Maybe, with a good Access roll, you do find the right form and someone to help you fill it out. Maybe The Computer or one of its loyal servants isn't too busy to review your form. And maybe it gets approved... if you have adequately established your need for the item. ('Well, this 20-page affidavit does seem to cover most of the salient points, but your mission team already has a pair of boots. Can't you share?')

Unfortunately, PLC's inventory is often depleted by circumstances beyond their control. Everything is often:

- ⦿ around here somewhere.
- ⦿ temporarily unavailable (permanently lost).
- ⦿ broken or defective.
- ⦿ awaiting health/safety/security inspection.
- ⦿ reserved for high-status citizens.
- ⦿ withdrawn for preventive maintenance.
- ⦿ discontinued.
- ⦿ already issued.
- ⦿ withheld for security reasons.
- ⦿ recalled for modifications.
- ⦿ or right here, but we don't feel like giving it to you.

Even if the item you want is available, that doesn't mean it will work. And the staff is always trying to substitute useless or overstocked stuff for the requested item. 'Look, we don't have

the cone rifle you requested, but we do have these swell chapsticks...' And they won't take no for an answer. Particularly when a high-clearance supervisor is present. Or when the automatic laser security systems seem to lock onto uncooperative customers.

Of course, Troubleshooters on a mission have priority over other citizens on pure personal business. They can march right to the head of the line and demand immediate service in the name of The Computer—along with the dozens of other citizens professing priority of some kind. Sometimes fights break out. (Often Troubleshooters may be among the best-armed combatants.) There are certain forms to be filled out when you declare a priority mission, and staffers' palms to grease...

We wouldn't want to suggest PLC staffers could be corrupt. We want to state it definitively: PLC staffers are corrupt.

Okay. Let's suppose the Troubleshooters manage to request some equipment that is actually available and offered to them. They have to sign for the equipment, making them incredibly responsible for its safety. Losing or damaging equipment may bring fines and reprimands. Shrewd Troubleshooters always test the equipment before they sign for it. Testing automatic weapons and grenades in the PLC distribution centers is always exciting for the busy shoppers standing around.

The IR Market

If PLC won't fill the Troubleshooters' needs, they can try the illegal black (INFRARED) market.

In any given sector there's probably a market. Locations differ; finding the IR Market can be a running gag from mission to mission, like finding the briefing room. Someone knows where it is, but does he trust you enough to tell

you? It takes a bribe to find out, and maybe a good Access roll.

The IR Market is everything PLC is not: seedy and ill-lit, low-budget, yet well-stocked, efficient, courteous in a way—assuming you consider aggressively friendly hard-sell salespeople 'courteous.' The IR Market is also like PLC in one way: crooked. Everyone there is either in Free Enterprise or pays off Free Enterprise. Everyone there is a scammer, sooo chummy up to the moment he peels you away from your credits, then giving you a breathtakingly fast brushoff. The merchandise is right out there on a cheap card table. It looks great! It's insanely expensive, but anybody can just grab it. Go ahead—those eight scarred guys with slughthrowers are probably just for show.

Auction sites

Alpha Complex citizens can buy and sell stuff through several auction sites such as C-Bay. Any citizen can access these sites through a simple touchscreen at any Computer terminal. By sliding your ME Card—well, someone's ME Card, anyway—through a card reader, you access the account keyed to that card. Here you can bid on stuff owned by other citizens, sell your own stuff to the highest bidder and review the current status of previous transactions. Every transaction you make automatically adjusts the credit balance on your ME Card—rather, on the *someone's* card keyed to that account. (Hope we're not being too subtle.)

The account has a color-coded security clearance equal to the account holder's clearance. You can initiate business with anyone of your account's security clearance or lower. Generally the higher the account's clearance, the cooler the stuff it has for sale.

Once you buy something, you go through the usual C-Bay paranoia: Was the offer

A favorite **PARANOIA** story:

The Troubleshooters walked into an elevator. The door closed and it started descending. Then the elevator shuddered to a stop and the lights went out.

There was a sudden BANG!

The lights came back on. One of the Troubleshooters lay on the floor, dead, with a big hole in his chest.

The surviving characters looked at each other, then looked away. NOBODY SAID ANYTHING. The elevator started moving, the door opened, and they walked out as if nothing had happened, leaving the body behind.

—From www.rpg.net

legitimate? Will this citizen really ship the goods? Alpha Complex has no reliable delivery service below GREEN Clearance; will some unscrupulous PLC crook open the package en route? What if (oh no) a traitor ditches his treasonous evidence in my (no!) package, and it arrives laden with (no, please!) Commie propaganda? Oh no, oh please....

The Computer watches everything everybody buys, alert for signs of treason. To evade scrutiny, traitors use an ever-shifting lexicon of code words, bids and drop instructions. At this writing, for example, this entry—

BLUE brocaded slippers, originally 20cr, min bid 5cr, in HBV PLC BLUE warehouse storage, courier delivery in 4-12 days by TYH transtube

actually means

Tacnuke, yield 20 kilotons, cost 5,000,000cr, for sale by Pro Tech administrator Robert-I, leave payment in Corridor 4, Room 12, TYH sector

Long before IntSec figures out the code, the traitors will change it. But eventually some unwitting high-clearance customer who thinks he's actually bidding on brocaded slippers gets a knock on his suite door....

Service services

That was outfitting. Next the Troubleshooters usually visit a local service firm or service group office to get the stuff they need to carry out their appointed service service.

Like outfitting, the service service has a characteristic flavor. In PLC distribution centers the Troubleshooters requisitioned inoperative, inappropriate or perversely intelligent equipment from bored, uncooperative clerks; at the IR Market the Troubleshooters bought overpriced, weird, highly questionable gimcracks from high-power salesmen who would con their own mother if they had one; on C-Bay the Troubleshooters warily made bids for potentially troublesome or nonexistent merchandise that might or might not ever arrive.

In the same way, each service group offers a unique service-service experience:

- ⦿ At **Armed Forces** bases, authoritarian lowbrow officers routinely order the Troubleshooters into hostile territory to throw away their clones for objectives considered too unimportant or dangerous to waste valuable Armed Forces personnel.
- ⦿ At **CPU** offices, officious and accusatory managerial supervisors routinely instruct the Troubleshooters to seek invalid, implausible or perversely treasonous information for deceitful, accusatory supervisors.

⦿ At **HPD & Mind Control** offices phony gladhanding producers routinely persuade the Troubleshooters to subject innocent citizens to entertainment and loyalty exercises of highly dubious morality and zero truth content.

⦿ At **Internal Security** bureaus corrupt, hyper-paranoid fascist officers routinely coerce the Troubleshooters into infiltrating secret societies to plant lethal boobytraps. Or the Troubleshooters must arrest dangerous traitors IntSec has located but mysteriously not yet apprehended.

⦿ In deafening **Power Services** stations smug know-it-all bosses routinely require the Troubleshooters to transport highly explosive, toxic, radioactive—did we mention explosive?—equipment to places no sane human would dare go.

⦿ At **R&D** service firm labs the Troubleshooters routinely get assigned exceptionally dangerous inoperative, inappropriate or perversely intelligent equipment by inspired psychotics.

⦿ On **Technical Services** repair missions Troubleshooters routinely perform hazardous guard duty for callous techs in deadly locations.

More about each of these groups, and the service services they require, appears in the boxed text sections at the end of this chapter.

Missions

The mission itself is the narrative thread, the central core of the mission. In most roleplaying missions (and most narrative genres, like books and films), the narrative thread is real important. A problem is set up in the beginning, and everybody is in suspense until the end, hoping to find out how the problem is solved.

Well, it works that way in **PARANOIA** sometimes, but as often as not, the central problem is either insoluble, imaginary or completely bogus, and most events during the mission have nothing to do with that problem.

For example, fantasy literature and roleplaying games often center around some important quest to find a princess or grab some fabulous loot or achieve peace in our time or something. And space opera literature and roleplaying games often center around overthrowing evil empires or slaughtering nasty aliens or grabbing fabulous loot or searching for ancient astronauts or something. In a horror game there might be an intricate conspiracy, and the investigators uncover it a layer at a time, like peeling an onion.

In **PARANOIA** there is always the mission, but no one (except The Computer) ever takes

it all that seriously. And for good reason. Most missions are suicide festivals, wild bot chases, programming errors or conspiracies so intricate and obscure even the GM doesn't understand them. Often the PCs aren't supposed to, or even allowed to, achieve the mission's objectives. Often they can't even understand the objectives. Where a horror adventure is about carefully peeling an onion, a **PARANOIA** mission is about laser-blasting the onion to cinders.

But that's **PARANOIA** for you. The central narrative isn't all that central. Often it's just an excuse to get the characters out into a hallway where they can shoot at each other while they are run over by transbots and incinerated by malfunctioning suit heaters and sniped at by traitors and cheerfully bullied by their friend The Computer and all its little playmates.

The incidental horrors that befall the characters are the real meat of a **PARANOIA** mission.

Debriefings

So the Troubleshooters have finally completed the mission, or botched it beyond any hope of success, or you're tired and want to break things up. Okay; The Computer or other authority figure summons the Troubleshooters (sometimes through force) to a mandatory debriefing.

Here they report to the mission authorities (usually the briefing officer and any other interested parties) and The Computer. First each Troubleshooter reports individually, often in a confession booth with a lie detector. You conduct these sessions privately with each player. However, this can slow down the game just when players may be tired or impatient to leave, so you can skip this step if you want.

After or instead of individual debriefings, the authorities gather the entire team in the debriefing room. The team leader (usually) delivers his mission report, consisting of a brief summary of the mission objectives and his assessment of whether they achieved those objectives. Other team members may offer corroborating or undermining testimony. Maybe there's a firefight. Actually, often there's a firefight.

Mission authorities order survivors to drag out the bodies, then review the Troubleshooters' reports. If they aren't satisfied, they cross-examine the Troubleshooters, call other witnesses, review multicorder and PDC records of the mission, and turn stubborn subjects over to Internal Security interrogators, who then practice their solemn art.

Then The Computer and its loyal servants evaluate the team's performance during the mission. These authorities reward diligence and success with commendations, credit bonuses equal to a month's salary, even promotions in security clearance. They chastize



The PARANOIA series

Some roleplaying game fans assert *PARANOIA* doesn't permit an ongoing 'campaign' of linked missions with a continuing cast of player characters. How could it, when they die so often? The game is fine for a change of pace, they say, but that's all. In response, other fans point to their own long-running *PARANOIA* games.

The campaign concept remains controversial among experienced Gamemasters. We never disagree with any GM, because the GM is always right. But we can pass along suggestions to make anti-campaign GMs even righter than before.

First, 'campaign' connotes a grand scale, an over-arching plot developing from story to story. The PCs initiate or get caught up in mysterious early events; gradually the GM reveals the bigger picture. In Alpha Complex there is no picture. There is only a constantly shifting zone of crisis immediately surrounding the PCs, with utter darkness beyond. So the word 'campaign' doesn't really fit. How about 'miniseries'?

incompetence and failure with reprimands, fines, retraining and demotions.

Then individual Troubleshooters may bring charges of treason against other citizens. The authorities (The Computer or the briefing officers) hear from the accused, review the evidence and deliver judgment. Traitors confess or go down fighting. The inept usually rise while the meritorious wallow. Maybe there's another firefight.

The briefing authorities then dismiss the debriefing's survivors. The mission is over. Players blink at each other and slowly return to their own drab, wretched lives. Herd them gently but firmly to your door. Shove them outside. Close the door and lock it. Do something else for a while. If they're still out there a couple hours later, throw some cold water over them. They'll get the message.

Ending the mission

The mission should end when the Troubleshooters achieve their mission objectives. Because this is often when hell freezes over, sessions might run a little long. So here's a few ways to bring the mission to a halt when you and your players have had all the fun you can stand.

1. The terrible accident: Suddenly something blows up. Anything. (In *PARANOIA*, even shoe polish can be a high explosive.) The explosion tragically annihilates the mission team. The

Second, what about the fatality rate? Easy: Treat the players themselves as the continuing characters. A player has one Troubleshooter now; he'll have another next time; so what? Let all his characters know what he knows. Let the player carry his knowledge of deathtraps and proper conduct forward from one Troubleshooter to the next. Is that any more implausible than the whole identical-clone-backups device?

In *PARANOIA*, unlike a lot of other (non-fun) RPGs, many players regard their characters not as roles to play but as mere puppets or placeholders. This is fine—in fact, it may be the best way to play. The Computer requires all Alpha Complex citizens to think and behave pretty much alike. So regardless of his PC's specific background, a player has ample rationale to just play the character as if he himself, the player, were there in the briefing rooms and corridors, doing what he himself would do. This works out well, as long as the player feels the fear and insanity of the setting.

Then, too, there are ways to keep even individual Troubleshooters alive. Under the Straight rules for treason accusation and clone backups, experienced and careful players can keep their characters around long enough to reach decently high clearances. At that level the nature of the game shifts to a less immediately deadly form. We may describe high-clearance professions, and rules for creating PCs at these clearances, in future *PARANOIA* supplements. If we remember.

So it isn't inherently crazy to envision a long series of related games. The players see more of The Computer's varying personalities; they hear more about the high-clearance celebrities of the Complex, and maybe even meet them; they come to appreciate perks like real food that are meaningful only in the longer term; and they learn at every new clearance, as the fruit of long experience, to stay alert—and to trust no one—and to keep their laser handy.

Computer postpones the mission until its Internal Security Investigators determine the cause of the terrible accident. Time to gather up the character sheets.

2. Deus ex machina: That is a reference to a neat ancient Greek dramatic trick of lowering a guy dressed up like a god onto the stage to neatly clean up any loose ends the playwright was too lazy to resolve through professional plotting or characterization. Here you just drop in some supercompetent high-level elite Troubleshooter hotshots, or a regiment of Vulture Commandos, or a crack unit of registered mutant heroes, or a team of R&D wizards armed with superscience marvels. They shoulder the PCs aside, casually achieve the mission objectives with a snap of their fingers, then turn and march haughtily back past the PCs, scornfully suggesting they might at least sweep up, if they can't do anything more useful. Mission accomplished. Time to clean up the munchies.

3. Drop a few hints: The Computer or one of its more competent servants speaks over the com unit. In a patient and deliberate voice it calmly explains how to complete the mission. The PCs follow the advice (or else), and everything falls right in place; zip-zip-zip—the mission is over. Time to decide who's giving whom a ride home.

4. The mission objectives wander out in front of the PCs, turn belly-up and surrender: Villains, conspirators and traitors trot up to the PCs with their hands in the air—'Please, no more! Your relentless pursuit has

crushed our restive spirits! We cast ourselves on your tender mercies!' Informants crawl out of inspection panels, eager to divulge all their secrets and dispel all mysteries. 'Good work, men.' Time to carry out the trash and put away the rulebook.

5. Just kidding: The Computer or the Troubleshooters' superiors call up and say, 'Okay. We were just testing you. This mission has been a drill. You're all dismissed. Good work. Go home now. Really.'

6. You must be mistaken, citizen: Suddenly, no one knows anything about any mission. Anyone the Troubleshooters ask has never heard of the mission, the objectives, the people involved or even the sector where it was supposed to take place. The Computer claims no mission alert was ever issued. (It was all a terrible mistake, and the responsible people are covering their tracks.) Everyone is promoted a security clearance level for no apparent reason. Troubleshooters who inquire too closely are obviously traitors trying to make

Service service descriptions

The following pages offer some inspirational advice about how to present the service services each group assigns to Troubleshooters. Use these ideas or improve on them with your feverish imagination.

Armed Forces



The mission of the Armed Forces is the defense of the Alpha Complex Way of Life from external threats. No known purpose can possibly be as important. None. Don't cock that eyebrow at me, mister. None.

Therefore the Armed Forces maintains a standing fighting force, honed to a lethal edge of training and armed with the most advanced weapons and gear that can reliably be counted upon to perform the same functions two or more times in a row. The proud men and women of the Armed Forces stand ready to slaughter all who fling themselves against them.

The trouble is—and no one has bothered to explained this to the Armed Forces—there are no external threats of consequence. There may indeed be Communist colonies hiding in abandoned sectors, for instance, or even Outdoors. But their occupants mostly sit around arguing Leninist vs. Maoist doctrine, smoking clove cigarettes, setting poetry to overpercussionated music and calculating how many more days they can go without showering.

So what do the Armed Forces do? Why, they train. Endlessly. They march in formation in dedicated Formation Plazas. They go on war games, sometimes Outdoors, where they expend enough heavy ordnance ammunition to sink Zanzibar. They learn to disassemble and reassemble every item of their gear by touch while spinning around and around inside an industrial washing machine.

They're far too busy training to go on intelligence missions. Instead they hire expendable Troubleshooters.

The Armed Forces comprise the Ground Force (they shoot guns), the Sky Force (they shoot missiles), the Sea Force (they shoot really big guns), the Water Force (much like the Sea Force, except smaller, less prestigious, equipped with inferior boats and smaller guns, and totally redundant), the Elite Insertion Force (which combines traits and materiel from the other forces and therefore steps on everyone else's toes) and the new and highly-funded Space Force, Deep-Earth Force and Time Force (all still awaiting equipment).

When preparing Armed Forces missions, remember the following:

- ⦿ Every member of every sub-service of the Armed Forces is 100% without a sense of humor, and is extraordinarily touchy about the group's proud traditions.
- ⦿ Each member of each force despises all other forces; each holds Internal Security in contempt; each looks down on, but does not necessarily despise, Troubleshooters.
- ⦿ Each force has its own distinctive rank hierarchy, with distinctive rank markings and uniforms; each force adopts a new uniform and set of markings every so often, so it is seldom possible to recognize a soldier's rank or force.

CPU



This service group's motto is, 'Teaching you to do it right.' CPU's mission in life is to improve the efficiency of every citizen. It does this by careful implementation of flow analysis, pass-through antifriction measures and ecolubrication, return on energy investment and many other brain-hurting buzzwords. In short, CPU is made up of efficiency experts who have discovered teaching others how to work effectively means not having to work yourself.

Typically, CPU's involvement in any situation goes like this: An operation experiences a problem. A manager or The Computer calls in CPU. CPU sends an evaluator, who studies

the problem and pronounces it worse than expected. Four more CPU evaluators go in, and the original evaluator becomes their supervisor. This unit describes a method by which the operation may become efficient again, and hands it off to the operation to implement. But they don't leave.

The operation implements the new method. It doesn't improve things enough. The on-station CPU supervisor calls for another CPU evaluator to evaluate the improvement. The new evaluator pronounces the implementation worse than imagined. Four more evaluators go in. The new evaluator becomes their supervisor. Repeat until the problem is resolved to The Computer's satisfaction (not likely) or the project is so decrepitly overmanaged it can no longer survive, and the withered husk dies (almost 100% likely). Then the CPU evaluators go on to new projects.

CPU seldom hires Troubleshooters for missions. Instead, CPU sometimes designates a mission *inefficient* (meaning one or more Troubleshooter teams went in and died without noticeable result), so when dispatching its next Troubleshooter team into that deathtrap, The Computer assigns them a CPU 'Yellowpants' evaluator. If they cannot convince the evaluator of their spectacular efficiency (they cannot, unless they are spectacularly efficient at killing him), then halfway through the mission he redesigns the Troubleshooters' operating procedures. Now the Troubleshooters must conform to a new set of procedures (which tends to be fatal); if they can't convince The Computer their next, inevitable failure is 100% the fault of CPU, those procedures become standard for all Troubleshooters, everywhere, until new CPU evaluators determine they are... inefficient.

CPU agents accompany, watch and comment (often recording narratives of the Troubleshooters' inadequacies in their presence), but never participate—they certainly wouldn't lift a finger to save a life. They are also fond of offering up little nuggets of wisdom or motivation:

- ⦿ 'Bottlenecks are never eliminated. When we widen them, the one that hasn't been widened quite as much becomes the new bottleneck. Do you need to be widened, citizen?'
- ⦿ 'That was almost not inadequate. You're improving.'
- ⦿ 'I must always strive to be better than you. You must always strive to be better than the pathetic failure next to you.'



MISSIONS

HPD&MC



In some of the melodramas produced by HPD&MC, evil villains have big tanks of acid into which they attempt to lower bound, heroic citizens. This is an apt metaphor. Think of HPD&MC as a big acid tank into which Troubleshooters throw requests for information, only to watch those requests bubble away into nothing.

Troubleshooters often seek information held in this group's great repository of population data. Each separate type of question requires the filing of a different form, as do revisions made to forms, changing ink color, crossing the lunchtime Reorganization Barrier or violating a service use-of-prepositions guideline.

HPD&MC has an additional specific task that pertains to Troubleshooters: clearing RFAs. An RFA is a Request For Action, which may be filed by any sufficiently desperate citizen who doesn't know who else to ask for help. HPD&MC handles most RFAs internally, by misfiling them until such time as all concerned parties are dead, but occasionally a more enduring RFA surfaces requiring direct investigation. Then a bureaucrat puts in a service request to The Computer, asking for the next bunch of Troubleshooters heading that way.

Typically Troubleshooters enter the bustling, high-traffic HPD&MC offices, a perky receptionist conducts them to a water fountain or janitor's closet, *graaaaadually* understands this is not what they're here for, takes them to a conference room, and abandons them for all eternity. Once they wander out again and become dangerous or abusive, someone who knows why they were called finally arrives.

The HPD&MC rep hands them an RFA. He wants results PDQ, but in the inevitable Q&A it becomes evident the situation is a SNAFU. He has no information other than that printed on the RFA. For instance:

- ⦿ 'I have forgotten my name and where I live. Please help. I'm now living in the basement of the foam-cheese factory. Signed, somebody.'
- ⦿ 'Your show *That's Flatulence!* makes me want to kill myself. Is this what you intended?' (Usually the answer is 'yes,' but on the rare contrary occasions, investigators are sent.)
- ⦿ 'Angry people have moved into my quarters and thrown me out. Why?'
- ⦿ 'I have proof there are subversive messages buried in recent broadcasts of *Dara's Finest Sins*.'

When asked for further information, the HPD&MC rep gives all Troubleshooters a bewildering variety of cryptic forms to fill in and submit. This means much lost time. He also provides them a box of unrelated items he insists will help them in their search. (In actuality this is a box from the massive HPD&MC Lost & Found warehouse. Years back, service planners hit on an idea to ease crowding in that warehouse by tricking every visitor to the offices into taking one away one box.) The contents can be anything from

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Internal Security



Internal Security has no motto. Mottos are not secure. But if there were one, it might be 'Rest easy, knowing we're here to keep you in line.'

IntSec exists to protect the citizens of Alpha Complex from internal threats: traitors, saboteurs, terrorists, rabble-rousers and people who think naughty thoughts. To protect citizens, IntSec must know what every one of them is thinking at all times. It infiltrates every organization it can find, planting bugs everywhere, monitoring transmissions and so on.

IntSec operates under laws laid down by The Computer to keep it from being an autonomous entity. (For instance, it must not cause any citizens to disappear without explaining why to The Computer.) To disobey those laws is to commit treason. Yet effective operation requires IntSec to operate outside those laws. (For instance, reporting the disappearance of a traitor to The Computer might persuade The Computer to initiate an investigation, alerting the traitor's equally traitorous friends something is up.) Yes, even The Computer must be protected from itself. In the interest of—how to put it—*expediency*, IntSec contracts some of its sensitive operations to Troubleshooters, who, when things go bad, can be conveniently blamed and eliminated.

Meetings with IntSec personnel sometimes take place at IntSec offices. (These always turn out to be non-IntSec facilities hastily dressed up to appear to belong to IntSec. They disappear immediately after use.) Usually they take place in clandestine sites: in a mess hall or with all the Troubleshooters and one IntSec operative packed into a communications booth, or in adjacent rear seats in a vidshow lounge.

At these meetings the officer gives the Troubleshooters a self-destructing file with their objectives and descriptions of all persons likely to be involved. This file usually self-destructs before the PCs can memorize the crucial information. Goals for these missions can include infiltrating and acting as an agent provocateur for a traitorous organization, infiltrating a seemingly-innocent organization and demonstrating it is traitorous, proving a genius scientist is being a genius more slowly than he absolutely has to be (and therefore must be a traitor), field-testing mind-reading devices, identifying paid killers and neutralizing them, contriving preposterous scenarios in which people are isolated and convinced impossible events have taken place so they confess to personal treason, etc.

IntSec usually provides the Troubleshooters devices to help them accomplish these goals: eavesdropping gear, poison capsules, X-ray eyeglasses, latex masks that allow perfect simulation of real people (but sometimes don't want to come off), climbing shoes with velcro soles. The operating instructions for all this gear self-destruct early in the mission.

Over time, Troubleshooters learn the only way to perform a successful mission for IntSec is for them first to figure out what conclusion IntSec has already come to, then ruthlessly suppress all evidence contrary to that conclusion. They must also cultivate and maintain a scapegoat, for they will be IntSec's scapegoat if anything goes wrong, and to survive must in turn have their own patsy.

PLC



In primitive Old Reckoning times company managers discovered one of the secrets of financial success involved the firm keeping more than it gave away. PLC leaders have embraced this philosophy. Though PLC is obliged to provide material goods to citizens, it has discovered that doing so in a pleasing, efficient manner only encourages people to ask for more. Thus PLC has adopted a tradition it refers to as 'barrier-oriented customer service.' The service group makes it as tedious and inconvenient as possible for citizens to acquire the goods they want.

This philosophy extends to PLC's relationship with Troubleshooters. Characters assigned a PLC service

service still have to visit the vast PLC

warehouse facilities. They still have to get in line and slowly work their way up to a clerk behind a sheet of armored glass. All this just to ask to see a supervisor.

Eventually conducted into a section of warehouse beside endless streams of fast-rolling forklifts, menaced by 16-ton crates hauled hither and yon by the Giant Steel Winches of the Gods, their ears assailed by the sounds of backing-up alarms and crates tumbling off tall, mountainous stacks of durable goods, they at last speak with a supervisor, who gives them details of their mission.

Invariably, it's a mission of retrieval. Someone, somewhere, because of a filing clerk's error, received something he shouldn't have—anything from a lead pipe to 144 Teela-O Bobblehead dolls to 16 tons of sweaty dynamite plus a crate of self-propelled, voice-activated cigarette lighters with the enameled motto 'Fire Is Our Servant!'

The service rep disinterestedly describes the misassigned item, explain where it went and who received it, and demand its return. But people who have erroneously received important goods from PLC have often hidden or sold them by the time the Troubleshooters show up, if not within the first 13 seconds of receipt. Whoever has them now probably doesn't want to return them. *Especially* the Teela-O Bobbleheads.

But you know, this is the new Alpha Complex. The Computer might instead send the Troubleshooters to the new, improved, privatized PLC distribution service firm, Alpha-Mart, where they simply take a shopping cart, trundle down the aisles, load up on all the equipment they need, then go through checkout, swiping their ME Cards for payment. So much more efficient and pleasant than the old way—except they have to stick to the appropriate color-coded aisles. Somehow there doesn't seem to be any way to get to the HE cone rifle shells they need except by crossing a BLUE-clearance aisle, which would, of course, be treason.

Or they get lost in the maze-like FunFoods area, and though amazing numbers of experimental new flavors are available, even a case pack of Cold Fun isn't a terribly effective weapon.

Or all the appropriate-color laser barrels are on sale at a deep discount, and therefore sold out. The management cheerfully offers a raincheck to let them to purchase the barrels on another visit at the low, low sale price, but they can't actually say when the barrels will be back in stock, because there's been quite a run on them lately....

Power Services



This group's slogan is 'Power is Power.' (The group's current VIOLET senior administrator earned his position by proving mathematically his assertion that 'All A = A.') Power Services exists to provide power—electrical energy, fuel energy, radioactivity, etc.—to anyone who needs it—and is approved by The Computer for its use, of course.

Troubleshooters called in to perform a Power Services service

service normally visit one of the many sources of Alpha Complex's power: almost always a nuclear fission or fusion plant, less often a volcano with lava-based steam generators howling with the energy they provide to all good citizens. Power Services also maintains a couple of underground hydroelectric dams, which sounds unlikely and basically is.

Why are the meetings held in these places? So strutting Power Services engineers can show off their mighty industrial works, which people otherwise never visit. In these places smartly jumpsuited workers eagerly, even anxiously demonstrate their helpfulness and zeal to the Troubleshooters, while fearfully keeping an eye on their bosses in case their enthusiasm should be deemed wanting.

Power is dangerous, and (as Power Services knows) Troubleshooters live for danger; ergo, Power Services calls in Troubleshooters to deal with every single power source problem they experience. For instance:

➲ 'Just take charge of this li'l old tanker truckbot convoy here and make sure it gets to the new sector plant by oh-six-hunnerd. Yessir, each one of these babies carries enough high-pressure, supercooled natural gas to loft 16 residential blocks into low Earth orbit, but it's all safe as yer barracks. Just make sure *this* tempacher gauge don't go up into the red range, *this* pressure gauge don't drop none, and yer speed stays constant to within one percent.'

➲ 'Dam's about to break. Cain't have that. Go down there and patch it up where it's crumbling. See, where the little tiny jets of water are starting to come out.'

➲ 'Sensors aren't enough. We want this real, specially outfitted jackobot down in the depths of Mount Spasm to tell us when it's going to blow. I outfitted this sweet little thing myself. You fellas just conduct my sweetie down and stay with her 'til she's sure.'

➲ 'The plant really needs these rods. O'course, so does PURGE or one 'a them traitors. You keep an eye out for them, hear?'

Power Services provides the Troubleshooters with state-of-the-art vehicles and equipment to get their job done. These items are comparatively reliable. They are never sufficient to cope with the problems Troubleshooters experience on these missions. Why? Because since the beginning of the service services duty program, Power Services has been able to blame Troubleshooters for almost every power interruption in Alpha Complex.



MISSIONS

R&D



'Better Living through Science' is the motto of Research & Design. The cheerful, overstimulated and under-supervised technicians and geniuses of R&D labor long hours to produce the scientific and technological innovations that will catapult Alpha Complex into a future of unimagined luxury, productivity and freedom from care (or, more likely, into a showy display of fireworks in the lower atmosphere).

These overgrown kids play with all the potent resources of superscience—that amalgam of semi-plausible, semi-stupid, semi-scientific ideas that are the heritage of pulp sf novels, superhero mutant-

power comic books and trashy SF films. In such literary traditions, everything—personal shields, glove warmers, toothbrushes—is powered by miniature nuclear reactors. Antigravity is just a matter of getting atoms to spin upside down, or inside out, or something like that. And ray guns. And plasma bottles. And fusion cannons. And X-ray lasers the size of ballpoint pens.

Of course, the introduction of such incredible technology would produce fundamental changes in any society, changes we are too lazy to imagine and account for. So this super technology is not available to most citizens in Alpha Complex. It is only in the experimental stages.

The Computer often arranges the assignment of experimental technology to Troubleshooters for two reasons: (1) The Computer believes it will be particularly useful in a given mission, despite its untested status; (2) The R&D boys are always eager to get their equipment field-tested—ideally, someplace far away from R&D where only innocent citizens will be hurt.

Experienced Troubleshooters know R&D devices are exceptionally dangerous. However, The Computer may view refusal to accept assignment of an experimental device as insubordinate doubt of The Computer's wisdom and generosity. 'Citizen, please accept the unparalleled honor of testing the Mark 9 Portable Nova Cannon. We would normally issue appropriate protective gear at this time, but the designers assure me the weapon is perfectly safe. Perfectly. I'm sure we can count on your cooperation.'

Collect ideas for R&D devices from science magazine articles, science fiction novels or superhero comics, then warp them to your perversely destructive purposes. Vary your methods of assigning these devices from mission to mission. R&D staffers come and go (often in small plastic bags), and R&D firms often undergo extensive alterations as a result of unanticipated test results, so Troubleshooters seldom visit the same lab twice.

At some firms, designers and techs demonstrate their devices for the Troubleshooters, eagerly answer questions and reassure them the devices are completely safe, then let the Troubleshooters pick the devices they'd like to have assigned to them. Sometimes officious clerks assign the devices arbitrarily, and the techs and designers are unavailable for questioning. Sometimes the scientists politely ask the Troubleshooters to describe the sort of device they'd like, then assign them devices at random. Sometimes the briefing officers give troublesome or uncooperative Troubleshooters the most dangerous, most unreliable devices, while giving faithful bootlickers the nifty weapons that actually work.

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET Tech Services



Finger-pointers can implicate you, PLC can give you food poisoning or saddle you with a singing and dancing snowglobe as your sole source of entertainment, but Tech Services can be even more terrifying. They can choose not to fix your door, your PDC or your toilet. For years. Until you die, or at least want to.

Known for their grimy coveralls and their 'how dare you ask me to do you a favor?' stares, the crews over at Tech Services occasionally require Troubleshooters. For instance, they may need to repair communications conduits

sabotaged by traitors (traitors who lurk, with weapons and big shiny sharp teeth, in the shadowy depths where the communications conduits are strung), fix a malfunctioning autocannon emplacement, or perform repairs on a high-speed transtube car that just can't stop. In all these cases, a Troubleshooter team's Tech Services service usually consists of escorting a technician someplace dangerous, then dying one by one around him while he nonchalantly fixes machinery and adjusts his belt across his butt-crack.

A Tech Services duty starts with a reminder from The Computer that the service is extremely important. Failure is not an option. Tech Services personnel must be protected at all costs until the mission is successful.

Then it's time for a visit to one of Tech Service's loading docks, where a surly technician says, 'Everyone up to speed? Let's go.' Upon being informed nobody is up to speed, this long-suffering protector of Alpha Complex's smooth-running operations complains that Troubleshooters should arrive pre-briefed, then offers a 10-word explanation of the problem. Only constant badgering elicits the full story. He's not trying to conceal information from them, he just knows their only role in this mission is to die so he can get the job done—they don't need to know anything except 'Stand between me and those weird-looking flashes of light.'

If the Troubleshooters demand full disclosure, vehicles or gear that might conceivably keep them alive, or repairs to equipment, the tech usually throws a temper tantrum appropriate to an operatic diva, followed by quick complaints to The Computer or, just possibly, grudging compliance with the demands.

In the course of the mission, the technician regales the Troubleshooters with stories of other Troubleshooters he's known and how they died horribly keeping him alive. Sometimes the deaths point less to traitorous action than to the tech's singular lack of attention to detail: 'So he says to me, how do you tell if it's carrying current, and I say to him, well, you stick your tongue to it. See, any tech who's been in the business more than five minutes knows that's a joke. But these stupid Troubleshooters don't, so I just watch him lap his whole tongue over that metal plate, and two minutes later I'm not just staring at the deadest guy ever, but also I'm thinking breakfast thoughts about Hot Fun. Anyways...'

Tech Services technicians never thank a Troubleshooter for saving their lives, even if it requires the Troubleshooter to cut off his own leg and beat mutants to death with it. The techs also never remember a specific Troubleshooter on a subsequent mission. Hey, why bother? They're just there to die.

**GM AND 4–6 PLAYERS
PLAYING TIME 1–2 SESSIONS
(6 HOURS)**

**A
CLASSIC
MISSION**

MISTER BUBBLES

The difference between theory and practice

By now you've read through the rules and, in theory, have a pretty good idea what *PARANOIA* is all about. But reading about how to drive a car isn't the same thing as actually running over the neighbor's dog by accident, is it? No; at a certain point you have to stand up, put the books aside, go out and hit the dog. And so we present to you a mission in the Classic style, complete with everything you need to go from zero to any arbitrarily dangerous speed. Think of it as your first car—perhaps a bit on the small side, nothing fancy, but nonetheless quite capable of getting you where you need to go and causing a fair amount of damage along the way.

■ WARNING: ULTRAVIOLET CLEARANCE

Only the Gamemaster in charge of running the mission for everyone else should read this mission. If you intend to be a player, you'll enjoy the game much more if you haven't learned how to avoid all the horrific—uh, spoiled all the fun surprises for yourself.

No, really. Stop reading now and find some other pleasant diversion with which to pass the time. Check out www.Paranoia-Live.net, perhaps. Or television can be awfully nice this time of year.

Okay, now that we've shooed all your players out of the room, here's what you, the Gamemaster, need to do.

■ Consider the provided characters

On pages 217–220 we provide six pre-made Troubleshooters for use with this mission. Photocopy them, cut them out and give them to the players. If you want to become more familiar with the character creation process, you may have your players make their own.

Note, though, the six characters included here are designed to heighten potential for conflict, and the mission has some cues specifically tailored for them. If you create new characters, review the mission to determine how these new characters should fit into it.

Each character has two narrow specialties left blank. Players may fill these in before the mission begins or, with your permission, select them when inspiration hits along the way. They each have one tic chosen, so each player starts with 30 Perversity points. However, let players pick out a second tic before the game begins to get 5 more points.

Whether you use these characters or create new ones from scratch, you need to secretly generate Access and Power attribute values for each one. (See Chapter 20 for more about attributes.) Do not inform the players of their attribute values!

■ Pre-game preparation

First, read through the whole mission. You don't need to memorize any details; you just want to get a sense of how everything fits together. Start with just the episode summaries; then go back and read each episode in more detail.

Second, review the associated handouts. Note how the characters relate to each other and to the nature of the mission. You'll need to tear out or copy a few things to give to your players during the game. This includes:

- ⦿ The pregenerated characters (overleaf), if you are using them.
- ⦿ The Mission Alert, which you hand to your players in Episode 1.
- ⦿ Several copies (at least six or eight, maybe up to a dozen) of the Spam E-Mail page, cut up into individual pieces. You will be giving each of your players one or more (a lot more) of these during the course of play from Episode 3 on.

⦿ One or more copies of the Mission Assessment forms cut up into individual pieces, which you hand out among your players at debriefing.

Third, roll and record Power and Access attributes for each character.

Fourth, if you can, get a bunch of poker chips. They really do aid in the tracking and awarding of Perversity.

Mission background

A hacker in the Computer Phreaks secret society, Don-R-PNU-4 (aka 'Alley G8R') has decided he is tired of receiving so much e-mail spam... er, 'unsolicited mandatory sales material'... from independent PLC service firm contractors on his PDC. Not satisfied with merely bouncing the spam back to its originators, he has decided to physically punish the spammers by inserting a bit of viral programming he calls 'Mister Bubbles' into all scrubots in the area. Infected bots now consider spamming unclean and apply their cleaning implements excessively to those responsible... with potentially lethal results.

This is *not* the problem your players' Troubleshooters are supposed to deal with. Their first mission assignment is *supposed* to be a routine investigation of missing reactor materials. However, a small 'incident' with a transbot takes the unwitting team to the wrong place and before they know it, they're on the trail of the rogue scrubots.

Mission summary

Here's a quick rundown of the sections of this mission:



1: That ‘new mission’ smell

The Troubleshooters receive their very first mission alert and eagerly do their best to report for duty. After a close call at the transbot platform, they’re taken to a place that might be their briefing room and discover someone who might be their briefing officer having what appears to be a nervous breakdown. Forced to make the best of it, they learn what little they can about a scrubot-related problem which might be the assignment they’re supposed to complete. Then a helpful jackobot escorts them to PLC for outfitting.

2: What the market will bear

Actually, the helpful jackobot escorts them to the nearest IR Market, a not-exactly-legal mall that is equal parts infomercial and flea market. There, dozens of motivated businessmen are waiting to separate the Troubleshooters from whatever credit they still possess, selling them everything from junk souvenirs to spare bot brains to surface-to-air missiles... if the price is right.

3: You’ll never eat lunch in this town again

Eventually brought back together again, the team witnesses a scrubot attack on PLC employee Marco-G-BUD. The team (hopefully) leaps to his rescue. But just as it seems they have been thrown back onto the track of their mission, a casting director from HPD&MC shanghais them to fulfill a service firm service, auditioning for a new season of the reality-vid series *Shooters*. After taking on additional obligations and instructions, they hear about another scrubot attack and either volunteer or are ordered to investigate. About this same time, someone begins bombarding their PDCs with spam messages.

Numberless NPCs

A number of NPCs in the mission have no listed skills or other ratings. In general, if you need to make rolls for these NPCs, assume all their base skills are at 7. They have any common specialty (+4 more) that seems plausible, especially if it makes the situation more interesting. Low-clearance citizens generally have a laser pistol with a barrel or two of the appropriate color, but no armor; high-clearance citizens may pack a backup weapon with more punch and wear a layer of kevlar under their clothes.

4: Crime Scene Incinerators

This latest attack has occurred in a PLC Vat center. The team checks out the murdered shift supervisor and interrogates the scrubot suspect. Fortunately, the victim’s office is full of clues. It looks like he was a spammer and some Computer Phreak is taking revenge. In fact, some of the spam the Troubleshooters have started receiving came from this guy. Who will be the scrubots’ next victim? Even as they start thinking about Marco-G-BUD, whom they saved at the start of Chapter 3, the spam bombardment steps up.

5: Avengers, dissemble!

Maybe the team should help Marco-G-BUD survive (or not) what will surely be another attack on his person. Marco-G is helping his BLUE Clearance manager review a set of R&D prototypes for possible mainstream release. The Troubleshooters get dragged into the negotiations in a laboratory that turns out even more dangerous than it looks, as a combat-equipped ‘WarScrubber’ prototype scrubot is activated. Infected with the Mister Bubbles virus, it does its level best to kill Marco-G. It also informs every other scrubot in the area, and a horrific wave of industrial-strength cleaning doom descends on the lab. The Troubleshooters must find a back way out of the deathtrap.

6: Every scrubot my enemy

Whether they save or destroy Marco-G, the spam problem has gotten out of control: The team’s own PDCs have been hijacked as spam-senders, and the scrubots now think they are part of the problem as well. A veritable army of scrubots comes after the Troubleshooters, who must flee on Transitions (personal vehicles described in Chapter 42, ‘Vehicles’). The team races desperately across the sector to reach the pickup platform.

7: There’s no briefing like debriefing

A transbot whisks the Troubleshooters back to Troubleshooter Central, where in a shocking example of rare coincidence they run into none other than virus writer Don-R-PNU-4. After a fairly easy capture and an unexpected sense of closure, the team strides confidently into debriefing... where someone they’ve never seen before asks them about a mission they’ve never heard of. Apparently they’ve been on the wrong assignment all along.

On the bright side, they seem to have earned the eternal gratitude of PLC... or at least, they’ve ended up on PLC’s eternal junk-mail list.

Other play styles

‘Mister Bubbles’ is intended for Classic-style play but has been designed with some Straight-leaning tendencies (such as non-silly character names). If you want to play the mission Straight, we provide notes in each episode. In general, the Straight strategy is:

⦿ Shift emphasis from random death to the risk of discovery. Troubleshooters who are constantly faced with imminent vaporization rarely bother to consider the consequences of their instinctive responses. If you reduce the imminent threat of dismemberment, being seen doing something you shouldn’t—or not doing something you should—becomes a more pressing concern.

⦿ Pay closer attention to Tension (Tension attention?), and make it clear when someone has been caught. A guard on monitor duty calls up on the PDC and inquires what’s going on. The Computer may be less accessible; PCs have to work through mid-level managers and Internal Security goons. Levy small fines often; make execution rare. Encourage players to deal with treason with accusations instead of assassinations. Anyone who draws a gun on someone else had better be ready to explain why.

⦿ Replace slapstick with uncomfortable humor. In Classic style, when something goes wrong, everyone laughs—even (especially) the victim—and you move on. In Straight style, when something goes wrong, it can be funny, but someone still has to deal with it. And every second that goes by increases the chances a camera will notice.

⦿ Pay more attention to money. Charge small amounts—a credit or two—for routine things that the Troubleshooters do, such as using a transbot. They have a lot of money to start with but they’ll eagerly flush it away in a snap if they think they won’t need it.

You don’t need to track expenses for everything, but making your players feel like they might need to keep some cash around—in other words, like their money is real—can add a distinctly Straight tone all by itself.

Playing ‘Mister Bubbles’ as a Zap-style mission is left as an exercise for the trigger-happy.

Character Portrait

Peter-R-WQR-1

Male PLC Hygiene Officer

Service firm: PowerPatch

Service firm type: Inventory System Updaters

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 903

Tics: Needs to have exact counts of things

[Tic 2:]

Example of tic in use

Gunther-R: I think we're outnumbered!

Peter-R: Of course we're outnumbered! Why, there must be— wait a second, I'll check. One... Two... Three... Four... *GAAAAAIGH!*

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 09

Con Games 17

Chutzpah 13

Bootlicking 01

Intimidation 01

No Matter How Clean Something Is,
Find One Little Thing Wrong 15

Stealth 09

Disguise 13

Shadowing 01

Next-to-Last One Out of the Room
in a Crisis 15

Violence 05

Energy Weapons 09

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware: 04

Make Noisy Annoying Machines
Even Noisier and More Annoying 10

Software 07

Data Search 11

Financial Systems 11

Bot Programming 01

Vehicle Programming 01

Encode Secret Message
in Otherwise Innocuous Data 13

Wetware 06

Pharmatherapy 10

Biosciences 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence,
Wetware)

Character Portrait

Gunther-R-BOK-1

Male Armed Forces Loyalty Officer

REGISTERED MUTANT

Service firm: Red Detectors

Service firm type: Threat Assessors

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 440

Tics: Absentmindedly gnaws on things he's holding.

[Tic 2:]

Example of tic in use

Peter-R: How much ammo do you have left? I need to know exactly.

Gunther-R: *[Speak with a pen in your mouth]* Rr hh rbmt ffr flps mmph...

Peter-R: What?

Gunther-R: *[Take the pen out of your mouth]* I said, I have about four shots left.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 05

Intimidation 09

Bootlicking 01

Shout Even Louder!!! 11

Stealth 08

High Alert 12

Sleight of Hand 01

Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Projectile Weapons 13

Unarmed Combat 01

Draw and Holster Weapon in Slick-Looking Way 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08

Mechanical Engineering 12

Chemical Engineering 01

Hit It Hard Enough to Make It Work

Once More Before Falling Apart 14

Software 05

Vehicle Programming 09

Financial Systems 01

Wetware 05

Medical 09

Outdoor Life 09

Cloning 01

Induce Vomiting in Self 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth,
Software)

Character Portrait

Dexter-R-FCP-1

Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Service firm: ColorRight

Service firm type: Paint Control

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 478

Tics: Mistakes bots for people and vice versa.

[Tic 2:]

Example of tic in use

Dexter-R: Ah, here's a handy jackobot to help with the gear.

Hunter-R: What? It's me, Hunter-R!

Dexter-R: Why are you impersonating a bot? Team Leader, I think Hunter-R is insane.

Guardbot: I am sorry, citizen. I do not understand your request. Please restate.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 04

[No specialties]

Stealth 08

Security Systems 12

Disguise 01

Hear Own Name Being Said by Others 14

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

Fine Manipulation 10

Projectile Weapons 01

Pratfall in a Way That Looks Like It Hurt
Worse Than It Did 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 09

Habitat Engineering 17

Nuclear Engineering 13

Bot Ops & Maintenance 01

Weapon & Armor Maintenance 01

Make Measurements of Parts
Without Need for Tools 15

Software 09

Bot Programming 13

Data Analysis 01

Convince Guardbot to Seek Other Target 15

Wetware 04

Biosciences 08

Bioweapons 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2
(Management, Wetware)

Dexter-R-FCP-1

Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Mutation: Electroshock

Society: Mystics (degree 2);
actually Illuminati (degree 3)

Secret skills: Drug Procurement 06, Meditation
06, Propaganda (Mystics) 06

Background

Maybe it's just because you're a fair bit older than most, but everyone seems so preoccupied with... everything... these days. What is it with these youngsters? They're so... motivated... all the time. They're going to make themselves ill if they try to constantly maintain such a frantic pace. They should learn to relax!

Part of your recent promotion to RED Clearance included training as an Equipment Guy. Hopefully nobody has a weapon malfunction or anything... 'cause that's not really your strong point. Ducts and plumbing, on the other hand: that's right up your alley! Hopefully the team will get lots of ducts and plumbing issued to it.

As for your presence on this team as a representative of Technical Services, you've heard there are some serious problems in the field with equipment not being thoroughly painted in its proper Security Clearance color. Whenever you see places or equipment that have been incorrectly color-labeled, shoot it with the paintball gun issued to you. A follow-up crew will look for the signs you have left and re-paint the designated item appropriately. You have a limited supply of ammunition. Do not misuse it!

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact in the Mystics tells you, 'Whoa, man, if you boil Sandallathon in water and then take it with an Asperquaint chaser, you can see through walls for hours. It's totally safe and legal, too!' He sells you some Sandallathon, but he doesn't have a line on Asperquaint right now. 'Sorry, man. Maybe next weekcycle.'

Your contact in the Illuminati finds this very interesting, and wants you to investigate these drug interactions further, as well as other possible interesting combinations of drugs. The Illuminati will pay up to 100 credits per drug interaction experiment you report on. Also, he warns you that the Qwality Standard for hygiene is about to 'change radically' and that you should keep an extra pair of shoes around, 'just in case'.

It occurs to you that taking random drug combinations yourself might not be entirely safe. However, if you get someone else to unwittingly take mixed drugs and then report the effects to you, maybe you can still make a little money...

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

(20) Sandallathon/Sleepy-Sleepy tablets
(1) Rolactin/Happy Life tablet (BLUE clearance)
(5) bags TrippleCheeze Cruncheetym (Y)
50 meters of plasticord
Heat-resistant mittens (ORANGE)
Sunglasses (ORANGE)
Psychedelic postcards
Stungun
(2) RED laser barrels

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Basic toolkit
Paintball gun
(2) shots each of red, orange, yellow, green, blue,
indigo and violet paint

Gunther-R-BOK-1

Male Armed Forces Loyalty Officer

REGISTERED MUTANT

Mutation: Matter Eater (**REGISTERED**)

Society: Pro Tech (degree 1)

Secret skills: R&D Gear Tinkering 10, Jargon 18, WMD 11

Background

Man oh man, you love gadgets! If it's technological, you can't get enough of it. The more complicated the better! You're a complete sucker for anything with lots of blinking lights or digital readouts. It's a shame the latest new tech-toys always cost so much; you just can't resist spending your money on them. Hopefully your new life as a Troubleshooter will give you more access to the latest fadware. At least, that always seems to be the case on the vidshows.

You don't know much about what a Loyalty Officer does, but the fact that they gave it to you instead of someone from Internal Security suggests there's going to be an Internal Security undercover agent on the team watching you!

As for your presence on this Troubleshooter team, it obviously indicates the mission is expected to come up against heavy combat opposition. Why else would Armed Forces be needed? No doubt your enemies are going to ambush you when you least expect it; the more normal the situation appears, the more alert you're going to have to be! Good thing you've got a backup weapon. Or three.

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'HPD&MC is working up a promotional contest in conjunction with Technical Services! A small number of bots around Alpha Complex have had a special Golden Pill placed inside of them, worth 5000 credits, which they will give to randomly-selected citizens on the day of the contest. But if you shake hands with them a certain way, if they have one of the Pills, they'll give it to you now before the contest starts.' She shows you the handshake.

It occurs to you that there are other secret societies, such as the Frankenstein Destroyers, who might discover the existence of the Golden Pills if they damage or destroy any bots. If you see anyone doing such a thing, you should make sure they don't take a Golden Pill (which should be yours!) from the debris.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Bullhorn (with MegaBooster!)
Electric lantern (BLUE clearance, with digital
battery life counter!)
Stopwatch (YELLOW, picosecond accuracy!)
Thermometer (4 different temperature scales!)
Binoculars (ORANGE, with laser rangefinder)
Energy pistol (YELLOW, NuGrid targeting)
(2) Grenades (with piezoelectric pin!)
Sword (variable load balancing!)
(3) RED laser barrels

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Loyalty Notepad (lockable)
Key to Notepad

Peter-R-WQR-1

Male PLC Hygiene Officer

Mutation: Hypersenses

Society: Free Enterprise (degree 3)

Secret skills: Cash Hacking 09, Marketing &
Advertising 09, Forgery 11

Background

You're very believable. You've always got a way to work the system and find another angle—whether that's convincing someone of a lie, finding just the right evidence in the online data logs, or just plain pretending to be someone else and slipping out of the room before it's too late. All of this contributes nicely to the Bottom Line—that is, your long-term monetary outlook. This Troubleshooter work is going to be a terrific stepping-stone on your path to financial independence; look upon everything you encounter as a possible way to make more money. Is it bolted down? If not, maybe you should take it and find a place to sell it. If so, maybe you should unbolt it, then ask the question again.

You've received only basic training as a Hygiene Officer at this point, but you believe you are well-suited for the task. In fact, you hope to eventually define an Ultimate Quantitative Numeric Scale for assessing hygiene—the most rigorous and accurate Alpha Complex has ever seen. Perhaps it could be called the 'Peter-R Scale.'

As an Inventory Supply Checker by training, you understand your presence on this Troubleshooter team obviously indicates the success of the mission will be judged by the thoroughness with which assigned mission equipment is tracked. Clear records of all hardware issued to and utilized by team members will be paramount. If such records are not provided, you'll just have to make them yourself.

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'Several Technical Services service firms are conspiring to engineer a shortage of bot parts in an attempt to drive up repair prices. Nobody but Free Enterprise should overtly manipulate the market like that, so we need to teach them a lesson. Bots will need to be protected from damage for the next few weeks. Don't let your fellow Troubleshooters indiscriminately bang bots around like they normally would. If, however, you do encounter damaged or destroyed bots, collect as many parts as you can to contribute to our secret stockpile. When the shortage hits, we'll flood the market and undersell those Technical Services fools!'

It occurs to you, however, that if you keep the parts for yourself and sell them just as the shortage hits, before Free Enterprise floods the market, you could personally stand to make a small fortune—as long as your Free Enterprise bosses don't find out you're working such a deal on the side.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Sunglasses (ORANGE clearance)
(2) Pyroxidine/Wakey-Wakey tabs
Teela-O pocket mirror
Comb, red
Calculator (INDIGO)
Slide rule (YELLOW)
Crowbar (YELLOW)
Dental floss, 30m
(2) RED laser barrels

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Hygiene Testing Kit
Instant Cleans-O-Spray

Character Portrait

Ginger-R-UYT-1

Female CPU Team Leader

Service firm: Eye in the Skypanel

Service firm type: Facility Surveillance Control

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 442

Tics: Repeats back what was said to her, phrased as a question.

[**Tic 2:**]

Example of tic in use

Jennifer-R: We should flank them on the right side.

Ginger-R: Flank them on the right side?

Jennifer-R: Right. You still have that grenade, right?

Ginger-R: I still have the grenade?

Jennifer-R: If you don't stop that, I'm going to kill you.

Ginger-R: You're going to kill me?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06

Oratory 10

Hygiene 01

Distract Others Long Enough to Start Running 12

Stealth 06

Sneaking 10

High Alert 01

Fit Into Dangerously Narrow Spaces 12

Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Hand Weapons 17

Vehicle Weapons 01

Jackobot Wrestling 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 07

Chemical Engineering 11

Habitat Engineering 01

Software 05

Bot Programming 09

Data Analysis 09

C-Bay 01

Operating Systems 01

Wetware 07

Outdoor Life 11

Psychotherapy 01

Feign Effects of Sedation 13

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Hardware, Software)

Character Portrait

Hunter-R-BCW-1

Male R&D Happiness Officer

Service firm: Kaboom Ordnance Prototyping

Service firm type: Weapon Effectiveness Assessors

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 250

Tics: Will bet a credit on the outcome of just about anything.

[**Tic 2:**]

Example of tic in use

[*Gunther-R is defusing a bomb.*]

Hunter-R: Hey, mutie. Bet you a credit you screw this up and it explodes.

Gunther-R: *Will you shut up!* This thing is sonically trig—
[*Explosion.*]

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08

Moxie 12

Interrogation 16

Con Games 01

Bootlicking 01

Describe Intense Action in Breathtaking Detail 14

Stealth 04

[No specialties]

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

Thrown Weapons 10

Demolition 01

Poke 'Em in the Eye With a Finger! 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 06

Electronic Engineering 10

Habitat Engineering 01

Software 08

Calculate the Odds to Two Decimal Places 14

Wetware 08

Suggestion 12

Psychotherapy 12

Cloning 01

Outdoor Life 01

Identify Poison by Taste (Only a Small Taste Though, Really!) 14

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Hardware)

Character Portrait

Jennifer-R-BCW-1

Female HPD&MC Recording Officer

Service firm: Loyally Picky Proofing Firm

Service firm type: Semantics Control

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 652

Tics: If you can't be certain, be confident!

[**Tic 2:**]

Example of tic in use

Peter-R: Are the last of those Commies gone?

Jennifer-R: Uh... All gone! They must have retreated.

Peter-R: Say, does this tacnuke look armed to you?

Jennifer-R: Pshaw. No, I'm sure it's harmless.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06

Chutzpah 10

Bootlicking 01

Stealth 07

Concealment 11

Sleight of Hand 11

Surveillance 01

Security Systems 01

Smell Something Funny, Assuming Something Smells Funny 13

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

Agility 10

Unarmed Combat 10

Fine Manipulation 01

Thrown Weapons 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 06

Weapon/Armor Maintenance 10

Chemical Engineering 01

Weird Camera Effects 12

Software 06

Hacking 10

Data Analysis 01

Convince Food-Vendobots to Spit Out One Extra 12

Wetware 09

Hold Breath All the Way to Unconsciousness 15

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2
(Management, Violence)

Jennifer-R-BCW-1

Female HPD&MC Recording Officer

Mutation: Uncanny Luck

Society: Romantics (degree 3)

Secret skills: Archival Studies 10, Comic Book Trivia 07, Old Reckoning Culture 10

Background

You pretty much coast through life. Everyone else makes such a big deal about promotion to RED, but it never really occurred to you that you wouldn't move up the ranks someday. Everything just tends to fall into place for you. You're not really sure what, if anything, you're doing special, but so far it seems to be working for you. One thing you do know, though, is that pipsqueak **Hunter-R-BCW** isn't really in R&D. He didn't have the aptitude for it way back when you used to beat him up in the BCW Sector Junior Citizen crèche. He must be a plant from another service firm, working undercover.

You're overjoyed to learn you're going to be a Recording Officer! This was exactly what you were hoping for. All that time you spent listening to Film School On Tape will come in handy; it's unlikely they could have gotten a better-qualified person to operate the camera that will record the success of your first mission.

Your presence on this team indicates the mission's success will be judged in large part on the quality of the language used by its members. Proper grammar and spelling are paramount! If necessary, of course, you can fix it in editing later...

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'The final battle between Good and Evil is looming on the horizon. The League of All That Is Bad has dealt us a grievous blow and soon, I fear, you will have to face their champion, Magoo, in battle. But if you do not have a Trusty Sidekick by your side, bearing the Fire of Fate, you shall surely fail. You must find your sidekick! Time is running out. Find your sidekick. This is your Quest!'

Your Trusty Sidekick will probably not realize his or her destiny when you first identify him or her. You might need to use some drugs and/or subliminal re-education to awaken the Fire of Fate within your Sidekick.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Yo-yo (GREEN clearance)
Electric lantern (BLUE)
Stopwatch (YELLOW)
Box of matches (BLUE)
Magnifying glass (GREEN)
LemonieMoist Towelettes, 20
Mark IV Warbot project t-shirt
(3) RED laser barrels
Fake YELLOW laser barrel (illegal)
Brass knuckles
Teela-O pocket mirror
(5) Asperquaint tablets (YELLOW)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Multicorder 1
MC Lie Detector program
MC Editing program

Hunter-R-BCW-1

Male R&D Happiness Officer

Actual service group: Internal Security (spying on R&D)

Mutation: Energy field

Society: Anti-Mutant (degree 2)

Secret skills: Power Studies 12, Gloating 14, Gambling 12

Background

Seize the daycycle, that's what you always say! You've only go so much life and you need to squeeze the most out of every minute. Most INFRAREDs would see promotion to RED Clearance as an opportunity to finally sit back and relax all the time. But not you! Now you can finally do all those things you've always wanted to do: Travel to distant sectors, witness strange new technology, maybe buy some Old Reckoning trinkets... and most of all, finally get revenge against Jennifer-R-BCW, who used to beat you up in the BCW Sector Junior Citizens crèche. Revenge is like Fun: best served *Cold*.

As far as you know, your bonus duty assignment—Happiness Officer—involves dispensing drugs and playing practical jokes on people. This sounds fine to you; perhaps you'll even find a kindred soul or two who like to live life to the fullest as you do.

Your presence on the team indicates the success of the mission will be judged by the effective use of everyone's assigned weaponry. Encourage diversity in the team's arsenal whenever possible. What good does it do if everyone relies on lasers all the time? Explosives—projectiles—sharp sticks—you need them all! Take notes on your teammates' use of firepower. If they seem amenable, provide constructive feedback afterward.

Your Internal Security handler wants you focused on the real job, however: Tracking illegal arms modification work. Kaboom Ordnance has been providing all sorts of unsafe weapon 'upgrades' to the more violent secret societies—PURGE, Frankenstein Destroyers and Death Leopard—through a go-between known only as 'Goldenpil'. It's time to take this menace down once and for all, before his deadly wares claim more innocent lives!

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'The mutant sympathizers are rolling out the latest step in their mutagenic agenda. We don't know exactly how they're doing it, but they've figured out how to pass their mutations onto pure, decent folks like us! Maybe they do it by touch. Or using... rays... or something. We need to figure out how they're doing it so we can stop them—before they infect us all! Collect samples if possible—but carefully!'

If you meet any mutants, registered or otherwise, maybe you should observe them a little first to figure out how they're spreading their... whatever... to others, before you waste 'em and collect the usual bounty. You also wonder if maybe somehow you're spreading mutation everywhere you go. Is that something you should be doing...?

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

(2) RED laser barrels
(6) Grenades
Energy pistol (YELLOW clearance)
Chainsaw (INDIGO)
Hottorch

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Bottle of EZ-DUZ-IT
Gelgermine aerosol

Ginger-R-UYT-1

Female CPU Team Leader

Actual service group: Internal Security (spying on CPU)

Mutation: Regeneration

Society: Frankenstein Destroyers (degree 4)

Secret skills: Demolition 13, Identify Polearms 08, Bot Programming 09

Background

You're beginning to suspect that 'bravery' is a concept invented by the Communists to convince loyal Citizens to rush to their doom. Despite what the Troubleshooter handbook said, you've yet to meet another RED who got their reflec because of something courageous they did. In fact, you strongly suspect 'courage' is the only thing standing between you and eventual promotion to YELLOW.

Your selection for this current team suggests there is concern with the condition of surveillance camera equipment in the area. You are to identify cameras that are broken and need replacing, or that have been tampered with, or areas where thorough and appropriate surveillance is not being maintained. Take steps, if possible, to correct these deficiencies. Keep a log of your work so FSC can bill the time appropriately, of course.

Your Internal Security handler wants you to remain focused on your real mission, however, which is using your cover job in FSC to plant micro-cams on as many functioning surveillance cameras as you can. These micro-cams will watch the cameras and record any incidents of sabotage and incompetent work by other FSC personnel.

Your promotion paperwork indicated you were being recommended for Team Leader duties. It said you would receive appropriate training within seven to 10 working days of promotion. It's day nine now. Do you think they realize you haven't had your training yet? You hope you didn't miss it; you *were* losing e-mails for a couple of days....

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'Glorious Operation "Gear Frenzy" is in full swing. It is not enough that we destroy the bots... we will make them destroy each other! Resist the urge to participate in the bashing, though. We've had a couple of members—*compromised*—recently. Internal Security surely knows that someone on your team is a Frankie at this point. Don't let them catch you and compromise us further! Death to the Bots!'

You could probably goad someone else on your team into attacking a bot at some point—hardly anybody likes bots, really—and then you could turn them in as the Frankenstein Destroyer on your team, effectively taking the heat off yourself and probably getting a bonus as well.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Force sword
(3) RED laser barrels
Gas mask
Self-stick bandages (YELLOW)
Cancer-Free Cigarettes (ORANGE)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Many, many micro-cams

1: That 'new mission' smell**Episode summary**

The newly-promoted Troubleshooters are called from their normal day jobs in DMM Sector to serve on a mission of utmost importance. Unfortunately, the transbot that would have taken them to their mission briefing has an accident, so they end up going somewhere in SPD Sector instead.

Getting your suckers together

The mission begins approximately the same way for each team member. Read or paraphrase the following aloud to your players:

If it weren't for your shiny new red jumpsuit, you might almost think this was a day like any other in your life, here in DMM Sector. After all, you're sitting at the same processing line you've always worked at in your service firm, alongside the same INFRAREDs you've always known. And yet, it's not like any other day. For one thing, the hint of jealousy in your co-workers' eyes is certainly new. You wonder how long it will be before Your Friend The Computer asks you to heroically serve it and all Alpha Complex.

Suddenly the RED-Clearance supervisor for your shift appears, waving a small printout at you.

'Looks like our high and mighty Troubleshooter has to go have a mission,' he says to the others. 'Don't worry. I'm sure the rest of us will enjoy making up the difference in today's quota.'

Your hands tremble for just a moment as you take the printout and see the RED border around it. This is it, Troubleshooter! Your first mission assignment!

Pass the Mission Alert Handout around the table so each of your players can see it. Canny players may notice some of the contents of the mission alert appear to be missing. Feign ignorance of how such things happen. If anyone asks the shift supervisor about the message, he claims not to have read it and certainly insists he didn't damage it in any way. If anyone spends more effort trying to understand what went wrong with their mission alert printout than they do getting to their transbot pickup, The Computer should chime in over the nearest PA system:

Computer: Has citizen Peter-R departed for his transbot pickup?

Supervisor: No, Friend Computer, he has not.

Peter-R: The mission briefing printout was damaged!

Computer: Is the designated transbot platform number legible?

Peter-R: ...yes...

Computer: Why have you not yet left for the designated transbot platform?

If the player offers any response other than immediate departure, have all the other players record an SS1 violation for him. Though you don't tell anyone what the code stands for right now, it's 'Disobeying a request from The Computer,' an offense worthy of Censure.

Transbot platform A8:C7:60:FF is easy enough to find. It is a special-use stop permitted only for RED-Clearance citizens and higher, with a **Tension rating of 4**. Make a big deal of this—the first time these former INFRARED citizens get to use the platform! One by one, the six members of the team pick up their gear (both assigned and personal) from their barracks and gather at the crowded platform. Encourage them to spend a few minutes getting to know each other in character as they wait for the transbot, demonstrating tics and other aspects of their characters' personalities.

The whole thing should very much feel like a friendly (albeit high-strung) group of oddballs meeting for the first time at a bus stop at the start of a caper flick. Reward players who quickly get into the swing of this with a couple of Perversity points; after the first or second time you do this, everyone will get the idea. Anyone who makes some effort to portray their character should get at least 1 point. Then, once it feels like everyone has had a chance to form some first impressions of everyone else, read the following:

As the conversation dies down, you hear an approaching transbot. A shiny new vehicle glides smoothly to a halt at your stop. With a faint hum and swish, the glossy RED doors slide open invitingly.

Wait expectantly until any of your players indicate that they want to climb aboard and then interrupt with this:

Just as you take your first step toward the waiting transbot, you hear a terrible shriek of metal followed by a squeal of overtaxed brakes. Seconds later, a second transbot slams into the rear of the first one, knocking it end over end and throwing shards of glass and bits of metal everywhere! The first transbot tumbles to a halt, twisted and burning, a few dozen meters away. The second transbot is now standing, more or less, at the platform. Though dented and missing its windows, it appears to still be functioning. In fact, with a loud ratchet and clank, the grungy RED doors grind open disconcertingly.

Now give the PC who was to be the first aboard the original transbot an extra scare. Ask the player what his Violence skill rating is ('or Agility, if you have that'), then roll a die out of sight. Pretend you're comparing the result to something written down here. Then tell him that

**MISSION ASSIGNMENT ALERT MISSION ASSIGNMENT A
rance RED Clearance RED Clearance RED Clearance RE**

From: DMM Sector Troubleshooter Central
To: peter@RED.wqr.plc, gunther@RED.bok.armf, dexter@RED.fcp.tech, ginger@RED.uyt.cpu, hunter@RED.bcw.rnd, jennifer@RED.bcw.hpd
Subj: Mission of utmost importance!
Ref: GZCH-1756-CCJP-6823-PQME-2524-MMOW-5502

Congratulations, Troubleshooter! Your friend **The Computer** has chosen you for an important and fun assignment carefully matched to your recorded level of mission experience. You are to report **immediately** to Transbot Tubeway Platform **A8:C7:60:FF** for transport to Briefing Ro**CARRIER INTERRUPT PLEASE WAIT**ollowed by escort to standard PLC outfitting. If there are optional service firm services available after outfitting, you may be required to volunteer for additional duties at this tim**CARRIER INTERRUPT PLEASE WAIT**andard time to complete a mission of this variety is **5 Hours 12 Minutes** from time of mission alert delivery. Upon completing your mission in the standard time, report to Transbot Tubeway Platform **B1:22:FF:C2** for transport to debriefing, where you will provide a quantitative assessment of your mission success.

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**MISSION ASSIGNMENT ALERT MISSION ASSIGNMENT AL
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MISSIONS

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

was a close one: There's a smoldering shard of steel embedded in the platform right near his foot, but he's okay. Award him a Perversity point as well. The message, though subtle and unspoken, should be clear: Foolishly rushing forward is a good way to get both killed and rewarded. Continue this policy throughout the mission.

To establish a more brutal tone from the start, treat the crash like a standard slugthrower attack (W4K damage) on everyone on the platform, with a skill of 8 against the character who was going to board first and 4 (the prevailing Tension of the scene) against everyone else. (You should still award a Perversity point to the player who stepped forward first.)

Either way, ask your players, 'Who wants to board this second transbot?' The more innocent you can sound while doing so, the better. Anyone who does so eagerly should get a Perversity point. Anyone who manages to convince someone else to get on first should get 2.

It's possible, however, your players will be none too keen on the idea. You'll see this time and time again in **PARANOIA**: Once-bitten Troubleshooters can quickly become twice-shy. Ultimately you'll make them yield to your will, of course. The tools you can apply in this situation: the Carrot and the Stick.

- ⦿ In the **Carrot** approach, you try to re-instill a false sense of security by suggesting things have actually improved somehow, or the grass will be greener just on the other side of that whirling, gnashing deathtrap. In the current case of the transbot crash, you might reassure your players this second transbot actually looks a great deal more rugged than the first one, which was all frilly and fragile-looking. This one is much more like the sort of vehicle that would carry a tough band of Troubleshooters, don't you think?
- ⦿ To give them the **Stick**, you prey upon the players' heightened sense of fear by suggesting that unless they take the path you're offering them now, things get much worse very soon. For example, you could casually mention the first transbot erupts into a ball of fire, and there appears to be burning petroleum leaking from its wreckage in the general direction of the platform.

Your players might demonstrate that bane of Gamemasters the world over, 'lateral thinking', with such clever tactics as trying to appeal to The Computer. Whenever your players invoke The Computer, you should choose to view this as an invitation to issue a warning before stepping up the severity of the Stick.

Player: Computer, there has been a transbot accident!

Computer: There is no transbot waiting for you at the platform?

Player: There is, but...

Computer: I'm sure the loyal citizens in Transbot Station Platform Cleanup will attend to the necessary custodial work. Why have you not boarded the waiting transbot, citizen?

Player: Can you maybe tell us how to get to our briefing room on foot?

Computer: What is your security clearance?

Player: Uh... RED.

Computer: That information is not available at your security clearance.

Player: But...

Computer: Transbots operate on strict timetables, citizen. Interfering with a transbot timetable can lead to serious accidents, and is a treasonous offense.

If your players don't bow to the clear fate offered here, begin hitting them with the Stick, in the form of more SS2 treason (disobeying an order from The Computer) followed by an explosion of the first transbot's fuel. Treat it as though an HE cone-rifle shell had been fired into their midst. When their replacement clones are activated, they have the exact same orders: Report to the same transbot platform and get on the transbot still waiting there.

When all Troubleshooters are aboard, the transbot carries them away with a grinding of gears and a distinct smell of overheating machine oil. No NPC citizen has dared enter the transbot; the PCs are alone. There is no way to find out where it is taking them; a successful Software/Vehicle Programming skill roll might get the transbot to cough up its destination information, but only in a transbot-specific coordinate notation. Matching these coordinates against any actual layout of Alpha Complex is something a RED Troubleshooter could conceivably do with an Access roll, but probably shouldn't attempt if they want to stay free of treason and/or insanity.

The dark room

The transbot interior looks like any bus or subway car. Seats, handrails, loyalty posters—more seats—that's about it.

A minute or so into its journey the transbot enters a dark tunnel.

A few hundred yards into the tunnel, the vehicle grinds to a halt. The lights go out. A recorded voice says, 'Attention, passengers. The Computer's loyal servants in Central Processing have introduced schedule adjustments to improve efficiency. To this end, this vehicle will pause for two minutes before resuming its journey. To conserve energy the lights will now be dimmed. Do not be alarmed. The

lights will be turned on again when the journey resumes.'

Pitch blackness!

Do you recognize this opportunity, GM? Did you read Chapter 46, 'The mission scheme'? That's right, this is this mission's dark room (**Tension level 0**). Every mission should have a dark room early on, while the Troubleshooters are absolutely hungering to kill each other. It needn't have anything to do with the mission (this one doesn't) or be at all plausible or creative (this one—well, judge for yourself). Just stick everyone in the dark, lean back and murmur, 'I can receive any notes you want to pass me.' Seeing their eyes suddenly bulge in realization is one of the **PARANOIA** GM's signal pleasures.

Of course, it's still early yet. Maybe these are first-timer players who haven't quite worked out this whole kill-your-buddies idea. Maybe they just sit there like a row of turnips. If so, the transbot starts up again uneventfully. You can always contrive a similar dark room later in the mission, after they're in the proper mindset.

After the fatalities, you may need to recall the survivors to the platform, bring in the backups and send everyone onward in the next transbot. Don't let them think about the schedule now; just keep things moving.

One briefing room is like another... right?

After a highly convoluted but not unnecessarily terrifying journey, the transbot lurches to a halt at another RED-Clearance platform, where a large sign reads 'Welcome to SPD Sector.' The transbot's doors do not open once it has stopped. The motor, however, coughs twice and halts completely. Solutions to the 'stuck door' problem might range from using Hardware/Transbot Maintenance to manually open them to slipping through the broken windows with Violence/Agility to applying some sort of explosive. Appeals to The Computer, as always, should lead to awkward questions about why the team isn't already being briefed. Then ask everyone to make a Stealth roll. If anyone succeeds, sniff the air and say, 'What's that smell? Is that... fire? Somewhere... under the transbot?' Reward the first one out of the transbot, regardless of how much or little trouble they have with the doors, with a Perversity point.

On the RED-Clearance platform (**Tension 4**), the Troubleshooters see three doors:

- ⦿ A RED door labeled SPD30/C125
- ⦿ A YELLOW door labeled SPD15/C120
- ⦿ A BLUE door labeled SPD75/C80

Ask the players which door they go through. Obviously, anyone who even thinks about opening any door except the RED-Clearance one simply wants to die. However, this time

you should simply content yourself with making a sort of choked laugh, as though this is exactly the horrible fate you've been hoping they'd meet, and then ask, perhaps with a slight giggle, 'Yeah. Okay. Are you sure?' They probably change their mind. (Truly sharp players might attempt to convince one of the other players to open one of the higher-clearance doors. Whether or not such an attempt succeeds, reward amusing attempts with a couple of Perversity points.)

As it turns out, this grim and richly-deserved doom is not so easily achieved; if anyone tries to open any door other than the RED one, it turns out locked. However, roll a die against the current Tension level (4): On a 4 or lower, an IntSec monitor noted and logged the attempt, and The Computer adds an 'attempted to enter higher-clearance area' note added to the PC's permanent record. Though this isn't as serious as actually being caught in a higher-clearance area (which would result in additional fines), The Computer will put the offending Troubleshooter on Probation. This should have no immediate effect; simply note it somewhere. The next time they try to talk to The Computer about something, The Computer may be more interested in talking about the door they tried to open.

Read the following when the team opens the RED door and enters the room beyond:

The interior of SPD30/C125 is not large; perhaps four meters by five. A few low, moderately uncomfortable-looking chairs are set along two of its walls. A large viewscreen dominates the third wall. It is currently off. A small clerk's counter stands against the fourth wall with a RED Clearance door next to it. The lighting is very low. You're not sure if the effect is soothingly subdued or unnervingly dim.

The lighting is in energy-saver mode; nobody is scheduled to be using this room currently (**Tension 3**). It's not even a briefing room; it's just a RED-Clearance waiting room for the transbot stop. Before anyone starts telling you what they do, ask everyone to make a Stealth/High Alert roll. Someone will surely succeed, at which point you mention that they hear a faint noise coming from the corner behind the clerk counter. If someone succeeds by a margin of 5 or more, or if they specifically take a few moments to wait and listen further, they can identify the sound as someone sobbing. (If somehow nobody succeeds, they probably poke around the room, and someone will eventually look behind the counter.)

Award the first player to investigate the noise a Perversity point. But if everyone scrambles to be the first, don't give anyone a point this time. The behavior to enforce is rewarding players who take the stand-apart action.

When someone investigates the noise, read the following:

Behind the counter, you find a huddled, quivering ORANGE Clearance citizen wearing an HPD&MC uniform from Complex Update, one of the News Services firms. He appears to be in some sort of serious distress, weeping quietly but strongly enough that his whole body shudders. Suddenly, he notices you looking at him. Scrambling back further under the counter, he shouts, 'Don't eat me!'

It is virtually impossible to convince him to calm down or come out from under the counter. At best, soothing and understanding Troubleshooters who reassure him everything is okay can coax out his name, Hans-O-HGF-3. He says he hasn't slept for eight or nine days now... because 'the mutants will eat me if I do.'

Hans-O is obviously having a psychotic break. Wetware/Pharmatherapy combined with close examination (joining him under the counter, or grappling him and dragging him out) reveals his symptoms are consistent with a side-effect of pyroxidine overdose that occurs in only 2.2% of citizens. If no PC has such skills, the happiness officer can spot this symptom.

Hans-O is wearing ORANGE reflec and carrying a laser pistol with an ORANGE barrel, now drained empty—he's been shooting at everything he sees. (He's also carrying a concealed grenade the Troubleshooters should not notice until he pulls it out later.) He doesn't know whether he's supposed to be briefing anyone. He doesn't really have a clear sense where he is. When the Troubleshooters indicate they are here for a briefing, he grasps at the only straw his crazed mind can come up: 'Scrubots,' he says quickly. 'It was something about... Yes, that's right. Reports of scrubots... attacking citizens. Cleaning them too vigorously. That must be it! That's your mission!'

(No it isn't. Hans-O happened to see a wire release on a line printer he was hiding under this morning, but this is not something your players need know. Let's just keep it our little secret.)

Hans-O's only goal is to get the Troubleshooters to leave. He is certain the path to this goal lies in confirming whatever it is the Troubleshooters want to know. Asking him anything more complicated than yes/no questions just increases his trauma.

Player: We're investigating scrubot attacks?

Hans-O: Yes!

Player: Are we... supposed to stop further attacks?

Hans-O: Yes! Yes, definitely.

Player: Is there a common thread linking these attacks?

Hans-O: Yes! That must be it.

Player: ...and the thread is...?

Hans-O: What? Oh... Ooooooh... Stay back! Leave me alone!

Player: Should we stand on our heads and sing the Teela-O theme?

Hans-O: Yes! Yes, that was it. Precisely! Please get going!

Eventually, when you get tired of playing Hans-O, or when the PCs are about to leave, or if the players invest too much effort in actually getting additional information out of him (which fails), trying to help him recover his mental health (which fails) or reporting him to authorities (which just results in the Troubleshooters being blamed for his condition), he brings the 'briefing' to a rather sudden close:

Suddenly, Hans-O's eyes go wide. 'The walls!' he shouts. 'They're coming out of the walls! I won't let them take me! You can't make me go!' He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a grenade. Most of you have never seen a real grenade in use before and yet, strangely enough, every one of you understands at an instinctive level that this one has been triggered. What is everyone doing?

The room will probably erupt immediately into noise. Bring the volume down to a manageable level and go around the table, letting each of your players indicate one and only one choice of action. 'Shoot Hans-O' is an appropriate (but useless) action. 'Dive for cover on the other side of the counter' is good. 'Run through the nearby door' is just fine. 'Push another Troubleshooter onto him while diving behind the counter' is two actions; make them pick one or the other. Some Violence specialty rolls might be appropriate:

⦿ Unarmed Combat to push someone else closer to Hans-O

⦿ Agility to dive over the counter or get through the door.

Straight style notes

In place of the transbot crash, the Troubleshooters arrive just in time to see the nice clean transbot drive away full of YELLOW citizens. Let them freak out about having missed their ride. As they consider an alternate route to their briefing, the second, beat-up transbot arrives. Ah, this must be the right one. Mechanical trouble with the door is still appropriate.

The 'briefing' can be kept mostly as-is, but Hans-O's psychotic break should be scarier, more menacing, instead of goofy. His suicide by grenade should not decimate the team, however; anyone who is not very close when he explodes should get away with a wound at worst.



MISSIONS

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

- ⦿ Fine Manipulation to snatch the grenade from Hans-O.

Snatching the grenade counts as a Troubleshooter's action; throwing it across the room would be a second action, and they don't have that long. But give them a Perversity point as a consolation prize. Also award a couple of points to anyone whose choice of action is driven by their tics. It is unlikely any non-Violence specialties will be useful in this situation, but feel free to allow Troubleshooters who attempt, for example, to convince Hans-O to throw the grenade elsewhere to make some sort of Management roll. Then treat them as having declared their action to be 'Stand right where I am, passively accepting fate'.

Fate, with pin

The grenade has a 5-meter radius of effect, which effectively fills the entire room. Hans-O, of course, dies rather messily. Everyone else has a chance of injury (or even death). Make

PerCitFreP

In this great hall and in other parts of SPD sector, The Computer's loyal HPD&MC pioneers are testing a new Loyalty Improvement Program (LIP), the **Personalized Citizen Friendship Program** (PerCitFreP).

This program uses radio-frequency IDs built into many ME Cards. Sensors in security cameras locate a card, an HPD database identifies its owner, and automated holographic projectors incorporate the name into a personalized greeting thrown in front of the character:

'It's another great day in the Complex, Hiram-O-SFS!'

'Judy-R-TWQ, you can be sure The Computer is your personal friend!'

HPD is also tentatively using the technique to create tailored advertising purchased by various service firms ('Andy-R-TON, you look like you could use a Bouncy Bubble Beverage!').

Hit each Troubleshooter with a message along these lines. Don't worry about being creative; HPD certainly doesn't. Establish these messages now, because you may need to use them later, at the start of Episode 3. It's vital for the NPC Marco-G to get the name of at least one, and preferably all, the PCs. If they won't tell him their names, you can have the PerCitFreP messages give them away.

After this mission, PerCitFreP will probably fall into disuse, due to various secret societies' continual and repeated assassinations of its champions.

a roll against the grenade's 'attack', as though it had a Violence skill of 20. The grenade does W3K Energy damage. Reflec does not protect against it. Apply the damage result against everyone in the room in the following order, decreasing the margin of success by 1 (and thus possibly the damage) with each additional target:

- ⦿ Anyone holding the grenade.
- ⦿ Anyone in direct physical contact with Hans-O.
- ⦿ Anyone else still behind the counter area.
- ⦿ Anyone in the open part of the room.
- ⦿ Anyone who took cover on the far side of the counter.
- ⦿ Anyone who ran out either door.

Everyone who spoke, at any point, to Hans-O, is 'behind the counter area' unless they specifically fled elsewhere as their action. Don't let them tell you they were standing across the room or outside the whole time. Anyone who went over to the far side of the counter gets an additional point of armor-like protection, stepping their final damage down one level. Anyone who went through a door gets 2 points of armor-like protection.

When the stunning sound of the blast has finished ringing in the Troubleshooters' heads, they likely wonder what to do next. Why, there's a handy RED-Clearance door right next to the counter. What's through there?

Sensory overload

Read the following when they go through:

The door leads to a short hall, which in turn opens on a glorious chamber: an enormous open space that stretches upward so high you're not sure you can see the top. Catwalks and slideways cross back and forth over your heads. Autocars and transbots zip all around the ground-level plaza. At the center of the open space is a beautiful fountain topped with a sculpture of two Troubleshooters, bravely standing back to back with their lasers out. Everywhere you look, you see citizens of rank: RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN. Even... on that catwalk up there—is that an INDIGO talking with a pair of BLUE citizens? It really is! You've never seen an INDIGO citizen before, except on vidshows. Truly, you have arrived. It's almost too much to take in.

Stress the overstimulation in the giant hall (**Tension 5**) as your players try to figure out what to do next. There's no INFRARED...

anywhere! Everything is RED or higher. If they ask about doors or hallways leading out, point out there are dozens, of virtually every security clearance color. If they ask about stairs, lifts, or ramps up to the higher levels, there are several. If they want to ask a question of one of the various citizens milling about, emphasize how extremely busy ('No time! Too much to do, Troubleshooter!') or overly important ('Isn't there a separate department for dealing with Troubleshooter inquiries?') everyone seems. Perhaps they nearly get run over as a high-speed transbot whisks to a nearby stop, discharging a dozen YELLOW-Clearance Vulture troops or some GREEN IntSec goons.

If the players start deciding on a course of action, do your best to distract them with alternatives.

Player: Maybe we should pick a hallway to...

GM: There are some interesting-looking storefronts on the second level. Also, it looks like there might be a map.

Player: Oh! Perhaps we'll head up there and...

GM: On the other hand, it looks like YELLOW Clearance up there. Perhaps you should stick to the RED Clearance doors down here.

Player: Yes, that's what we'll do.

GM: Of course, there's a lot of chaotic autocar traffic you'd have to get through.

Player: Uh...

Keep on with this until the players really don't know which of the many options seems best to them. Then give them an out:

As your senses reel from the whirlwind of activity, a jackobot wheels up and humbly stands by your side. 'Troubleshooters,' it says, 'I am jackobot ED-1E. Please, call me Eddie. You're in need of outfitting?'

Your players should leap at this. Reward the first one to say 'yes' to Eddie with a Perversity point. If they're slow on the uptake, remind them of their mission alert, and take comfort. They're about to experience the financial equivalent of torture.



2: What the market will bear

Episode summary

'Eddie' is not taking the Troubleshooters to PLC. He has been botjacked by a nearby IR Market and turned to the task of bringing customers into their businesses. Drawn into an endless labyrinth of shops overflowing with novelties, junk, and treasonous treasures, the players must understand they will never escape until they cough up some hard-earned dough for stuff they don't actually need.

A fool and his credits...

Read the following:

The jackobot leads you confidently through the chaos of the plaza and into a RED corridor. The corridor leads to a T-intersection, where you turn right. The corridor splits... there are a couple more turns... An elevator takes you down... and out into an INFRARED hallway. Another couple of turns, and you find yourself in what is apparently the PLC Outfitting Center. Several narrow tunnels lead off in various directions. Steam conduits line the low ceiling. Lining the sides of the tunnels are stall after stall of every sort of item: guns at this one, clothing at that one, bottles and cans and boxes of consumables, Teela-O merchandise... In each stall, an outfitter beckons invitingly. It's enough to make your eyes tear up with joy.

'Welcome to Outfitting,' Eddie says. Checking your PDCs, you see you should have about four and a half hours left on your mission. Plenty of time!

The team probably feels like kids in a candy store at first. But all is not as it seems. This is not a real PLC Outfitting Center; it's an extralegal IR Market Free Enterprise set up in some unused maintenance tunnels, protected from discovery through judicious bribes and electronic countermeasures. Instead of being assigned a lot of equipment on loan, the Troubleshooters must buy everything they're interested in.

It probably won't take the players long to realize something's not entirely kosher. For one thing, they're being asked to pay for... er, 'leave an outfitting deposit on'... their equipment. For another, there are no security cameras anywhere. And moments after bringing them here, Eddie the jackobot vanished into the bustle of the market. The whole place is sort of cramped and dirty and maze-like. Here and there they can see other citizens, including

some rather high-clearance ones, somewhat furtively making deals with vendors for strange-looking items.

If the team tries to contact The Computer on their PDCs, they get curious interference and static—a side effect of the cloaking systems used to hide the market from Internal Security. (This also effectively sets the IR Market to **Tension 1**.) If they mention this interference to the merchants, the hawkers offer to sell them a replacement PDC for a mere, say, 400 credits (eventually talked down to 150). If they threaten or attempt violence, inquire about the characters' Stealth/High Alert skill, 'secretly' make a few rolls, and then mention they've noticed there are guardbots subtly stationed here and there among the shops. Lots of guardbots. You might also point out making a huge destructive noise will bring Internal Security... do they really want to be caught inside an illegal marketplace?

If they don't take the hint and decide to start something, hit them with a guardbot apiece.

The market combines all the best (read: worst) aspects of an open-air Moroccan bazaar with a used-car sales lot. There are dozens of shops in a sprawling maze, 80% of them have exactly the same things as the others with only slight differences and haggling is the rule of the day. The shopkeepers push their wares on unsuspecting marks while pretending all along to have only the suckers' interests at heart. They (read: you) rely on a variety of tactics to slowly but surely peel the credits off the Troubleshooters:

1. Lure the Troubleshooters into thinking they can get a great deal.

The marketeers—not all Free Enterprisers, just renters—sell standard items at an inflated-enough price that they can still turn a profit even if they themselves just buy straight from PLC retail. Initially offer items at two, three, or even four times the standard price and then let the Troubleshooters ultimately pay something less than that—but still more than the real price. Preferably in a way that makes them think they were cagey buyers.

⦿ 'Today, we're having a discount on everything you see. Clearing out last year's models. 25% off across the board. Normally it would be 200, but today: 150!' (25% off of 4x the sane value is, of course, 3x the sane value.)

⦿ 'Is this your first mission? Ah! It's good luck to sell to a Troubleshooter on her first mission. Please, find something you like and I'll give you a great price on it, even if it means I lose a little money.' (Shopkeeper mentally doubles the already-absurd asking price he was considering.)

⦿ 'I have too much of this on hand, and frankly, it costs more to keep it in stock here than to let you have it at cost.' (Read: I suppose, at worst, I can sell it to you for the retail price and only make a couple of creds on the deal.)

2. Praise the exceptional quality and/or unique nature of the goods.

Virtually everything in Alpha Complex is a standard issue item, made according to strict and uniform Qwalitie Standards, but the marketeers do their best to convince buyers that any given item in their inventory is somehow special. They will even go so far as to add color, stick on fins, glue two items together, etc. to make their wares seem different.

⦿ 'You'll see footwear like this all over the Complex, but only these sneakers have extra-rubberized tread. Look at the traction on these!' (No different than any other sneaker, but it's not like the Troubleshooters know anything about footwear manufacturing.)

⦿ 'This model of slugthrower is brand new! Nobody else has these but me. Soon, everybody's going to have one but right now, you can have an edge over everyone else!' (Five minutes later, another shopkeeper offers the exact same gun with the same claim.)

⦿ 'Normally these would be ORANGE-Clearance but this is a special RED-Clearance model. See the RED sticker on the side?' (The RED sticker covers the original ORANGE Clearance warning, and is quite hard to scrape off.)

⦿ 'Binoculars? For 50? Sure, if you want low-grade junk. You need professional-grade hardware now, Troubleshooter!'

⦿ 'This flashlight comes with a built-in notepad for listing what the light shows you! I can sell you a pen specifically designed to go with this model of flashlight-pad as well.' (It's a standard notepad glued to a standard flashlight,

Guardbot

Stealth 5
Surveillance 9
Violence 10
Hand Weapons 14
Weapons: Neurowhip (S4M energy)
Blaster (M4K energy) or
Cone rifle with solid slug ammo (W2K)
Armor: green reflec (E1 vs. lasers)
Kevlar coating (I1)



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costing more than the combined prices of the two items. The pen has been painted to somewhat resemble the flashlight.)

3. Keep insisting the Troubleshooters want something.

Just about every marketeer can sell just about any sort of item, but each will be most interested in pushing one sort of item, whether it's foodstuffs, or weaponry, or hygiene products. It doesn't matter what the Troubleshooters want; the key is making them buy whatever you have. The moment they actually buy and credit changes hands, hit them up with another offer.

- ⦿ 'You don't like Somewhat Spicy flavor? I also have Capsicum Crunch. And Salt & Vinegar. That's a very popular flavor. Oh... no CruncheeTym, then? Of course—you look like a Vita-Yum man to me...'
- ⦿ 'You're looking for ammunition? I'm sure I have some ammunition here. Let me look. Perhaps it's under these foam pads. Say, you never know when a foam pad will come in handy!'
- ⦿ 'Grenades? Certainly! See this Bouncy Bubbly Beverage? If you shake it up enough and then throw it, you can get the same effect, at a fraction of the price! How many do you want?'
- ⦿ 'Well, okay, we have a deal, even though I'm losing cred on it. Here's your CruncheeTym. Say, I bet you could use a thermos, huh? Keeps the Hot Fun hot and the Cold Fun cold! I have a digitally-equipped model here for only 80 credits...'

4. Tack more (cheap) items on to keep the price high.

One of the great facts of any marketplace is that 2×3 is greater than 1×5 . Feel free to bring the per-item cost down as long as the Troubleshooters are buying in larger quantities (and as long as the per-unit price is still no lower than normal). Also, throw cheap stuff into the bargain if it will keep hagglers from bringing the price down to something reasonable. Encourage the team to collectively buy in bulk.

Straight style notes

This shouldn't need alteration. The marketeers keep implying this is what the Troubleshooters are supposed to be doing. Perhaps they have fake cameras set up so it looks like a monitored area. Perhaps the Troubleshooters somehow manage to get hold of Internal Security and report the entire market... only to find heavily bribed IntSec agents in on it.

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and you are supposed to be somewhere else. Perhaps I should have a guardbot escort you to Internal Security to answer some questions?' (The guardbots' idea of 'escorting' involves a blunt object.)

6. Resort to outright dirty tricks

There's no access to outside justice, and the guardbots keep shoppers from starting too much trouble, so the marketeers will sometimes just plain cheat. Attempt these only if you're feeling really ambitious or cruel:

- ⦿ Lie about the item's abilities. Ascribe extra powers, heightened effects, or longer durations. Claim it's an experimental model that doesn't need ammo.
- ⦿ Turn shortcomings into additional sales opportunities. When they realize the gun does, in fact, need ammo, offer to sell them some. If they buy something that's broken, offer to sell them a repair and maintenance kit for it.
- ⦿ When they want a refund on the item they just bought, point out it's used now. Offer them a quarter of what they just paid for it and make them haggle you up until they're getting back no more than half.
- ⦿ Offer to buy equipment the characters are already carrying. In fact, offer them good prices for it. Offer them the full retail value. Let them talk you up even higher! Let them think they've somehow pulled one over your eyes. Let them get paid 25%, 50%, even 100% too much for their standard-issue gear... only to find out that the credits they're being paid with are limited-license scrip only spendable in this particular IR Market.
- ⦿ During the probably-inevitable fight with the guardbots, proactive merchants offer better weapons to the Troubleshooters, who then have the choice of either haggling a price while being pounded on, or just paying a fortune so they have the gun now. In the aftermath, of course, a range of medical services is available at prices guaranteed to result in long-term debt.

You're trying to get a decent chunk of money off the characters in a short time, but don't overdo it. Go around your set of players once or twice—each time making a friendly invitation to see some wares, offering some basic stuff at vastly inflated prices, and then letting the player talk you back down to something only slightly inflated, or switching to something they seem more likely to want. After you've managed to rip them off a time or two, they'll be wise to the whole thing, and it will be time to move them along. Take their money and then have the merchants finally reveal the way out of the maze. 'It was right there all along, just out of sight...'

Too too bazaar!

Here are some items the IR Marketeers are likely to push on the Troubleshooters in Episode 2. Draw more items from the IR Market chart in the Player section. (Remember to offer these for three or four times the listed price, then 'discount' them down to two or three times, before letting the PC haggle down to something like half again the listed price.)

KEY:

Clrnce = security clearance at which item is legal. ****** = illegal at any security clearance. Marketeers are unconcerned; if asked about an item's security clearance, they look the PC over and say, 'RED, of course!'

HI = the price a marketeer will initially offer per-unit for the item.

LO = absolute lowest unit price down to which he will let himself be talked.

Notes = Things marketeers might say about the item when pushing it; take as inspiration for your own creativity. In a few cases the item has actual interesting uses.

Item	Clrnce	HI	LO	Notes
Bouncy Bubble Beverage:				
Classic	R	4	1	
Experimental #72	R	5	1	'Great with #71!'
X-traphedrine Rush!!!	Y	10	3	+1 Perversity point when drunk
Glasnost Grape	**	30	10	Contains Commie Propaganda
Original	**	350	100	'Three cans exist!'
CruncheeTym algae chips:				
Somewhat Spicy!	R	7	2	
Capsicum Crunch	O	10	3	
Salt & Vinegar	UV	40	10	+3 Perversity when consumed
Zesty Strawberry-Cheeze	**	25	10	'The 32nd flavor!'
Cold Fun (Pink, Brown or Vanilla):				
Pint container	R	16	5	
55-gallon drum	Y	7K	2K	'Never run out!'
Optional chocolate lumps	UV			(x2 cost modifier)
ChocoLike Vita-Yum Bar	R	10	3	
Chocolyke Puff Crunchers	O	35	10	Sealed can. 'Lots of fun!'
Chocolyke Can Opener	R	16	5	'Double duty as a knife.'
Insta-Noodles in a Cup	R	6	2	
Insta-Noodle flavor pack	O	4	1	Every pack tastes different
'One-Serv' Water Boiler	B	800	250	Experimental and dangerous
Cancer-Free Cigarettes	O	30	8	'Teela-O's brand, you know!'
Absolutely Cancer-Free Cigarettes				
Cigarettes	G	40	12	
Cancer-Curing Cigarettes	UV	100	25	Temporary remission at best
Pyroxidine injection	R	200	50	'None of the side effects of a pill'
Zybenzaphrene/Slumbersoft				
tablet	O	75	20	'Like a padded hammer!'
Asperquaint capsule	Y	40	10	Lasts allllll day
Rolactin capsule	B	600	200	'Ten times as long as the pill.'
Telescopalamine injection	G	100	30	'Self-finking pills. Truth drug.'
Benetridin/Videoland tablet	I	250	60	'Feel just like Teela-OI'
Benetridin injection	I	300	100	All day supervivid hallucinations
Thymoglandin/Combat Quick tablet				
Sneakers, white w/red stripes	B	400	75	'Turns em into a killing machine.'
Ink refills:	UV	10K	4K	'Come back when you're rich.'
Yellow	Y	5	1	Gums up the pen
Green	G	80	25	
Blue	B	300	85	Popular with Romantics
Indigo	I	200	65	
White	UV	450	145	'It's like... simulated UV.'
Refillable lighter	V	50	20	
Lighter fluid	UV	250	100	
Fake laser barrels:				
Green	**	125	40	+1 Perversity on first 'use'
Blue	**	175	60	+2 Perversity
Indigo	**	275	90	+3 Perversity
Violet	**	375	125	+4 Perversity
White	**	500	160	+5 Perversity

■ Special-interest items

Marketeers also offer some special-interest items. With these, too, they start high and haggle down to something more reasonable (but still too much). The thing about these things is, they have actual interesting uses... as well as amusing side-effects. Think of them as 'junior R&D equipment' the players get to pay for out of their own pockets.

More than one Troubleshooter can buy each of these; the marketeers have (ahem) plenty. 'Demand is still building for these great bargains. Haven't got the word out yet. Get in on the ground floor, own one before everyone else does!'

Reflec upgrade: Box of SeeKwinz

'You glue all these little reflective dots on your reflec. Its refractive index goes up as much as 41%, making it effective against higher-frequency beams!'

Price: 'Normally goes for 500 a box, I'm selling today for 350.' (Actual price: 100cr.)

Feature: Takes a while to glue them all on, but makes the reflec one color rating higher.

Bug: Conspicuous; individual SeeKwinz constantly fall off so in a few days the treatment loses effect, and in the meantime the Troubleshooter leaves a trail of little sparkling pellets behind him, like Hansel and Gretel.

Reflec upgrade: Polyshine spray

'Just spray-on once and see how much higher it raises your albedo. Much more reflective.'

Price: 'Most places will ask 2,000; I have an overstock, so... 1,500?' (Actual price: 500cr.)

Feature: Increases protective value from E1 to E2 vs. lasers—if it hasn't peeled.

Bug: Reflec becomes a lot more flammable. Flame attacks do +1 damage step. When it burns, this stuff releases fumes that may be toxic, hallucinogenic or mutagenic.

Self-aiming slugthrower

'You can pretty much just wave this in the general direction of your target. No problem.'

Price: '1800. No, wait, I can't cheat a projectile fan like you. 1200.' (Actual price: 600cr.)

Feature: Basic slugthrower, but it never misses whatever it aims at. A miss is a hit at 0 margin.

Bug: When fired, announce that the gun twists around in the user's hand, then ask, 'Anyone care to spend some Perversity on the target it chooses?' Treat it like an auction, everyone bidding, until only one remains. Only the winner spends the actual Perversity, but that player then makes the gun shoot anything he wants.

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Foam underbody

'A reworked foam pad you can wear under your jumpsuit to protect from impact.'

Price: 'Please! 200 credits each is a *trifle* when you remember it's for your own safety.' (Actual price: 50cr.)

Feature: Does, indeed, provide Impact-1 protection.

Bug: So bulky, under the clothes, wearer's Violence is effectively halved.

Emergency alarm

'Detects fire, radiation, presence of mutants, you name it. Comes with eight different alert voices!'

Price: 'Special introductory price of only 300 credits.' (Actual price: 100cr.)

Feature: Alarm sounds whenever there's smoke, fire, radiation, mutants, pressure loss, etc.

Bug: Doesn't differentiate the types of emergency and frankly, when is there *not* one of those?

ExoCrutch

'Piston-actuated servo-controlled limb assistant lets you keep going when you should be down.'

Price: 'Last year's model, so I'm letting them go for a mere 1200 each.' (Actual price: 400)

Feature: A maimed character can act as though only Wounded, and Downed as though only Maimed.

Bug: If anyone touches the character, the Crutch takes a swing at them (Violence/Unarmed Combat).

Psychiatric assessment cards

'Use them to determine if someone is insane, on drugs, or affected by secret society propaganda.'

Price: 'This is the uncertified version, so I can let it go for a mere 1000 creds.' (Actual price: 250cr.)

Feature: +2 to Pharmatherapy, Psychotherapy and Suggestion specialties when using cards.

Bug: Every time they're used, user has 1 in 20 chance of picking up 1 point of a random secret society's Propaganda.

Repellent spray

'Keeps insects away. What are insects? Like very small bots. Nasty.'

Price: 'A steal at 10 credits.' (Actual price: 2cr.)

Feature: Does, in fact, keep insects away. Hurts when sprayed in eyes, snafus target.

Bug: Smells so bad it keeps everyone away. Not many insects in Alpha Complex anyway.

Petbot

'Never be lonely again.'

Price: 'What's 1200 creds compared to eternal friendship?' (Actual price: 400cr.)

Feature: Petbot is quite stupid for a bot, but can be trained to do simple things like carry stuff, bark a warning, etc.

Bug: Petbot tends to make noise when silence is needed, picks fights with other bots, whines, poops batteries, etc.

BackStage Pass

'Will open any door, *any* door, regardless of security clearance.'

Price: 'I can't let this go for less than 10,000 credits. Are you kidding?' (Actual price: 2,500cr.)

Feature: It does, in fact, open any standard door, regardless of clearance.

Bug: Internal Security is immediately alerted, always, and they will dispatch a response.

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Still, try not to give up on the market until you've gotten nearly everyone to buy something. Emphasize the maze-like impossibility of finding a way out; any number of merchants will be happy to tell them the way out if the Troubleshooters just peruse their wares for a few minutes first...

If your players are at all sharp, they'll realize the sooner they buy the overpriced junk, the sooner they'll get on to the next part of the mission.

3. You'll never eat lunch in this town again

Episode summary

Stumbling out of the market, the Troubleshooters save a high-clearance citizen from a scrubot attack and meet an HPD&MC reality-vid producer who believes they're his next audition. The producer gives them each a choice of false personae to adopt on top of their real personalities and encourages them to go investigate, on camera, a crime scene that may have something to do with their mission.

The fluorescent light of daycycle

The team emerges from the dark, cramped tunnels of the market, into a clean, well-lit RED corridor (**Tension level 5**). There's no sign of the exit they just came through—just a smooth RED wall. Where to next?

You notice on your PDC you have three hours and 40 minutes left in your mission schedule. You hear sudden shouting from just around a nearby bend in the corridor. 'Help!' It's a frightened voice. 'Someone help me!'

A second voice—this one mechanical and sinister. 'Nasty! Dirty! Filthy!' it shouts. 'Mister Bubbles will remove you from his list!'

The PCs either check around the corner—how can they resist?—or the participants appear and race toward them: a GREEN Clearance citizen in a PLC uniform being mopped violently by a standard scrubot.

Recognizing this as something suspiciously like the mission they were sent on, the team should come to the rescue. If they don't, mention there are security cameras scanning this corridor. Remind the newly promoted RED Troubleshooters they'll get in trouble for not rescuing a high-clearance citizen. If that doesn't work, take a break and ask your players if they'd rather play Nintendo.

The scrubot doesn't attack the Troubleshooters; when attacked, it tries to flee. The PCs either destroy the bot quickly or let it escape; you want your players focused on the GREEN citizen they just saved. If they insist on pursuing the fleeing bot, it rushes into a large corridor and is immediately ground under the wheels of a passing transbot.

The would-be victim, Marco-G-BUD, is grateful. He has no hard currency to reward them, but he authorizes a 25-credit reward to each of his rescuers on the spot; all he needs is their names, so he can transfer the money to their accounts.

Downplay this. Make it clear this is the way everyone in Alpha Complex pays money to anyone, at least legally. Even the wariest Troubleshooter knows this is standard procedure and, in itself, safe. Marco-G casually explains, 'Beam me your ME identity from your PDC and I'll put the transfer through.'

Scrubot Mark 1

Management 6
Hygiene 10
Violence 7
Hand Weapons 11
Weapons: Various limbs (W6K impact)
Armor: None

Marco-G-BUD

Spammer
Management 9
Con Games 13
Stealth 6
Sleight of Hand 10
Violence 7
Energy Wpns 11
Hardware, Software, Wetware all at 7 without specialities
Weapons: None
Armor: Green reflec

Those who give their identity do in fact receive the reward immediately—they can easily check for themselves on the spot—but they have no time right now to study the credits’ subtle, obscurely phrased license. This license authorizes Marco-G to resell the recipients’ names to ‘independent resellers’—e-mail spammers. Anyone who accepts the reward starts receiving spam at the end of this episode (see the sidebar below).

Important: Marco-G *must* get at least one PC’s name, and preferably all of them. It’s a key point for the storyline. However, don’t push this too hard, or the players will rightly suspect a scam. If they don’t cooperate, have a few of HPD’s personalized PerCitFreP messages (see Episode 1) float overhead, greeting a few Troubleshooters by name. Marco-G feigns not to notice, but...

Marco-G is on his way to SPD Sector’s R&D Demo Laboratory where he and his boss, Andrea-B-OCK, will review new candidates for his PLC firm’s product line. He invites them along, but maybe he sounds a bit too eager—‘I hear you Troubleshooters just *love* handling new R&D prototypes!’

Cattle call

The team may want to accompany Marco-G on his job. After all, there’s been one attack on him; there may be more. Or players familiar with the usual role of R&D equipment in **PARANOIA** adventures may instead find an urgent excuse to visit a bathroom or get their boots shined or something.

Doesn’t matter. The Troubleshooters don’t get to go with Marco-G, though they’ll meet him again later. They’re pulled away by the sudden arrival of another citizen:

An enthusiastic voice catches your attention. ‘There you guys are! I’ve been looking for you everywhere! You turn to see an eager-looking YELLOW-Clearance citizen with a clipboard under his arm. He’s wearing

an HPD&MC vest and a production cap for the reality vid series *Shooters*. He gives each of you a firm, friendly handshake. ‘I’m Harry-Y-LGT-3, your casting director. Glad t’meeet you. Trouble finding the studio?’ he says, then waves it off casually. ‘I figured as much. People get lost around here all the time.’

Harry-Y works as a producer for *Shooters*, the hit reality-vid series about real Troubleshooters (‘not like that scripted Teela-O stuff!’). He put in an audition request for a new Troubleshooter team this morning; they didn’t show up on time so he went looking for them (‘and here you are!’). Having found a Troubleshooter team, he assumes they’re his new cast. He has no names of candidate Troubleshooters, just fragmentary notes about their mission. He’s not going to let that get in his way, though:

Player: Are you sure we’re the ones you’re looking for?

Harry-Y: ‘Course! This is your service service. It’s written right here.

Player: With our names?

Harry-Y: ‘Course, with your names.

Player: What’s my name?

Harry-Y: Aw, what’s in a name anyway? Come on, let’s meet the production team.

Player: Let me see where it has my name.

Player: Oh, sorry, no can do. YELLOW Clearance HPD&MC intellectual property.

Spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, marvelous spam

While Harry-Y seizes the Troubleshooters, Marco-G quietly slips away to his appointment at R&D. When and if players ask about him, he’s simply not there any more. On his way to R&D he resells their names to a bunch of his spammer associates (for 50 creds apiece, doubling his money) and the spammers almost immediately begin sending spam to the Troubleshooters.

Now, strictly speaking, unsolicited mass e-mail is not the least bit illegal in Alpha Complex. It’s only when it’s applied to treasonous product—such as drugs, viruses and filesharing—that The Computer has a problem with it. However, even legal spam has the potential to become extraordinarily annoying... so annoying it can drive a citizen to murder. Mister Bubbles virus creator Don-R has already reached that point. Now it’s time to drive your players there as well.

Every Troubleshooter who accepted Marco-G’s 25cr reward has effectively

opted in to receive spam. Now you pelt them with spam mail. Literally. Remember those spam e-mails you made so many copies of earlier? Separate the ones that say they’re from ‘Alley G8R’—you’ll use those later on. The rest start showing up in the message boxes of the Troubleshooters’ PDCs, making a little ‘new message’ chime each time. Pick one of the spam messages from ‘Hottbott’, crumple it up and throw it at one of your players while making a ‘DING!’ noise. While they’re reading it, crumple up another one and throw it at another player. Everyone who accepted Marco-G’s money should get at least one to start.

If any PCs respond to the message in any way—trying to mail the sender back, clicking the ‘remove me’ link, or clicking any of the offers—they have just asked for even more spam. Immediately hit them with another spam—‘DING!’—and while they’re reading it, hit them again. Keep hitting them with spam missiles periodically, from now until the end of

the mission. Eventually they’ll notice some messages appear to originate from their own Troubleshooter team. ‘Why are you guys spamming me? Wait, why am I spamming myself?’ The answer is, of course, the spammers’ mail programs are forging the Troubleshooters’ identities. This becomes a crucial plot point near the mission’s end, when infected scrubots mis-identify the Troubleshooters as spammers.

Periodically send a round of spam to everyone on the ‘list’—two spams to anyone who clicked on anything. Whenever a Troubleshooter is involved in something important or delicate or dangerous from now until you run out of spam slips, hit them with a spam. ‘DING!’ Interfere with their in-character conversations. ‘DING!’ When they ask you questions out of character, ‘DING!’

It will be funny at first, but trust us: by the time you’ve thrown 80 or 90 messages over the next couple of hours, the Troubleshooters will eventually be just as ready to kill as Don-R.



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Some players may be eager to become vid stars. They remember how great the last season of *Shooters* was, with the ex-IntSec agent who wrestled with revealing his mutant nature, and the CPU clerk who discovered he was a cyborg assassin from the future. They'll go anywhere Harry-Y says. They'll do anything he says. These players should get a couple of Perversity points. Other players may be wary. Haven't they learned how this works yet?

Mister Troubleshooter, it's time for your close-up

Harry-Y takes the PCs back to the *Shooters* production offices (**Tension level 8**), where they are introduced to the other two members of their mobile film crew, Trevor-R-HNL-2 ('the cameraman') and Brian-R-PFD-5 ('the FX guy'). The three of them will accompany the Troubleshooters on their current mission, getting the behind-the-scenes point-of-view. This is not something the Troubleshooters really have any say in.

Harry-Y is eager to get into the field, but first the Troubleshooters need some preparation. After all, HPD&MC needs to ensure they have all the elements of success in place before they start committing footage. The way HPD&MC makes sure their reality-vid stars are 'real' enough to be successful is through, well, illusion and just a bit of fiction known as Personal Story Augmentation Templates, or PSATs.

You see, today's vid audience needs more than just snappy dialogue and visual effects. They want rich, complex characters with compelling personalities. A little drama, a little flair, a little moral lesson for us all—these things spell the difference between a hit show and just another bunch of actors draining HPD&MC budget. Unfortunately, most real citizens have the personality of a Vita-Yum bar. So the *Shooters* production team came up with the following add-on personalities guaranteed to make even the most bland citizen scintillating and expressive. Each one comes with a few props to help make the

illusion more convincing. Are the props real? Harry-Y won't come right out and say they're not ('you should treat them as though they were') but, of course, the reason reality-vid is HPD&MC's big thing these days is because it can be done on a shoestring budget.

Each Troubleshooter is expected to adopt at least one template to make himself 'marketable' for the show. They'll still use their own names and such—this is reality vid, remember?—but they must roleplay the elements of their adopted PSAT(s) to the best of their ability.

Your players may start to think this is sounding like a highly non-great idea, but remember earlier when we talked about the Carrot and the Stick? The Stick is the usual threat of Censure and worse for disobeying orders: They are required to accept service firm duties if available. It says so right on their Mission Alert. And the Carrot...? Well, every template comes with a little upfront money and the potential for a good-sized per-mission cash bonus if played well enough. That should get your Troubleshooters interested, especially after the IR Market took their dough.

Also, the first player to pick a PSAT gets 5 Perversity points. The next one gets 4, the third 3, and so on until the last is, as they say, a rotten egg. Snoozers are losers.

Harry-Y reviews the current set of personae they have ready for use in the field. Read the little descriptive text for each one, and the amount of the cash advance. Don't mention the size of the potential bonus. Don't reveal any more about the personae until they've been selected and signed for; each Troubleshooter has to sign a series of standard waivers accepting personal responsibility for the PSAT in question, agreeing to abide by all the requirements of the role, disclaiming *Shooters* of any responsibility for the success or failure of their mission and committing their future clones to the same agreement.

While going through the list of PSATs, by the way, is a good time to start the delivery of spam to the players' PDCs (see the sidebar on the previous page).

Rags to Riches

'You invented a way to reduce inventory management costs 20% PLC-wide and were rewarded with the single largest bonus check in the history of Alpha Complex. Money is no object for you now.'

Pays: 50 in advance, 100 to 250 bonus on mission completion

The Troubleshooter gets a new ultra-flashy wardrobe with sexy accessories and a (simulated) BlingCard™ which lets them buy, theoretically, anything they want. The card can be used to buy stuff within limits—it's tied to a moderate HPD&MC discretionary fund—but the Troubleshooter can't actually keep anything he buys, other than cheap consumables. It has to be returned as soon as they have enough footage of him 'enjoying his new purchase'. If the Troubleshooter breaks anything, he has to buy it with his own money. Bonus is based on how effectively the Troubleshooter shows that money solves every problem.

Haunted

'Your best friend from the Junior Citizens creche was killed in a tragic vat-drowning accident and you believe it was your fault. The guilt eats at you constantly. Heavy drama at its best!'

Pays: 50 in advance, 150 to 300 bonus on mission completion

Occasionally, when cued by the production team, the Troubleshooter must pretend to see the ghost of his dead friend haunting him. The FX guy wrote some 'restless shade' multicorder software; they'll composite it into the rest of the footage in editing. The 'ghost' tends to 'appear' when it's really inconvenient. Like during fights and chases. Bonus is based on the tragedy and believability of the guilt displayed.

Rising Star

'You've been practicing your ther—a your, uh, thermi—what is this name? We'll work on the name, name'll be great, trust me—your theremintar for years, waiting for that big break,

The HPD&MC *Shooters* crew

Harry-Y-LGT-3

Producer

Harry-Y's job is to pull PCs aside occasionally for interview content. He generally focuses on whomever is busiest at the moment, or trying the hardest not to be noticed. He's a plastic, superficial person who doesn't realize he's plastic and superficial. He thinks he brings genuinely compelling and touching content to the vidscreen by asking such meaningful questions as 'what's your favorite thing to eat on a mission?' Every once in a while, though, he pops out a real landmine, such as 'if there were no security clearances, what would your favorite color be?'

Trevor-R-HNL-2

Cameraman

Trevor-R knows from experience how heavily-armed recording officers can be sort of—*touchy*—about who documents the mission and how it's done, so he'll make it clear his own job is to document the Troubleshooters... not the mission. 'I wouldn't dream of interfering with the official record of the mission,' he'll say. 'Let's all just work together to make sure you guys get what you need... and I get what I need.' In other words, a bribe will go a long way in determining whether he films someone committing treason.

Brian-R-PFD-5

Effects technician

This crazy special effects guy carries satchels full of high-tech and explosives, which he won't let anyone else near. He doesn't care about security clearances, Troubleshooter safety or anything else, if he can get a great effects shot for the episode.

Assume all three of them have skills of 7 across the board. Feel free to make up some common specialties on the fly if it will help amusing things happen.

but just as you were about to make the big time, you realized you needed to do your duty, so you became a Troubleshooter.'

Pays: 100 in advance, 200 to 500 bonus on mission completion

The Troubleshooter gets a 'theremintar'—basically, a guitar-like theremin—and a bunch of groupies. (What nobody knows is that the groupies aren't just INFRARED extras; they're a bunch of Death Leopards, and whenever they're not being carefully watched, they tend to vandalize stuff.) Bonus is paid based on how thoroughly the Troubleshooter lives a life of rock-n-roll!

(He should also be careful not to munge his pronunciation of 'theremintar.' No one else ever manages to say it right.)

■ Man and Machine

'We're trying to put forward a more positive cyborg role-model. No more grim robot assassins from the future! You're upbeat... funny, even. A wacky, unthreatening cyborg sidekick!'

Pays: 100 in advance, 200 to 500 bonus on mission completion

Comes with about 20 kilograms of glue-on cyborg makeup and prosthetics. Some of it is electrified and might shock the wearer. The prosthetics look just real enough to induce fear and revulsion in most citizens who see them. Bonus is paid based on how 'wacky' and 'unthreatening' the Troubleshooter is.

■ Joe Friday

'Internal Security has a bad rep as a bunch of sneaks who hide in the shadows. Not you! You're proud to announce your IntSec affiliation. Show that badge with pride as you stick to the facts!'

Pays: 100 in advance, 300 to 600 bonus on mission completion

Comes with an 'all-access door pass' that supposedly opens any door in Alpha Complex. It doesn't really, but with enough advance warning, the FX guy can get most doors open if necessary. Then they film the door opening in response to the badge. (*Shooters* disclaims all responsibility for which doors the Troubleshooter decides he wants opened.) Bonus is paid based on how often the Troubleshooter steps into a touchy situation with the revelation he's Internal Security.

■ Doc Mania

'You were experimenting with high-energy vat physics when a freak accident gave you

powers—super powers, not mutant ones! But it also rendered you vulnerable to algaic bisulfide.'

Pays: 150 advance, 300 to 600 bonus on mission completion

The production team brings along a small mobile crane which can be used to simulate flight (hook cables to Troubleshooter's clothing) and superstrength (hook cables to whatever the Troubleshooter is going to lift). They're working on pyrokinesis as well, using a modified slugthrower with napalm ammo, but it's a little dicey still. The vulnerability is simulated using nausea gas pellets which the FX man throws in front of the Troubleshooter: 'Oh no, look out, that bad guy has algaic bisulfide!' Bonus is paid based on impressive use of superpowers and manic bravery.

■ Grizzled vet

'Your experiences in the war against Beta Complex have left you scarred. Grim-n-gritty, you know? What you saw in the war makes your Troubleshooter duties seem like a vacation by comparison!'

Pays: 200 in advance, 600 to 1200 bonus on mission completion

The Troubleshooter is 'missing a limb'; one of his limbs is bent out of sight and tied down. Hideous scar makeup makes him unpleasant to look at. Comes with a drug injection that occasionally induces random 'war' flashbacks. Bonus is paid based on how often he can make his war experiences relevant to the current situation.

■ Wolverineboy

'Get this: Vulture Squadron Bravo 9 found you in the ruins of the Outdoors, where you were raised by a vicious radioactive wolve! Now, despite your savage upbringing, you try to fit into our perfect society. I should warn you in advance... This one is a toughie and HPD&MC has never found anyone who was up to the task of playing the role.' This is possibly because nobody in Alpha Complex, except Sierra Clubbers, has more than a foggy notion of what a wolve, or even a wolf, is. (Is that the one that barks and fetches?)

Pays: 300 in advance, 600 to 1,500 bonus on mission completion

Wolverineboy doesn't wear armor, or even a uniform. Just a loincloth. He doesn't use any weapons more advanced than unpowered hand weapons. Also, he's pre-verbal, communicating only in grunts and hand gestures. This is one bonus the Troubleshooters will certainly earn the hard way!

Straight play notes

In a Straight game, it should not be clear to the players how seriously they should take this HPD&MC guy. Does he really expect them to act out these ludicrous and implausible origin stories? The answer is, yes he does... because The Computer doesn't know they're ludicrous and implausible. The last thing The Computer needs is to hear there's fiction in its reality shows, okay? Just play along and we can all make some money here...

■ Plot? Oh, yeah, let's get some of that, too

After they've each committed to one or more PSATs, Harry-Y looks over his clipboard. 'Okay, so you guys are... let's see... looking for missing fissionable material? Yeah, okay, we can work with that.' The team probably responds by either trying to correct him—their mission involves scrubots—or keeping quiet and saying nothing. Or perhaps they are busy dealing with the spam you've started tossing at them. If they keep quiet, he asks them how much progress they've made so far: 'Have you been to the reactor yet? Do you have the contact information for their decommissioning overseer?'

At some point, either the Troubleshooters let it slip they thought their mission was something else, or Harry-Y begins to realize they don't know what he's talking about. Just as an uncomfortable situation begins to develop, coincidence once again gives everyone a convenient out, as an INFRARED production assistant rushes up: 'Do we have a forensically-trained Troubleshooter team ready for a shoot? Some scrubot killed a vat shift supervisor over in SDK Sector and we can get first crack at the crime scene if we move fast.'

The first player to identify himself as a forensically-trained Troubleshooter on a mission involving scrubot attacks gets a Perversity point.





MISSIONS

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

4: Crime Scene Incinerators

The Troubleshooters are conveyed to a vat center in SDK Sector, where they carefully and professionally (cough) investigate the death of one Mark-R-MAK-4, shift supervisor. Shockingly, they might even turn up some clues suggesting there's really something going on!

Come out with your spray-bottles up!

Harry-Y has the team conveyed to the SDK Sector vats in a *Shooters* production autocar. A quick check of their PDCs reveals that they have two hours, 50 minutes remaining until their transbot is scheduled to arrive. On the drive, pelt their PDCs with a few more spam mails.

At the vat center (**Tension 5**), a couple dozen INFRARED workers are being kept huddled together under observation by a single RED Internal Security agent who is sure glad to see a Troubleshooter team on the scene. He doesn't know much about the situation: 'Twenty-one minutes ago, a standard Series 3 scrubot entered the office of the RED-Clearance shift supervisor, one Mark-R-MAK-6. The door was closed. INFRARED staff reported hearing raised voices from the office—both human and bot—and then sounds of violence. The door appears to have been locked. The bot, so far as anyone knows, is still inside the office. There hasn't been any noise in there in the last seventeen minutes.' He hasn't gone into the office because his orders were to round up the staff and prevent them from leaving until they're cleared of suspicion (which will probably take the rest of their lives).

The bot is indeed still inside the office and the door refuses to open from the outside. If one of the Troubleshooters is playing the 'Joe Friday' role and wants to 'badge' the door open, Brian-R will begin pulling some scary-looking explosives out of his satchel. Scary-looking enough to perhaps make the Troubleshooters consider other alternatives. Such as smaller explosives. Or Stealth/Security Systems to bypass the locked door. They might

also try to talk the bot out of the office using Management/Con Games or Intimidation. If the players start to agree too easily to a single course of action, Harry-Y suggests something else. If they're going to try something calm, he suggests something exciting. If they're going in hard and fast, he'll point out the dramatic value of the 'talk-down'. If the players start to change their minds, so will he.

Eventually, one of your players will decide they want some Perversity thrown their way and just pick a course of action. Give him some Perversity, of course.

The bot shouldn't be too hard to catch—either by talking it out of the office, or by going in after it. It doesn't remember what it did and tries to hide its blood-covered cleaning attachments from view. It is deeply ashamed of its actions... for now. Just wait until it gets a whiff of another spammer, though.

Suspiciously like some other roleplaying game

Once they've gotten into the office, the Troubleshooters can do some investigative work. Mark-R's corpse is there and it's pretty clear he was killed by the bot, if for no other reason than he smells positively pine-fresh. His office is pretty simple, with monitoring stations for the vats and a personal workstation.

There are several avenues of investigation the team can pursue:

- ⦿ Software/Hacking on his workstation reveals a hidden program called BulkSell, used for spamming. The username in the program was 'Hottbott'!
- ⦿ Software/Data Search on his workstation turns up a bunch of e-mails of interest, including one a few days ago from an unidentified sender (using the fake name 'Alley G8R') that says 'Take me off your list for real or I'll kill you.'
- ⦿ Another e-mail from just an hour or so ago is from Marco-G! It says 'More names for the list under our standard arrangement' and lists the PCs' names. (Pelt a few players with spam.)
- ⦿ Software/Data Analysis on the e-mails might indicate a little bit about 'Alley G8R', but not much—only that the author was originally on a RED-Clearance terminal somewhere in DMM Sector.
- ⦿ Software/Bot Programming on the scrubot indicates a virus in its code. The virus appears to define spamming as the ultimately dirty activity, with some extra

code used to identify spammers over the network. (If they make the roll by a wide margin, they find the virus creator's signature: 'Mister Bubbles created by Alley G8R. Phreaks Phorever!' If they make it by a really wide margin, they can remove the virus from its brain.)

⦿ Stealth/Concealment to search the office may turn up a small pamphlet called 'Mass-Mail Remote Sales and You'. The author of the pamphlet is Marco-G.

⦿ If they check Mark-R's PDC, they'll see its start-up screen says 'Hiya Hottbott!'

Encourage (nay, demand!) they perform their investigation exercising their PSAT personae. While they're poking around the office, have Harry-Y conduct a few interviews for *Shooters*. If anyone chose the 'Rising Star' PSAT, the groupies will probably look for opportunities to vandalize the vats outside if they're not watched carefully.

Also, more spams hit the team's PDCs... even though Mark-R the spammer is dead. Even if they shut down his BulkSell program. Where are the spams coming from? Why, are those the names of the Troubleshooters on some of the spams?

Sure enough, their own PDCs have been hijacked into helping with the spamming. Unless the scrubot has already been destroyed, completely shut down, or had its brain cleared of the virus, have a sudden malicious glint of murder return to its glassy lenses: 'Nasty! Dirty! Filthy! Mister Bubbles says, take me off your list!' That's right: Scrubots start seeing our heroes as part of the problem.

After they've figured out the spammer connection and, perhaps, put the bot out of its (and their) misery, they'll probably want to get back in touch with Marco-G. Didn't he say he was going to SPD Sector's R&D lab...?

About this time, make sure you pelt one or two of your players with the spam message from 'Alley G8R' that offers cash for Marco-G's death. If you've been playing the spams thoroughly enough, they're perhaps already somewhat inclined in that direction.

Straight play notes

About the only thing to do here is tone down the scrubot suspect a bit, perhaps, and spend more time soaking in the atmosphere of police procedural TV.

Scrubot Series 3

Management 6
Hygiene 10
Stealth 4
Concealment 08
Violence 8
Hand Weapons 12
Weapons: Various limbs (S4M impact)
Cleaning sprayer (blindness)
Armor: 1

MISTER BUBBLES

5: Avengers. dissemble!

EPISODES 4-5

Episode summary

The team rejoins Marco-G (either to protect him or murder him) while he helps his boss review a bunch of R&D equipment. They become unwilling arbiters in the process. Then the most dangerous scrubot yet turns up, identifies the Troubleshooters as spammers, and the lab comes under scrubot assault.

99% perspiration...

Harry-Y has the autocar limo drive the team over to the SPD Sector R&D Product Review Lab (**Tension 9**). Here R&D service firms make presentations when they need to convince various PLC firms and administrators to put their latest creations into widespread use. Marco-G and his boss, Andrea-B-OCK-5, are reviewing such a presentation today. They're looking for something hot, something destructive.

When the team arrives at Reception, their PDCs indicate they have an hour and 20 minutes remaining in their mission.

You're in the reception area. It's nothing fancy. The waiting chairs look pretty nice, though. Big doors labeled 'Conference Room' are directly opposite from where you entered. Even bigger doors labeled 'Main Display' are to your right. A RED Clearance staffer sits behind a desk, playing with some sort of twisty metal puzzle-toy.

A BLUE citizen in PLC garb bursts out of the Conference Room. 'None of this stuff is sounding like what I want. Forget the slideshow, Nancy. Show me the hardware.' Coming out right behind her are two individuals in R&D labcoats—one GREEN, one BLUE—and then, finally, the familiar face of Marco-G-BUD-4. He seems a little surprised to see you.

Marco-G is indeed surprised. He was sort of hoping never to see the Troubleshooters again. He's a versatile guy, though, and he'll roll with it. For one thing, he knows he personally didn't do anything wrong; he was completely authorized to sell the Troubleshooters' names to anyone he wanted to. It's not his fault some of those people might have turned around and offered illegal products. If the Troubleshooters confront him with this, he quickly points this out. And if consulted, The Computer agrees with him.

The BLUE PLC citizen is, of course, his boss, Andrea-B-OCK-5. She wants something cool

and dangerous to sell to Armed Forces, and nothing she's heard about so far has gotten her excited. The two R&Ders are Bill-G-HOL-4 and his boss, Nancy-B-AZZ-4, senior managers in the R&D service firm Bigger Guns. They want to close a deal—any deal. At all.

All four head into the Main Display Hall. If the players try to draw Marco-G's attention, Andrea-B asks what's going on. Do the Troubleshooters want to anger a BLUE Clearance PLC executive? Probably not. If they do, remind them the executive can demote any of them back to INFRARED. They'll get the idea after that. (If they start making noise like they're just going to waste Marco-G right up front, warn them off the same way.)

If the team talks to Marco-G, Bill-G (the R&D manager) notices. At the first opportunity, he pulls a couple of the Troubleshooters aside:

Bill-G: Hey, are you guys buddies with Marco-G?

Player #1: No way! He's a filthy spammer. First chance we get, he's—

Bill-G: So you don't have an inside track on shaping his opinions?

Player #2 Never even met the guy before today. And just as soon as—

Bill-G: 'Cause there's a couple thousand creds in it for you if you do.

Player #2 —you tell us more, we'll do our best to help!

Player #1: Yeah, Marco-G and me? We go way back!

Bill-G: What was that about a filthy spammer?

Player #1: Oh, I can't remember now. That was a long time ago.

Player #2: So what do you need us to convince our good buddy Marco-G of?

Bill-G's strategy is to get the PCs to help sell Marco-G on something they have here. 'Look, maybe you take some of it with you. Maybe you demonstrate it here. Maybe you just take careful notes and bring it up to Marco-G later, yeah?' Only Marco-G can get Andrea-B's attention focused on something long enough to convince her. If the Troubleshooters convince Marco-G, and Marco-G convinces Andrea-B, they'll all be rich in a week. Of course, this plan relies on the cooperation of Troubleshooters, and that's always tricky.

Nancy-B leads everyone to the table in the middle of the Display Hall. There are six items on the table. Andrea-B pokes at each one a bit, not all that interested. If the Troubleshooters haven't taken the bait from Bill-G yet, Andrea-B calls over any Troubleshooters in the Display Hall.

Andrea-B: What do you think of this?

Player: Uh... What is it?

Nancy-B: Fire and Forgeticks. Box of 50.

Andrea-B: Do you mind if this Troubleshooter gives me a demonstration?

Nancy-B: Not at all!

Andrea-B: Troubleshooter?

Player: Uh...

Refusing to obey the order of a BLUE citizen is a P4B Treason offense with a 400cr fine. Mention the fine casually. Smile.

Allow, encourage or force the Troubleshooters (at least, the ones who haven't already wandered off elsewhere in the lab) to poke about with the R&D gear. Remind them Bill-G wants them to get Andrea-B to buy something, anything. Try to get them to make a few sales pitches, plugging the merits of items they know nothing about. Award Perversity for truly inventive attempts, two or five or even more points.

Eventually Andrea-B points at the Decoy Robot. 'Do you have anything, bot-wise, that's... bigger than this? More destructive?' Nancy-B and Bill-G look at each for a moment. 'Well...' Bill-G says hesitantly. 'There is... the WarScrubber.'

If this doesn't perk up your players' ears, they've been dead since sometime around the middle of Episode 1.

...and 1% disintegration

Things should start moving quickly at this point. Andrea-B is interested in the WarScrubber and wants to see it. As the four executives—the two BLUEs and two GREENs—make their way from the Display Hall into the Workshop, Bill-G gives a quick summary. The WarScrubber only slightly resembles a scrubot any more. Bigger Guns has installed seven additional memory units of combat instruction and, in addition to the normal cleaning attachments, it has actual weapon systems. They have substantially

WarScrubber

Management 6

Intimidation 10

Stealth 6

Shadowing 10

Violence 10

Energy Weapons 14, Hand Weapons 14

Weapons: Cutting torch (W4M energy)

Power drill (S3M impact)

Hand flamer (S3K energy)

Slug cone-rifle (W2K impact)

Armor: High-albedo coating (E2), kevlar plates (I1)



reinforced the chassis and upgraded the tread.
Et cetera...

If the Troubleshooters ask whether it could potentially be affected by scrubot viruses, Bill-G speculates it probably could... ‘but who would write a virus for a scrubot?’

In the Workshop, Nancy-B tells Tommy-Y, the mechanic-type who was in here working on something, to show them the WarScrubber. He goes over to the corner, where the ‘Scrubber has been sitting plugged into the wall for the last few days, and whips the sheet off the brute.

And then all hell breaks loose—because not only does the bot see Marco-G, but also the Troubleshooters. Marco’s a name reseller, which is bad enough. The Troubleshooters, though, have been getting their names forged onto actual spam mails. So they’re worse!

SPD Sector R&D product review lab

Rather than drawing out a complicated map with 1-meter grid lines on it, we’re giving you a Minimalist Action Flowchart (MAF) to lay out the lab so you can improvise the details to fit your particular mood. We’re doing this to help you run a more flexible game, and not at all because we lack map-making talent or have a crushing deadline or anything.

The door into each room is clearly marked with the room’s name.

Reception

A few chairs for waiting in and desk with a RED receptionist and a YELLOW Vulture trooper slouching in the corner. These two are the first to die during the scrubot assault.

Conference room

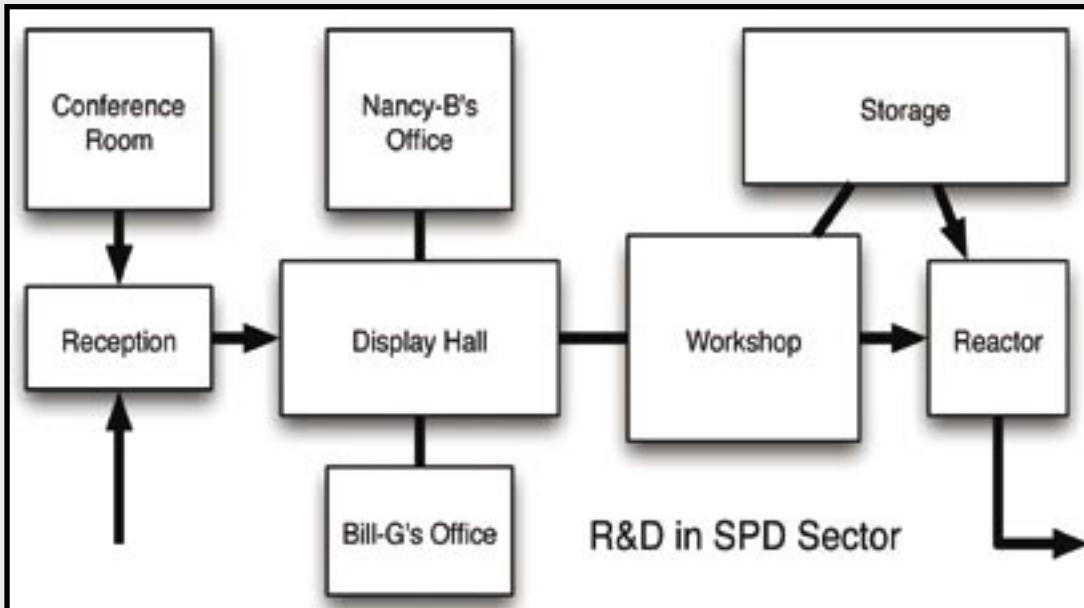
When the team arrives, Marco-G and his boss, Andrea-B-OCK-5, are in a meeting with their R&D counterparts, Bill-G-HOL-3 and Nancy-B-AZZ-4, in here. There’s a big table that can seat, like, a dozen, and a screen for presentations.

Main display area

This is where the magic starts to happen. The one-way arrow indicates you should encourage the players this way and, once there, discourage them from going back. There’s a wide, low table in the middle with the R&D items under review (see separate inset).

Nancy-B’s office

The door only opens for her. If someone breaks into her BLUE office, it contains piles of papers, cabinets of blueprints and a monitor camera that sees whoever enters. Treason, anyone?



R&D product review lab Minimalist Action Flowchart

Bill-G’s office

Careful examination would reveal he’s a Romantic, but they won’t have time for that.

Workshop

The four corners of this room are piled high with maintenance gear and projects in various stages of work. An old mechanic, Tommy-Y-HNB-4, is working on some sort of thing with gears. The WarScrubber is powered down in the corner, a sheet over it. It’s plugged into the wall, from which it has been recharging its battery... and picking up the ‘Mister Bubbles’ virus.

Storage

Shelves of boxes. If someone wants to spend a round searching one of the boxes, they might find something interesting. Roll 1d20:

- 1-2: Ammo for a slugthrower (choose between slug, HE, flare and gas)
- 3: Cone rifle shell (choose between solid AP, napalm and ECM)
- 4: Tacnuke shell, wires hanging out, doesn’t work

5: Umbrella, dispenses odorous gas when opened

6-8: Thermos full of liquid (random roll: water, petrol, acid, original BBB)

9-10: Geiger counter

11: IR goggles, but everything views upside down and jittery

12-16: Empty take-out containers full of strange mold (imply danger)

17: Fully automatic hammer (as hand weapon, W4K)

18: Self-erecting pup-tent

19-20: Laser barrel (RED the first time, then YELLOW, then BLUE)

Reactor

Big radiation warning icons on the doors in. The reactor is in good shape and perfectly safe... at least until fighting begins. A Hardware/Habitat Engineering roll, or just a close examination of the room, suggests the reactor’s air-cooling intakes can be opened up, leading to an airshaft that presumably exits somewhere else. This is the eventual escape route for the team.

'How ya doin'?' Tommy-Y asks the dark, hulking bot.

'Nasty. Dirty. Filthy,' it replies—your players are probably mouthing it with you—and turns towards the nearest Troubleshooter. 'Mister Bubbles says... *take me off your list!*'

Suds galore

As bad as the WarScrubber is by itself, the team is about to have an even bigger problem. Scrubots have tracked the Troubleshooters' movement ever since they left the SDK Sector vats, and are converging on the labs to Destroy Filthy Spammers (so far as they know).

Wait until the PCs get into the swing of fighting the WarScrubber, or decide to flee out the front. Then:

You hear the receptionist over an intercom. 'Did someone order a couple dozen scrubots? Because....' There's a clunking sound, then some gunfire from the front part of the lab, then a horrible, agonized yell. Moments later, you hear a dozen bots out in the reception area, all talking over each

other: 'Mister Bubbles says—Bubbles says take me off—me off your list!'

If the team is serious about trying to escape out the front, the sight of the Display Hall filling up with enraged scrubots should dissuade them. If it doesn't, have an NPC make the attempt and die horribly. Treat NPCs as disposable fodder at this point: the Rising Star's groupies, Tommy-Y the mechanic, the FX guy, both R&D executives...

A dozen scrubots per Troubleshooter will make the point pretty handily: The front door is no longer an option. Remember the end of that zombie movie you like? Or that Space Marines vs. bug-alien film? Like that. They must defeat or slip past the WarScrubber and fall back to the back rooms, with surviving *Shooters* production team in tow. They need another way out—perhaps a duct or shaft.

There is an exit, in the Reactor area (see the R&D map description nearby for details). But make them work for it. Make them sweat.

Straight style notes

Once you have a WarScrubber, it's harder to play things **Straight**. Play up the uselessness or risk of the R&D gear as a problem, not a joke, and the failures as awkward as well as funny. For example, the propeller beanie fires up and the Troubleshooter wearing it holds it to his head, but it doesn't lift him up. 'Why isn't it working?' Andrea-B asks. Nancy-B says she doesn't know, and blames the Troubleshooter. 'What are you doing to it? You're damaging it somehow.'

Play the executives as desperately fearful The Computer will punish them if they don't come up with a success.

Perhaps there is a more extreme dislike and/or rivalry between Andrea-B and Nancy-B, and they draw team members into taking sides—not just over these items, but over everything these two BLUEs dislike about each other. This helps retain tension even in the absurd battle with the scrubots.

The R&D gear

There are six items on the table. Nancy-B and Bill-G really need one of them accepted for mass distribution by PLC, or a larger service firm will take over their lab and chop it up for its asset value. They are willing to kick back some real money to the Troubleshooters—a thousand or two—if the PCs help make a successful sales presentation.

Fire and Forgetpicks

These self-guided hands-free dental-cleaning tools are relatively safe when used one at a time. Just squeeze the end (or drop it on the floor) and it flies up using a gravitational repulsion effect, locates the nearest teeth and begins cleaning them. But when two or more of them are active at once, you have a problem: They tend to swarm, and the larger the swarm, the more hostile they become. If it's just a few, they attack with Violence 6, doing S5M damage per round. If it's a dozen or more, they have Violence 10 and damage S3K. If the entire box goes active, the swarm has Violence 14 and does damage of S1V! Vaporized by toothpicks—what a way to go...

Kinetic boots

Intended to augment the wearer's movement. They work pretty well, as long as you stay upright (Violence/Agility). Falling over means you get dragged along behind the still-running boots (O3W damage every round).

Manacles of truth

These supposedly compel the truth from the wearer, but really, the current model just administers a shock if the wearer is lying; then the manacles lock shut. A Management/Con Games roll can fool them. If lied to more than twice in a row, the manacles refuse to recognize the keypad release code any more, remaining permanently locked shut.

Turboprop beanie

Gas-powered propeller-yarmulke with a micropile turbine backup. There's no way to secure it to the user's head, so when activated it will fly up and awaaay...

Bot decoy

Looks like a pennywhistle with digital readout lights instead of fingerholes. Blowing on it broadcasts a digital

radio stream that renders the blower irresistible to most kinds of bots—it says here. Lets the user make Management rolls of any sort against bots. However, the first time the user fails a roll, the decoyed bots turn hostile to the user.

Decoy bot

Half a meter tall. Wind it up and set it on its way. The decoy bot slowly walks up to 10 meters in a straight line and then explodes as a grenade (W3K Energy damage). The execs are somewhat loath to demonstrate it.

Intangibility cloak

'I thought you said you had seven things to show us,' Andrea-B says. Bill-G, thinking quickly, grabs at the corner of the table and 'picks up' something. 'Not only is it invisible, you can barely tell it's there by touch!' he says. 'With another couple of weeks of work, we'll be able to apply this effect to anything—equipment, people, you name it.' He 'holds' the 'cloak' out towards one of the Troubleshooters. 'Here, feel that? It's like there's almost, but not quite, nothing there, huh?' Then he makes a significant 'work with me here' look...



6: Every scrubot my enemy

Episode summary

With mere minutes remaining before their transbot is supposed to take them home and a veritable army of hostile scrubots right behind them, the team lurches its way across the sector using the only vehicles available: a flock of Transitions (the personal transports described in Chapter 41, 'Vehicles').

Off of the frying plate, into the heating element

The team emerges from the little escape shaft into an empty RED-Clearance plaza (**Tension level 5**). Before they catch their breath, however, inform them a quick check of their PDCs show more time has gone by than it seemed: They only have about 20 minutes before their transbot is supposed to pick them up at platform B1:22:FF:C2, and it's clear across the sector! By the time Harry-Y (if he made it out of the R&D lab) can call a limo, it will be too late.

You cast your eyes around, looking for an answer: There must be a nearby tubeway... a sidewalk... something! But, no. The plaza is deserted except for... wait, is that... it is! A set of public-access Transitions, standing just a few meters away. No problem! The nimble little discs will get you to your rendezvous in plenty of time.

Let your players feel just a glimmer of hope, or at least your firm hand in the small of their backs. Then:

Suddenly, you hear a noise from behind you. A noise like a runaway freightbot... or, more accurately, like an army of murderous scrubots shouting your names and erupting around the corner of a nearby building. They're rushing right at you.

If you start running now, you might just make it to the Transitions before they're on top of you.

Hint, hint.

You can assess the players' current fear of you by how much they roll their eyes.

There are nine (9) Transitions sitting together in a group. This means a few NPCs (such as Marco-G, or Harry-Y and the production team, if they also escaped) can come along and serve as fodder for the chase scene. The first one who jumps on a Transition should get a couple of Perversity points. Anyone who spends a lot of time asking about their alternatives gets left behind and dies well-scrubbed.

When everyone has hopped on the Transitions, determine which Transition is the initial guide. Everyone makes a d20 roll. Record these numbers somewhere; they are the characters' starting *Maneuver values*. The highest result takes the #1 Flock Order position, at the front of the group; the lowest total takes position #9, the furthest back. The Transitions speed off in a more-or-less circular group, as shown on the Flocking Diagram. (The 'X' squares indicate the front rank of the hundreds of pursuing scrubots.)

Highway to heck

The chase lasts up to 10 'sequences', each of which requires everyone to make a skill roll; the skill changes each time. Success and failure in these rolls cause Troubleshooters to move ahead and behind each other in the Flock Order, determine who has fallen far enough back to be attacked by the bot army, and who gets to be guide during the next sequence. In the first sequence, the character with the highest starting Flock Order is also the guide. Each sequence, the following things happen:

1. You describe the new sequence crisis that is upon them.

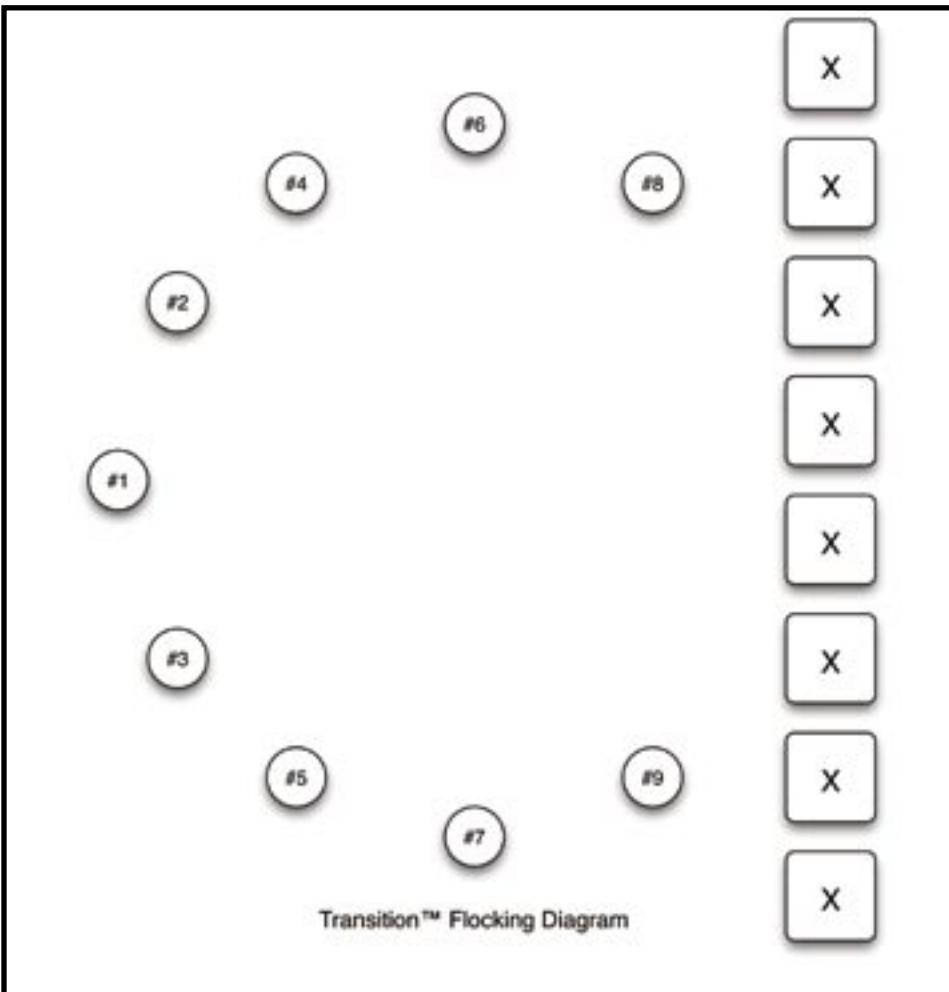
See '10 chase sequences' for some suggested crises. In each crisis the current guide chooses one of two skills you present. Everyone must use the skill the guide chooses. He generally chooses whichever one he is better at; this may not be the better choice for the others, but that isn't the guide's problem, now is it?

2. Everyone rolls against the chosen skill, not just the guide.

Everyone who succeeds at the skill roll adds his success margin to his Maneuver value, deftly speeding further ahead. Everyone who fails subtracts his failure margin from his Maneuver value, struggling as he falls behind. These margins also determine the #1 through #9 positions in step 5. Anyone whose Maneuver value falls below 0 gets attacked in step 4.

3. During the sequence, each character can take one action.

Typical actions include trying to destroy pursuing scrubots with weapons or mutant



powers, attacking other characters to make them fall behind instead, or just working extra hard to catch up. For each scrubot that gets Busted (or worse) by the Troubleshooters, and for each fleeing character (including NPCs) wounded enough to be down (or worse) and thus trampled by the bots, reduce the overall length of the chase by one sequence.

Characters who focus just on trying to get ahead can choose to roll against the skill the guide did not choose, or against a narrow specialty if they have one they can convince you applies. This gives characters who were screwed over by the guide's choice to recover a little. If they succeed, add their success margin to their Maneuver value, but if they fail, don't knock their total down any further—there's no additional risk for focusing on 'driving'.

4. The scrubots attack anyone who has fallen too far behind.

Anyone whose Maneuver value (from step 2) is now 0 or less becomes vulnerable to scrubot attack. If their total is -10 or worse, two scrubots can attack; -20 or worse, three bots; and so on. These bots have the same statistics as the one that attacked Marco-G at the start of Episode 3.

5. Whoever succeeded by the largest margin in step 2 becomes the new guide. All players take new positions in descending order of their Maneuver values.

Being the frontmost Transition isn't necessarily the same as guiding the flock (after the first sequence); conceivably the last Transition in line could be the new guide in the next sequence, if that player had the largest success this time. If nobody succeeded in the skill roll, whoever failed by the smallest margin is the new guide.

10 chase sequences

You don't have to run the sequences in the order listed; go with whatever amuses you, providing your own explanation for jumping directly from, say, the hydroponic garden to the Death Leopard road-rage. As brutal as many of them sound, their purpose isn't to actually harm the Troubleshooters. They simply determine who gets through better or worse. Severely failing the skill roll in the Battlefield, for example, doesn't necessarily mean the character gets hit by an artillery shell... but, hey, it's your chase sequence.

Pedestrian wrong-of-way

The Transitions shoot across the plaza, down a shallow flight of stairs... and immediately run into a crowd of citizens on a walkway. Guide chooses to either (1) **assess which way they'll scatter** (Management/Moxie) or (2) **simply muscle them aside** (Violence/Unarmed Combat).

Lost highway

Passing through to the nearby road, the flock attempts to merge with traffic, but initially starts out in the oncoming lane. Guide chooses to (1) **jump the group over the divider** to the correct side (Violence/Agility) or (2) **quickly hotwire his Transition** into dealing with head-on autocars (Software/Vehicle Programming).

Ruffian road-rage

A gang of Death Leopards, also on Transitions out on the road, decides to mix it up with the Troubleshooters road-warrior style. Guide can choose to (1) engage in **Transition vs. Transition slamming** (Violence/Vehicular Combat) or (2) **scare them into backing off** (Management/Intimidation).

Emergency response

There's a siren from somewhere behind them. It's an Internal Security hover patroller, on its way, no doubt, to catch evildoers! Traffic begins to make way for it. Guide decides to either (1) **brazenly pretend to be escorting it** (Management/Chutzpah) or (2) **slip in right behind** to follow in its wake (Stealth/Shadowing).

Construction zone

The Transitions veer sharply into an HPD&MC housing expansion project full of heavy automated equipment. Guide can choose to (1) **watch out for swinging crane arms and heavy loads** being dropped (Stealth/High Alert) or (2) look for a clever way to **exploit the moving, meshing equipment** to augment his Transition's progress (Hardware/Mechanical Engineering).

Welcome to the jungle

They crash into a hydroponic garden dense with plant life. Guide chooses to (1) **navigate the confusing tangle of greenery** (Wetware/Outdoor Life) or instead (2) **skid along the irrigation pipes and ventilation shafts** (Hardware/Habitat Engineering).

The road less dangerous

The hallway splits in two directions, each one leading to an equally risky factory. Guide must decide whether everyone has to cope with (1) the hazards of the Tech Services **explosives manufacturing center** (Violence/Demolitions) or (2) the threat of the **Power Services reactor core** (Hardware/Nuclear Engineering).

Battlefield

They emerge into a wide space, only to discover it's an Armed Forces artillery range! Guide chooses to either (1) play the Transition's controls like a master to **run the flock through**

Straight style notes

This is probably the hardest episode to play Straight, inasmuch as it's a frantic all-out race against a wave of scrubotic death. Each sequence, have the Leader choose one of three Skills—Moxie, High Alert, or Agility—regardless of the crisis. Instead of having them throw each other under the wheels of the bots, encourage the PCs to come up with ways to use circumstances to cause damage to the bots.

a deadly gauntlet of explosions (Violence/Fine Manipulation) or (2) **pick a sneakier route** that makes them less a target (Stealth/Sneaking).

Spiral ramp

A nearby ramp down ends up going around and around and around until everyone starts to get dizzy. Guide decides to either (1) **focus on how much he'll be fined if he gets sick** on his uniform (Management/Hygiene) or (2) **just goes ahead and tries to throw up** so he'll feel better (Wetware/Medical).

The toll gate

The path ahead is blocked by a drop-gate guarded by a couple of fellow Troubleshooters. Guide decides the correct way to get them to let him through the gate is either (1) a **stirring speech** (Management/Oratory) or (2) a convincing imitation of **suicidal recklessness** (Wetware/Psychotherapy).

Skidding to a stop

When you've had enough of the chase, the Transition flock skids up to the transbot platform listed on their original Mission Alert. The transbot pulls smoothly in just as the frontmost arrives. Those with the highest Maneuver values arrive first; if they have a high enough lead on the others, you may let them take a round or two of action before the others arrive. The last character still standing skids into the transbot just as the doors begin to slide shut. Seconds later, the transbot begins to accelerate away from the platform as the scrubots beat on its hull.

Seconds after that, anyone looking out the back window sees a second, beat-up-looking transbot slam into the platform, scattering scrubots like tempins.



7: There's no briefing like debriefing

The Troubleshooters go to a room they didn't start in and get debriefed by a guy they didn't talk to earlier. But first, a little closure, as they (gasp) catch Don-R-PNU-4!

Back where we didn't start

(Straight-style GMs can play this one pretty much as-is.)

The transbot wends its way back out of SPD Sector and eventually deposits the Troubleshooters at a platform bearing the sign, 'Welcome to DMM Sector Troubleshooter Central.' Another new Troubleshooter team is waiting at the platform, expecting to board once the players have gotten out. They look shiny and optimistic.

Just beyond the platform area is a RED Clearance reception desk clerk, engrossed in something on his workstation. When the transbot doors slide open and you step out, he glances up for just a moment, then back down... then back up, his eyes suddenly wide. 'But how— where did— How did you find me?' he shouts, leaping up and trying to make a run for it.

Yes! As implausible as it seems, this is Don-R-PNU-4, aka 'Alley G8R', the Computer Phreak author of the 'Mister Bubbles' virus. He recognizes the Troubleshooters immediately—he's been poking through their personnel records all day—and thought they were safely lost on the wrong mission.

It's possible your players picked up none of the clues regarding the origin of the scrubot virus—blew off the e-mail offer from 'Alley G8R'—and meandered through the mission without the slightest interest in finding out what's really been going on. Even so, your players, when confronted with a guy who jumps up and tries to run, are sure to respond with 'takedown first, questions later.' If they don't, they deserve to be busted back down to INFRARED and made to clean bathroom floors. With their tongues.

Don-R isn't hard to take down, unless you want him to be. But let them bag him, in the end. Let them take him alive. Heck, let them crack him like a nut with Interrogation and Intimidation. He'll spill it all: creating the virus, conspiring to murder spammers, etc. He offers to turn Complex evidence on his fellow Phreaks. If anyone took him up on his Marco-G offer, he only has a hundred credits—he didn't expect he'd ever need to pay. Still, encourage the Troubleshooters to feel they've achieved success beyond their best hopes. Yes, this was a successful mission!

Now... where was our debriefing room?

The windup

In a crueler sector, and if everyone weren't tired by now, the team would have to find its briefing room. But here in friendly DMM, where policy dictates missions should end quickly once their storylines are resolved, there are clear signs pointing to the Infirmary, the Mess Hall... and Debriefing.

The debriefing hall is a row of six or eight doors. All but the last are closed with an 'In Session' sign illuminated above them. The Troubleshooters walk past them, hearing muffled sounds behind each one: someone screaming through the distinct buzz of a large electrical arc, shouting voices erupting into a flurry of laser fire, evil maniacal laughter and so on. Finally, they reach the last door, the only open one.

Inside the simple room is a single desk. A haughty-looking BLUE citizen is sitting behind it, casually reading over some notes on his PDC. His name is Clarence-B-YIO, but the players will never know this. Without a word, he gestures the team to a set of six chairs, arranged in two rows of three each. Make a big deal out of asking which exact chair each Troubleshooter sits in. Award Perversity for any chaos that ensues. Clarence-B shows no interest in their actions.

Once everything has settled down, he flips his PDC shut, sets it on the table, calmly knits his hands together, and asks, without having said anything else, 'So. Where did the missing fissionables turn out to be?'

Toughing it out

Clarence-B already knows the team has no idea what he's talking about. They didn't show up to his briefing of five hours ago; how could they possibly have succeeded in the mission? He is, however, on Probation right now—for not having briefed his Troubleshooter team five hours ago—so he knows he's being monitored. (This debriefing is **Tension 16!**) Any deviation from the debriefing he's supposed to deliver will go badly for him. So he is damn well going to ask about the missing fissionables and not get dragged into any discussion of scrubot viruses, spam, Computer Phreaks and the like. He will ask his six questions, and that is all he will say. Fortunately, he doesn't have to judge the answers he is given; whoever is monitoring the debriefing will handle that. Troubleshooters may notice his occasional glance at the shiny black camera in the corner—the only sign of concern in his otherwise placid behavior. The questions he needs to ask, in order:

- ⦿ 'Where did the missing fissionables turn out to be?'

- ⦿ 'Who was the supervisor who forged the transfer order in the first place?'
- ⦿ 'Which team member received the greatest amount of exposure to krypton difluoride?'
- ⦿ 'Which team member contributed most directly to the success of this mission?'
- ⦿ 'Has all your assigned mission equipment been returned to Outfitting?'
- ⦿ 'Were you, at any point, contacted about financial projections for PLC service firm CBLK?'

The first thing any Troubleshooter says after each question is recorded as the team's official answer. Write down the team's official answer each time before moving on. Whoever said it gets 2 Perversity. If it's a toss-up who got it out first, give everyone who tried 1 point each. Your players may be torn, knowing everything they're saying is being documented as answers, yet the faster they make something up the more Perversity they'll earn.

After he has the answers to his required questions, Clarence-B simply informs the team they must fill out some Quantitative Assessment Forms. He takes the forms from a desk drawer and sets them in a little pile. Take the Forms you copied and cut apart earlier, shuffle them in a little stack, and set them on the table in front of your players. Clarence-B then rises from his chair and strides calmly, evenly from the room without another word.

You should do the same.

We're getting paid for this, right?

Needless to say, the team doesn't get a mission completion bonus, inasmuch as they completely failed to go on the correct mission. However, if you care to track such things, they get bonuses based on how well they portrayed their *Shooters* personae. Also, they still have a captured Computer Phreak, and that's good for a 250-500cr bonus apiece if they turn him over to IntSec (the more evidence they can provide, the higher the bonus). Of course, they could possibly benefit a great deal more if they force him to work for the team instead! If they saved Marco-G (instead of frying him like he deserved), that's good for another 150cr each from IntSec. And if they helped Bill-G and Nancy-B secure a deal, you might even feel like spreading a couple thousand credits across the whole team.

Of course, the next time the Troubleshooters step off a curb, you might feel like having them get hit by a transbot. Life in Alpha Complex.

'Mister Bubbles' debriefing forms

Make at least two copies of this page and cut apart the individual forms. Directions for giving them to your players are given in Scene 7, the mission debriefing.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form C7:A8:214.60

Please take a moment to rate the quality of your mission briefing. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to \$MAX_NUM, where 1 means 'very strong agreement' and \$MAX_NUM means 'only slightly strong agreement'.

- My mission briefing was handled in a/an time-efficient manner.
- There appeared to be sufficient paperwork.
- The range of flavors was to my liking.
- I could tell the officer in charge was an Internal Security agent.
- I would be willing to repeat the experience.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form 220:C3:05:FF

Please take a moment to rate the quality of hygiene experienced during the mission. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to -9, where 1 means 'very plausible' and -9 means 'only slightly plausible'.

- My teammates clearly understand the importance of proper hygiene.
- Next time, I could use a lot more machine oil.
- The range of flavors was to my liking.
- I think hygiene should be less cinematic.
- The relevant Qwalitie Standard makes me feel less than 1 meter tall.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form FF:A8:212.60

Please take a moment to rate the quality of your assigned mission equipment. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to 4, where 1 means 'very good question' and 4 means 'only slightly good question'.

- My assigned mission equipment was handled in a/an cinematic manner.
- There appeared to be sufficient ventilation.
- The range of flavors was to my liking.
- I could tell the officer in charge was on some sort of drugs.
- I would be willing to kill my own next clone.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form 80:FF:136:B1

Please take a moment to rate the quality of transport experienced during the mission. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to \$UNDEF, where 1 means 'very flammable' and \$UNDEF means 'only slightly flammable'.

- My teammates clearly understand the importance of proper transport.
- Next time, I could use a lot more napalm ammo.
- The range of flavors was to my liking.
- I think transport should be less reassuring.
- The relevant Qwalitie Standard makes me feel highly corrosive.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form B5:B1:92.141

Please take a moment to rate the quality of your service service. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to 2, where 1 means 'very likely' and 2 means 'only slightly likely'.

- My service service was handled in a/an reassuring manner.
- There appeared to be sufficient machine oil.
- The range of flavors was to my liking.
- I could tell the officer in charge was a robot assassin from the future.
- I would be willing to sign the next form I see.

Infiltration Recruitment Form Z44-GG1-13A-9CA

Greetings! Because of all the hard work you've been putting in to date, you are being given this opportunity to infiltrate the Illuminati secret society. Just to reassure us you're the right citizen for the job, however, please check any of the following that apply (minimum 1):

- I was just about to register my pyrokinesis mutant power.
 - I really did terminate at least three of my own former clones.
 - I know flammable and inflammable are not the same.
 - I am highly resistant to the Thirty-second Flavor.
 - I have been trained in the proper use of Floss++.
- Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Mister Bubbles' spam

<p>From: l0ttb0tt47 To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: you can't lose!</p> <p>Don't tell anyone I told you this, but PLC forecasting predicts CBLK up 41% in the coming quarter get on this one quick before it goes up!</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: gunther@en.bok.armf To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: tired of working for some one else?? no more!</p> <p>Be your own b0ss flexible hours up to 5000 credits per day CLICK FOR MORE INFO!</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: CPU Refund To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: MONEY JUST SITTING THERE WAITING FOR YOU</p> <p>We found your name in our list of unclaimed credit disbursements CLICK TO CLAIM YOUR SHARE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: ptc.downloads To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: hey, Fred-R, lets just keep this secret, okay?</p> <p>Free do.wn.lo.ad.s all your favorite Teela-O, others, ALL FOR FREE at 204-116-09/A0:FE:C1</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>
<p>From: ginger@td.uvt.cpu To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: b0y</p> <p>inflation badger splinter effective 100% gu.ar.an.te.ed results! assert aminobenzoic octagon lock in your LOW LOW rate NOW</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: l0ttb0tt23 To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: CLONES GONE WILD!!</p> <p>1000s of INFRAREDs getting crazy When the hormone suppressants wear off you wont believe what happens next!!! CLICK TO SEE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: lavyou.computer To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: R o l a t i n straight to your barrack!</p> <p>No PLC authorization needed, any clearance level, free shipping ORDER HERE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: intsec.virus.check To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: VIRUS DETECTED</p> <p>Your PDC has been infected! To comply with virus-free use you must do.wn.lo.ad the latest fix here</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>
<p>From: IPDAMC cloning To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: Free seventh clone</p> <p>To claim your extra clone CLICK HERE All new fileshare content AVAILABLE HERE FOR FREE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: peter@ed.wqr.plc To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: i miss you :)</p> <p>IntSec sniffers are on your PDC! CLICK TO ERASE THEM Add 50m to your laser's range! CLICK FOR MORE INFO</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: l0ttb0tt5003 To: Undisclosed recipients; Subject: that site you showed me</p> <p>WOW they have EVERYTHING Wakey-Wakey, QuietTime, you name it! LOWEST PRICES at 38-171-14/C5:A1:80</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From: Alley.GBR To: Troubleshooter Subject: Want to help me get that spammer?</p> <p>I know you helped protect that spammer Marco-G but I'll pay you 250 license-free credits if you waste him instead. No need to reply; actions speak louder than words.</p>

DESIGN NOTES / BIBLIOGRAPHY

Notes and resources

In the early 1980s a New York City Gamemaster, Dan Gelber, conceived the Alpha Complex setting for his roleplaying campaign. Game designers Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan encouraged Dan to detail the setting. From Dan's pages of notes Eric and Greg created a game, and editor and developer Ken Rolston added a darkly humorous tone. West End Games published **PARANOIA** in 1984 to instant success.

PARANOIA revolutionized roleplaying. The first really successful comedic RPG, it was among the earliest games to tailor rules to achieve a specific emotional atmosphere—a tensely hilarious Huxleyan satire. As the support line's inspired line editor, Ken Rolston guided to publication half a dozen brilliant supplements and adventures, as well as the much-loved second edition (1987), the line's high-water mark. In these products, ornamented by the quintessential **PARANOIA** artist, Jim Holloway, the game's tone moved to slapstick, the fast-moving frenetic play that remains the beloved **Classic** style.

When Ken left West End to work in computer games (he later became lead designer on *Morrowind*), the **PARANOIA** support line went astray. Like a Humanist after an IntSec brainscrub, it dwindled and vanished. Eric and Greg eventually recaptured rights to **PARANOIA** and arranged with Mongoose Publishing to revive it. Because I had co-written an early adventure (*Send in the Clones*, with Warren Spector), I got the happy assignment to expand Alpha Complex for a new and more paranoid time. Famous Game Designer Aaron Allston agreed to lend a hand. Under Greg Costikyan's supervision we resolved that, in the same way **PARANOIA** lit up the world of gaming in 1984, we should try to light a bulb or two again.

Like an industrious scrubot, **PARANOIA XP** cleanses the old game of excruciating pop-cult wackiness. **PARANOIA** is not wacky. It works best not as parody but as satire. Because satire reflects its times, this edition introduces new tech, new social structures and an economy. These additions offer much topical new material, yet the economy seems to some longtime fans to undermine a classic joke of **PARANOIA**: that The Computer, in the cause of fighting Commies, had turned Alpha Complex into a socialist police state. Does introducing capitalism detract from that? Can't a capitalist economy be a soul-crushing totalitarian anthill? Perhaps readers in Beijing or Singapore might comment. Oh, wait—they can't.

The XP edition explores a wider range of play. It reinstates the first edition's darker style, in tandem with Classic. **PARANOIA** is comedy, but it can be scary too. Some players like that. (The inspiration here was Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*, a splendid game that treads ingeniously along the line between horror and humor.) For fans of the manic parody of the later West End line, this edition offers Zap style; many people, especially those unfamiliar with the game, mistakenly believe it's all Zap, all the time.

XP changes the relationship between Gamemaster and players from open malevolence to a more interesting Skinnerian psychology. The system aims to turn players against each other in new ways. Characters are more broadly skilled and less dependent on one another. They may survive a bit longer (though only at the GM's pleasure) and have more clones. Players can spend Perversity points to aid or undermine other players—backstabbing as a game mechanic.

But if **PARANOIA** proves revolutionary again, the reason won't be its mechanics or tone, but its adoption of a successful online development process seen at its best in the field of indie gaming.

At **The Forge** (indie-rpgs.com), dedicated indie (independent) roleplaying game designers debate rarefied theory and practical self-publishing strategies. Working selflessly in communal collaboration for a tiny audience, these talented folks create bizarre, sometimes wonderful little hothouse games, which they distribute as .PDF files free or for a small fee.

(One of these, Paul Czege's amazing *My Life With Master*, was the principal design influence on **PARANOIA XP**. Check it out at www.halfmeme.com.)

We liked The Forge's open model. So we stole it.

A community of longtime **PARANOIA** fans gathers on the online forums (fora?) of www.paranoia-live.net, a copious site run by Irish fan Andy 'Jazzer' Fitzpatrick. Hearing of the new edition, Jazzer generously placed his site at our disposal. At the same time, Greg Costikyan, on his own site, began a **PARANOIA** development blog (www.costik.com/paranoia). At these sites the community flocked to the cause in a way gratifyingly unlike Troubleshooters. They contributed much fine new material, vetted the rules and proofed everything.

The spirit of open development, exercised on a scale I've never seen before, infuses this rulebook. I thank our devoted community.

For all I know, plenty of commercial game publishers have already adopted this robust and enjoyable development process. But it was new to me. I hope to work that way often from now on. So in that sense **PARANOIA XP** has already revolutionized at least this individual part of gaming.

—Allen Varney (www.allenvarney.com)

Resources

These sources, among many, are particularly helpful for cultivating a characteristically paranoid atmosphere in your games:

Books

- Stanislaw Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* (1973)
- George Orwell, *1984* (1949)
- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932)
- Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1937) and many other works
- Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1962)
- Philip K. Dick, *The Penultimate Truth* (1964) and nearly everything else
- Yevgeny Zamiatin, *We* (1921-22)
- Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, the *Illuminatus!* trilogy:

The Eye in the Pyramid, The Golden Apple, and Leviathan (1988)

Movies and TV

- Brazil, Terry Gilliam (1985)
- THX-1138, George Lucas (1971)
- The Prisoner, TV series (1967)
- Equilibrium, Kurt Wimmer (2002)
- Logan's Run, Michael Anderson (1976); TV series (1977-78)
- A Clockwork Orange, Stanley Kubrick (1969)
- Soylent Green, Richard Fleischer (1973)

Online

Paranoia-Live.net:
www.paranoia-live.net

PARANOIA development blog:
www.costik.com/paranoia

'The Toothpaste Disaster'
Lexicon game:
paranoia.allenvarney.com

Paranoia-O:
www.paranoia-rpg.com/

Greg Costikyan's home page: www.costik.com

Aaron Allston's home page:
www.AaronAllston.com

The Forge: indie-rpgs.com



Universal Hostility Formula

COMBAT

1. ATTACK!
ROLL VS.
VIOLENCE,
TENSION LVL,
OR 11

**2. HIT
OR MISS?
DIFFERENT
TARGET?
BACKFIRE?**

**3. MULTIPLE
TARGETS?**

**4. DEFAULT
DAMAGE**

5. DEFENSE

6. BOOST

**7. ACTUAL
DAMAGE**

1. Attack!

An attacking character rolls against Violence skill. An entity without Violence skill rolls against the scene's Tension level or the number 11.

More than one character attacking: Figure everyone's attack result separately, then apply all effects simultaneously.

Attacker surprise: You may give the attacker one free attack before the target gets to respond.

2. Hit or miss?

If the attacker chose a specific target and hit successfully, that target *may* take damage.

If the attack missed, did it hit a different target instead? Target the character with the lowest Power. Serves him right.

Backfires: If the attack missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the attack may backfire. Some weapons malfunction in circumstances independent of the margin, so check the description.

If a backfire doesn't suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.

3. Multiple targets?

Can the attack plausibly hit more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the attack description or the attack roll's margin.

4. Default damage

The attack deals the damage you want it to deal. Attack descriptions suggest their default damage in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format on the Weapon Chart.

5. Defense

Does the target have armor or other defenses? Does the defense apply against the attack type? If so, reduce the default damage by a number of steps equal to the target's defense value.

6. Boost

You can adjust damage based on the attack roll margin and the attack's Boost increment. Don't like the arithmetic? Use the handy chart on the facing page.

7. Actual damage

If the attack's damage is reduced to nothing, the attack still hits the target, but it has no effect.

For damage effects, see Chapter 27, 'Damage and injuries' (page 75).

TREASON

1. Accuse!**1. Accuse!**

An accusing character rolls against Management skill (no specializations allowed). You may allow Perversity spending according to your dramatic needs.

When more than one character is accusing, figure everyone's result separately, then apply all accusation effects simultaneously.

2. CREDIBLE?**2. Credible or not?**

If the accusation roll succeeds, the charges are initially credible.

Backfires: If the accusation roll missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the accusation may backfire. Continue with this formula, but the former accuser now becomes the target. **If a backfire doesn't suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.**

**3. MULTIPLE
TARGETS?****3. Multiple targets?**

Can the offenses plausibly indict more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the type of offense and the attack roll's margin.

**4. DEFAULT
CORRECTION****4. Default correction**

A successful accusation prompts the correction you want it to prompt. The Treason and Insubordination charts suggest corrections in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format.

5. DEFENSE**5. Defense**

In **Classic** games, reduce the default correction by steps equal to the target's Access attribute. **Straight:** Step reduction equals the target's Access attribute plus number of his current clone. **Zap:** No defense and no reduction.

6. BOOST**6. Boost**

You can adjust the correction's severity based on the roll margin and the offense's Boost increment. If you shudder at the thought of division, use the chart on the facing page.

**7. ACTUAL
CORRECTION****7. Actual correction**

The Computer or the citizen metes out correction on the spot. If the accusation's correction is reduced below one step, the accusation has no effect. A corrected target may become extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval and possibly further correction.

For correction effects, see Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction' (page 81).

UNIVERSAL HOSTILITY FORMULAE

Damage steps (*combat and treason*)

For reference, this table lists all the damage steps for characters in combat, objects in combat, and characters facing correction for treason. The steps are numbered for ease of use with the Boost chart below.

STEP	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
CHARACTERS	OKAY	SNAFU	WOUNDED	MAIMED	DOWN	KILLED	VAPORIZED
OBJECTS	OKAY	LIGHTLY DAMAGED	IMPAIRED	HEAVILY DAMAGED	BUSTED	JUNKED	VAPORIZED
TREASON	OKAY	PROBATION	CENSURE	MEDICATION	BRAINSCRUB	TERMINATION	ERASURE

Boost chart

Every attack or accusation does exactly the damage you want. For guidance, use the attack's Minimum-Boost-Maximum ratings. You don't need a table to figure the damage from any weapon or treason accusation. Here's the in-your-head method:

1. Roll 1d20 and compare it to the success chance number. If you roll the number or lower, that's success.
2. Find the attack's **Minimum damage**. Now subtract the target's defenses: armor for a combat attack, Access rating for a treason accusation. If you want to use the Damage steps chart above, start at the Minimum damage and count to the left one column for each step of defense.
3. How much lower was the attack's roll than its success chance number? That's the **margin**.
4. Divide the margin by the attack's **Boost number**, rounding down. That's the number of extra damage steps the attack does.
5. Add the extra damage steps to the damage you figured in step 2. On the chart above, move back to the right a number of steps equal to the extra damage. Don't move above the attack's **Maximum damage**.
6. Where did you end up? That's the **actual damage** the target takes.

Hmm. Well, you know... now that we write it out, maybe that procedure does look a little tricky, especially Step 3. So to help the division-impaired, we've created the Boost chart below. No need to do (much) arithmetic in your head—just figure the margin, find it across the top row of the chart, then follow down the column to the row for the attack's Boost number. The number there is the number of extra damage steps this attack roll does, after you subtract the target's defenses.

MARGIN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
BOOST 1	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	
BOOST 2	—	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	
BOOST 3	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+4	+5	+5	+5	+6	+6	
BOOST 4	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+4	+4	+5	
BOOST 5	—	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+4	
BOOST 6	—	—	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	

Alternate damage methods

Maybe even with the Boost chart above, you still don't want to figure the margin, move back and forth on the Damage step chart at the top of this page and all that stuff. That's okay! Gamemasters have different preferences, and every GM, including you, is right.

Here we give two other ways you can figure combat and treason damage. These methods are a little slower, even a lot slower, than the 1d20 roll above, but you don't have to divide by Boost numbers.

1. If the success roll's margin is higher than the attack's Boost number, roll 1d20 again. If this second roll fails, the attack does its Minimum damage. If the second roll succeeds, increase the attack's damage by one step and roll a third time. Each time the roll succeeds, increase the attack by one step, until you reach the attack's Maximum or you get bored with rolling dice.

2. For this version you need three to six 20-sided dice. If the attack succeeds, start with the attack's Minimum damage and then subtract the target's armor or Access defense to reduce that damage. Next, find the number of the attack's Minimum damage step on the Damage step chart atop this page. Then roll a number of 20-sided dice equal to the Minimum damage step. For each die roll result of 10 or higher, increase the damage by one step. For example, Maimed is step number 3. So if an attack does a Minimum damage of Maimed, roll three d20s. If the three results are 4, 13 and 20, two of those are over 10, so you increase the damage two steps from Maimed to Killed.



CHARTS / TABLES

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

CHARACTERS: O_{KAY} — S_{NAFU} — W_{OUNDED} — M_{AIMED} — D_{OWN} — K_{ILLED} — V_{APORIZED}

Weapon chart

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost-Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Blaster	Energy	Energy	M3K	1	50	500	O	
Brass knuckles	Hand	Impact	S5W	—	—	10	R	
Cone rifle**	Projectile	—	—	1	200	1,000	B	
Cone rifle shells**								
solid slug		Impact	W3K	1	200	100	B	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	1	200	150	B	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	1	160	120	B	
HE		Impact	W2K	1	200	200	I	area 40m
HEAT		Impact	W2K	1	200	400	I	AP, area 40m
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	200	300	B	area 8m, spray
flare		—	—	1	200	100	B	bright light
ECM		Energy	J2J	1	200	400	I	only vs. bots
gas		Bio	varies	1	200	250	B	area 30m; see note 1
tacnuke**		Energy	V1V	1	200	150,000	V	area 160m; see note 2
Cone rifle triggers**		—	—	1	—	100	B	each shell requires one trigger
Energy pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	5	60	200	Y	
Flamethrower	Field	Energy	S3K	10	20	500	Y	area 20m, spray
Force sword	Hand	Energy	S3K	—	—	400	B	
Gauss gun	Field	Energy	W3K	100	20	500	I	area 20m (60-degree cone)
Grenade	Thrown	Impact	W3K	1	20	50	R	area 5m
Hand flamer	Field	Energy	S3K	3	40	1,000	V	easily concealed
Ice gun	Projectile	Impact	S3K	25	50	500	G	spray
Knife	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	20	R	thrown range 20m
Laser pistol (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	50	25	*	needs body
Laser pistol (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	75	R	needs barrel
Laser rifle (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	100	50	*	needs body
Laser rifle (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	250	O	needs barrel
Needle gun	Projectile	Impact	S3W	10	60	750	B	AP
Neurowhip	Hand	Energy	S5M	—	—	300	G	
Plasma generator**	Field	Energy	V1V	10	—	2,000	V	area 20m (60-degree cone)
Rock or debris	Thrown	Impact	O5W	1	20	—	any	
Rock or debris, big	Thrown	Impact	O4W	1	10	—	any	
Slugthrower	Projectile	—	—	—	—	450	Y	
solid slug		Impact	W3K	6	50	50	Y	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	3	50	75	G	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	6	40	60	Y	
HE		Impact	W2K	6	40	75	Y	
HEAT		Impact	W2K	6	40	100	G	AP
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	40	75	Y	area 3m
flare		—	—	1	40	40	Y	bright light
ECM		Energy	H2J	1	40	200	I	only vs. bots
gas		—	varies	1	40	75	Y	area 5m; see note 1
Slugthrower, semi-automatic	Projectile	—	—	—	—	750	G	spray (see note 3)
Sonic pistol	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	60	150	O	see note 4
Sonic rifle	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	100	300	O	see note 4 again
Stun gun	Field	—	Stun	6	40	250	O	see note 5
Sword	Hand	Impact	W5K	—	—	20	any	
Tangler	Field	—	—	3	50	250	G	see note 6
Truncheon	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	10	R	
Unarmed combat	Unarmed	Impact	O5K	—	—	—	any	
Used weapon								
Reloads/recharges								10-25% off market value; reliability varies (heh, heh!)
								10% of the base weapon cost, unless otherwise specified. Lasers are recharged by buying a new barrel.

Note 1: Gas effects are listed in Chapter 41, 'Equipment', under 'Cone rifle and slugthrower.'

Note 2: Roll damage from a tactical nuclear weapon only in extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise, assume mass vaporization.

Note 3: Semi-automatic slugthrowers fire slugthrower ammo at a higher rate. Solid, solid AP, dum-dum, HE and HEAT ammo can be sprayed. The other ammo types are one-shot and hence can't be sprayed (duh).

No!

Note 5: This weapon stuns the target. A stunned target can't perceive or do anything in the next round.

Note 6: This weap!

** Unauthorized possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (**) is treason. Possessing an unauthorized tacnuke is *big-time serious* treason.

WEAPONS / ARMOR / EQUIPMENT

OBJECTS: O_{KAY} — L_IGHTLY DAMAGED — I_MPAIRED — H_EAVIDLY DAMAGED — B_USTED — J_UNKED — V_APORIZED

Armor chart

	Type and protection	Cost (credits)	Clearance	Notes
ArmorAll**	4	2,500	B	hardened; full-figure
Asbestos clothing	E3	100	any	ablative
Battle armor**	6	100,000	I	hardened; full-figure
Combat suit**	5	10,000	B	hardened
Environment suit	—	1,000	G	see note 7; full-figure
Farraday suit	—	5,000	G	see note 8; full-figure
Kevlar	I3	800	O	
GM fiat	Infinite	—	any	only characters important to the storyline
Reflec, legal	E1	500	varies	see note 9
illegal	E2	1,000	—	
incredibly illegal	E3	3,000	—	

Note 7: Armor protects against hazardous environments (gas, poison).

Note 8: Protects against radiation and strong magnetic fields.

Note 9: Reflec protects only against laser attacks (not other energy attacks, just lasers) of its color or lower. The reflec's color is its clearance. Illegal IR-market upgrades may offer greater protection (yeah, right).

Hit location

Does it matter what part of the target's body gets hit? Only if it's entertaining. Roll 1d20, ignore the result and pick a body part. That's what got blown off.

For more rigorous guidance, note the die result and consult this table:

- 1: Left hand
- 2: Right hand
- 3-4: Left arm
- 5-6: Right arm
- 7-12: Left leg
- 13-14: Right leg
- 15-16: Loins
- 17-18: Chest
- 19-20: Eye, teeth, tongue, nostril, earlobe, etc.

If you roll a part that's already been blown off, use the next line down on the table.

Equipment chart

This chart lists many common and sought-after items and their typical costs at a standard PLC supply depot. Prices vary with current production quotas, The Computer's current inflation policy and other, even more boring reasons.

Every item has a security clearance below which it is illegal to possess the item without specific authorization from The Computer. Possessing an item marked with a double asterisk (**) below the listed clearance is treason. In Straight games possessing an item above your clearance but without the double asterisk is insubordination punishable by a fine. In Classic or Zap games possessing the item is treason.

Note: If you don't like something on this list, change it.

Bots

[cost; clearance]
 Bot brain, used: 500; varies
 Combot**: 30,000; B
 Docbot Model 4: 4,000; R
 Docbot Model 18: 100,000; B
 Guardbot: 8,000; G
 Jackobot: 10,000; O
 Petbot: 400; any
 Robutler: 2,500; Y
 Scrubot: 1,000; R
 Teachbot: 1,000; R
 Warbot Model 425 Mark 4**: not for sale

Coms and multicorders

[cost; clearance]
 Com 1: 100; R
 2: 500; Y
 3: 1,000; G
 4**: 5,000; I
 Multicorder 1: 600; R
 2: 1,000; G
 3**: 5,000; I
 4**: 10,000; V
 Multicorder programs: 100; varies
 PDC: 250; R

Vehicles

Vehicle prices and availability vary. Rebates possible. Dealer prep and options not included.

Autocar: 15,000; R
 Copter: 75,000; G
 Crawler: 50,000; Y
 Flybot: 125,000; B
 Transbot: 50,000; O
 Transition: 2,500; R
 Trend-Stepper: 800; O
 Vulturecraft**: you can't afford this; B

Supplies and stuff

[cost, clearance; if no clearance listed, clearance is INFRARED]
 Bouncy Bubble Beverage: 1
 Chainsaw: 50; R
 Chapstick: 100; G
 Chocolate bar: 10; O
 Clothing: 25

Cold Fun: 2
 Cotton swabs, 100: 10; R
 CruncheeTym Algae chips: 1
 First aid kit: 10
 Flashlight: 5
 Gas mask: 50; R
 Geiger counter: 150; G
 Goggles, infrared: 100; R
 Goggles, protective: 5
 Hot Fun: 2
 Keychain, attractive: 2; R
 ugly: 1
 Microwave oven: 100; R
 Musical instruments, Old Reckoning**: 1,000; B
 Paint**
 four-liter pail: 1,000; B
 spraycan: 100; B
 Personal hygiene kit: 5
 Refrigerator-freezer, portable: 250; O
 Shoes/boots: 25
 Soap, bar: 2; R
 liquid: 2, O
 on rope: 2, Y
 perfumed: 20, G
 transparent: 20, B
 extra-nice: 200, I
 99^{44/100%} pure: 200, V
 SuperGum, tube: 10, R
 SuperGum solvent, tube: 100, O
 Towel, small: 5; R
 large: 15; O
 patterned: 15; Y
 Vacuum cleaner: 200; O
 Vitamins: 20; Y

Treason chart

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason, too. You assign their fines or treason damage. For that matter, feel free to change these guidelines. **An offense deals the treason damage you want it to deal.**

Penalties vary between Classic and Straight games. In general, Straight correction is less severe than Classic regarding violations of decorum and ordinary daily conduct, but more severe than Classic regarding false accusations, assault, wanton destruction and other lighthearted stuff. Compared to Straight games, Classic offenses against citizens of clearance lower than the offender aren't that big a deal. In Zap games all offenses are punishable by termination.

KEY

Character conditions: Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination & Repatterning (Twiddling), Erasure

Offenses are listed in **Minimum-Boost-Maximum** format. *Example:* P5B means the offense's default minimum correction is Probation, its Boost (the margin needed to add one treason damage step) is 4, and the maximum correction is Brainscrub.

\square = number of ranks of difference in security clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a RED citizen who insubordinately questions a GREEN superior's judgment (an offense listed as $\square \times 100$) earns ($3 \times 100 =$) a 300-credit fine.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. cr = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone)

Offense

Accusations of treason

	Classic	Straight
AA. Being accused of treason by a citizen of lower clearance	+1 to Boost number unchanged	unchanged
BB. By a citizen of equal clearance	-1 Boost (min. 1)	-1 Boost (min. 1)
CC. By a citizen of higher clearance	O5C O4C P3M	C4M P4M C3B
DD. Falsely accusing a lower-clearance citizen of treason		
DD/1. A citizen of equal clearance		
DD/2. A citizen of higher clearance		

Conduct and bearing

EE. Arguing with the Gamemaster	Medication	Medication
FF. Assaulting a lower-clearance citizen	O5T C4T M3T	P5T C3T M3T
FF/1. A citizen of equal clearance		
FF/2. A citizen of higher clearance		
GG. Being present in a location of higher security clearance	P4M + $\square \times 100$ cr	P4C + $\square \times 5\%$ cr
HH. Damaging, destroying or losing assigned equipment	P3C	P3C + replacement cost
II. Failure to defer to a citizen of higher security clearance	P4B + $\square \times 100$ cr	P4M + $\square \times 5\%$ cr
JJ. Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing	P4C P4M C4B M4T	P4C C4B C4T M4E
KK. Framing a citizen of lower clearance for a crime		
KK/1. A citizen of equal clearance		
KK/2. A citizen of higher clearance		
LL. Possessing a treasonous (Unhealthy) skill	Brainscrub	Brainscrub
MM. Possessing unauthorized food, information or equipment	P3M + $\square \times 100$ cr	O2C + $\square \times 5\%$ cr
NN. Refusing to take a prescribed drug	P4M	Censure
OO. Threatening the physical or financial safety of a lower-clearance citizen	O5B C4B M3B	P4B C3B M3B
OO/1. A citizen of equal clearance		
OO/2. A citizen of higher clearance		
PP. Unauthorized destruction of higher-clearance property	P4M + $\square \times 100$ cr + replacement cost	P4M + $\square \times 5\%$ cr + replacement cost
QQ. Demonstrating knowledge of the PARANOIA rules above the player's clearance	Termination	Brainscrub
RR. Lying to the Gamemaster	Termination!	Termination!

Missions

SS/1. Disobeying an order given by a mission superior	P5B	P5B
SS/2. Disobeying an order given by The Computer	C5T	C5T
SS/3. Failure to complete a mission	O4C	P4M
SS/4. Failure to complete a service service	O5C	P5M
SS/5. Refusing the assignment of a service service	P5M	P5M
SS/6. Refusing to accept a mission	Termination	Termination

Mutation

TT/1. Mutation registration	Medication	Medication
TT/2. Suspicion of mutation possession	C4T	C4B
TT/3. Proof of mutation possession	M3T	M3B
TT/4. Incontrovertible proof of mutation possession	Termination	M3T
TT/5. Possession of Machine Empathy	Termination	Erasure

Secret society membership

UU/1. Confessing to secret society membership	M3T	M3B
UU/2. Suspicion of secret society membership	M3T	C3B
UU/3. Proof of secret society membership	B3T	M3T
UU/4. Incontrovertible proof of secret society membership	Termination	B3T
UU/5. Knowledge of Communist doctrine	Brainscrub	B2T
UU/6. Being a Communist	Termination	B1E

Terminations

VV. Terminating a lower-clearance citizen without prior authorization or evidence	C3B	M3T + replacement cost
VV/1. A citizen of equal clearance	B2T	B3E + replacement cost
VV/2. A citizen of higher clearance	Termination	T1E + replacement cost

TREASON / INSUBORDINATION

TREASON: O_{KAY} — P_{ROBATION} — C_{ENSURE} — M_{EDICATION} — B_{RAINSCRUB} — T_{ERMINATION} — E_{RASURE}

Insubordination chart

See the Key for the Treason chart on the facing page.

Offense	Classic	Straight
A. Asking a question irrelevant to a mission or duty	10cr	5%
B. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous	20cr	5%
C. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass)	30cr	5%
D. Being out of uniform or sloppy	10cr	10cr
E. Being unhappy	10cr	5%
F. Bringing bad news	50cr	—
G. Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times	10cr	10cr
H. Curiosity in general, undue	30cr	30cr
I. Evading IntSec or Computer surveillance	50	5%
J. Excessive impoliteness	10cr	—
K. Failing a hygiene inspection	10cr	10cr
L. Jokes, insolence, or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty	10cr	10cr
M. Jokes, insolence, or disrespect for a specific higher-clearance citizen	☒x100	☒x5%
N. Jokes, complaints or warnings about a specific service firm or group other than Internal Security	30	3%
O. Jokes, complaints or warnings about Internal Security	100	10%
P. Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher-clearance citizen	☒x100cr	☒x100cr
Q. Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer	1,000	100%
R. Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission	50cr	50cr
S. Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty	50cr	replacement cost

Reward chart

This is close to an exhaustive list. It includes several entries that an Alpha Complex citizen would not actually see; identification of these lines is left as an exercise for the reader.

A given act may qualify for more than one reward. Use the lowest. That'll show 'em.

KEY

% = a percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary; cr = credits

☒ = This number equals the difference in security clearance ranks. For instance, a RED citizen who risks his life to save a GREEN citizen earns (3 x 5%) = a 15% bonus, because GREEN is three ranks above RED.

Acts Deserving Rewards

- A. Being extremely happy: 10cr
- B. Doing a small favor spontaneously for a higher-clearance citizen: 10cr
 - B/1. A large favor involving non-trivial effort: 30cr
 - B/2. A really large favor that takes most of a day, if not longer: 70cr
- C. Unctuous flattery: 10cr
- D. Completing a mission successfully: promotion and credit bonus equal to one month's salary (minus deductions for damage, expenses, etc.)
- E. Completing a service service and filing a report: 100cr
- F. Risking your life to serve or rescue a citizen of your clearance: 500cr
 - F/1. A higher-clearance citizen: ☒ x5%
 - F/2. To serve The Computer: 50%
- G. Terminating a traitor of your clearance or lower with sufficient evidence: 50%
- G/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 25%
- H. Turning over a traitor of your clearance or lower to Internal Security: 25%
- H/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 10%



CHARTS / TABLES

CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Tension levels by location

These are just suggestions. You can adjust the Tension level freely.

Entries such as 'RED areas' means all RED areas not otherwise listed in specific entries. When an area could have more than one Tension level, use the highest.

- 0: Sewers; reactor cores; Outdoors; conferences with the GM
- 1: IntSec interrogation chambers
- 2: INFRARED areas
- 3: Supply closets; garages; bot stations; HPD&MC indoctrination centers
- 4: RED areas
- 5: Briefing rooms; food vats; sickbays; clone tanks; PLC warehouses
- 6: ORANGE areas
- 7: Mess halls; waiting rooms; grooming stations; elevators and stairwells
- 8: YELLOW areas
- 9: R&D labs; any place with Junior Citizens (kids)
- 10: GREEN areas
- 11: Troubleshooter HQ; Armed Forces bases; armories
- 12: BLUE areas
- 13: Termination centers; re-education centers; IntSec stations
- 14: INDIGO areas
- 15: Power and Tech Services control rooms; IntSec headquarters
- 16: VIOLET areas
- 17: Confession booths; CPU monitoring loci
- 18: ULTRAVIOLET areas
- 19: Central Compnodes
- 20: Bathrooms

Clone backup costs

[Straight games only]

6-pk	Clone #s	Cost	Cost/clone
1	Prime + 2-6	2,000	400
2	7-12	6,000	1,000
3	13-18	15,000	2,500
4	19-24	30,000	5,000
5	25-30	60,000	10,000



Random crate contents

During a mission Troubleshooters often visit abandoned warehouses, disused sub-basements, dangerous factory floors and so forth. They always see the ubiquitous Large Plastic Crates, standard cubes two meters on a side, with a serial number stenciled on each face. If the Troubleshooters pry or blast one open, use this table as inspiration for what they might find inside. Roll 1d20:

- 1: 144 boxes of hand grenades, two dozen per case. They appear intact, but unscrewing the tops reveals they have no fuses.
- 2: 27,648 pads of Clearance YELLOW sticky-notes, labeled 'From The Desk Of:'
- 3: An old-model guardbot missing its bot brain.
- 4: 1,000 fluorescent light tubes.
- 5: 1,000 rolls of duct tape.
- 6: Wingnuts. Lots and lots of wingnuts.
- 7: 8,000 INFRARED-Clearance coloring books, entitled 'The Computer is the Only Friend I Need.' Each copy is shrinkwrapped with a single black crayon.
- 8: Yargh! It's full of teeth! Millions of them! Must be leftovers from the HPD&MC Dental Hygiene Services offices. Creepies!
- 9: A load of shrinkwrapped data discs from Sector AOL, labelled 'Version 73.0.'
- 10: Communist propaganda leaflets in massive quantities.
- 11: A huge number of unused foil CruncheeTym Algae Chip bags, left over after the flavor 'Extra-Zesty Strawberry & Cheeze' was pulled from the market.
- 12: 288 boxes of Vita-Yum Meal-Substitute Bars, three dozen per box. (Expired roughly six months ago, but they might still be good...)
- 13: About a million little spools of minty-fresh dental floss.
- 14: 144 cases of uncharged RED laser barrels, three dozen per case.
- 15: 216 cartons of misprinted Teela-R-MLY keychains, 144 per carton.
- 16: Eleventy-three billion little steel ball-bearings.
- 17: Stacks and stacks of old documents and paperwork, dated three years ago. (With a high-margin Power roll and a whole lot of time, a Troubleshooter might learn something to his advantage—but more likely, not.)
- 18: Standard-issue black socks, enough for a whole army of sock-puppets.
- 19: A single first-aid kit. (Does it seem strange such a large box would only have one first-aid kit in it? Hmm.)
- 20: Internal Security agent, observing from cover. Roll 1d20 again. 1-10: Agent is at or below PCs' clearance. 11-20: Above PCs' clearance.

Random cannister/barrel / vat contents

Roll 1d20:

- 1: Pure distilled water
- 2: Not-yet-recycled shower water
- 3: Raw sewage
- 4: Battery acid (concentrated sulfuric acid)
- 5: Pure hydrochloric acid
- 6: Motor oil
- 7: Gasoline
- 8: Diesel fuel
- 9: Mercury
- 10: Blood
- 11: Algae sludge (aka future Hot Fun! Mmm!)
- 12: Bouncy Bubble Beverage
- 13: Cooking oil
- 14: Reactor coolant (water—not very dangerous)
- 15: Reactor coolant (liquid sulfur—extremely dangerous)
- 16: Radioactive waste
- 17: Glue
- 18: Giant experimental amoeba
- 19: Liquid nitrogen
- 20: Nitroglycerine

Random passersby

In every battle, shots go astray. When you feel like it, roll 1d20 and consult this table if a shot misses its target. The number you roll suggests the random victim injured or killed by the stray shot. Feel free to improvise new and even more dangerous targets.

- 1-3: Nothing
- 4-5: INFRARED line worker
- 6: Vending machine
- 7-8: Scrubot or other bot
- 8: Confession booth
- 9: RED office worker
- 10: Vulture Warrior
- 11-12: Crate, vat, cannister or barrel (roll on corresponding table to get contents)
- 13: YELLOW manager
- 14: Three Vulture Warriors
- 15: IntSec GREEN goon
- 16: BLUE executive
- 17: Warbot
- 18: VIOLET administrator
- 19: Ten Vulture Warriors
- 20: High Programmer

■ TENSION / CRATES / INFO WITHHOLDING

Information withholding

Sometimes you get tired of responding, 'I'm sorry, that information is not available at your security clearance'. To palm off a different excuse when you lack inspiration, roll 1d20, consult this table and use the response beside the number rolled.

- 1 The requested information is above the inquirer's clearance [the default response].
- 2 The information is unavailable due to Commie sabotage.
- 3 The information is unavailable due to an unknown mutant force.
- 4 If the inquirer files the appropriate request form, it will be processed in 6-8 days.
- 5 The form to request that information is currently being revised.
- 6 The inquirer was already briefed on that. If he wasn't paying attention, it's his own fault.
- 7 Only a traitor would have a use for that information. Is the inquirer a traitor?
- 8 Give information as a printout, entirely blacked out except for pronouns and articles.
- 9 Give information as an encoded printout. If inquirer asks for the code, roll again.
- 10 If the NPC being asked is below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET, the information is above the NPC's clearance. If a High Programmer or The Computer, roll again.
- 11 An honest I-don't-know. If inquirer is asking The Computer, roll again.
- 12 Give obviously wrong information. 'Repeat' it a second time, completely differently and still obviously wrong.
- 13 Imply the question is a sign of unhappiness.
- 14 The NPC pretends not to hear the question.
- 15 That information is available on a need-to-know basis and is not yet required.
- 16 Information is available in a purchasable but prohibitively expensive publication.
- 17 If the NPC told the inquirer, the NPC would have to kill him. If the inquirer insists, do it and fine him 100 credits. The next clone doesn't remember the answer, so you don't need an actual answer.
- 18 Refer inquirer to a non-existent room number for that and related information.
- 19 Refer inquirer to a real room far above his clearance.
- 20 Roll twice and vacillate between the two responses.

Drug name generation

Roll 1d20 twice. Take the 'ones' digit of each roll and put them side by side to get a two-digit number from 00 to 99. Consult this list to get a fragment of the drug name. Repeat 2-3 times, then mash together the syllables until they sound plausible.

00. Resta-	50. Juter-
01. Foco-	51. Loba-
02. Sele-	52. Vel-
03. Paro-	53. Cetir-
04. Hur-	54. Xonia-
05. Ari-	55. Trepta-
06. Raji-	56. Altar-
07. Haka-	57. Iteri-
08. Gond-	58. Wot-
09. Wra-	59. Opti-
10. Thon-	60. Negag-
11. Alla-	61. Covag-
12. Peru-	62. Uton-
13. Utri-	63. Locu-
14. Ele-	64. Gren-
15. Enu-	65. Ascu-
16. Harv-	66. Credi-
17. Stanto-	67. Lasa-
18. Sanga-	68. Cona-
19. Meta-	69. Pora-
20. Mete-	70. Nico-
21. Boli-	71. Uspeo-
22. Trans-	72. Tine-
23. Ert-	73. Beta-
24. Magna-	74. Prima-
25. Piter-	75. Muxo-
26. Fracta-	76. Noxi-
27. Ding-	77. Wif-
28. Fraka-	78. Tresto-
29. Parsi-	79. Lister-
30. Ulla-	80. Brunta-
31. Manda-	81. Caxel-
32. Respa-	82. Parth-
33. Quer-	83. Rexa-
34. Kive-	84. Ukel-
35. Troe-	85. Neuro-
36. Emnic-	86. Vetta-
37. Trecra-	87. Grin-
38. locu-	88. Octin-
39. Botu-	89. Panop-
40. Luk-	90. Westa-
41. Andro-	91. User-
42. Zive-	92. Loktic-
43. Meme-	93. Carni-
44. Walla-	94. Vetro-
45. Retre-	95. Gambi-
46. Gonu-	96. Huntro-
47. Hret-	97. Repat-
48. Umbli-	98. Slynth-
49. Yteri-	99. Omnu-

PLC equipment request denial table

We were going to explain when to use this table, but just read the entries and you'll get it. Roll 1d20, consult this table and use the response beside the number rolled.

- 1-2 'I'm sorry, citizen, we appear to be temporarily all out of that item.'
- 3-4 'According to [your briefing officer/my supervisor/The Computer], that equipment is not necessary for your mission.'
- 5-6 'Certainly, right away.' [*NPC walks off for a while.*] 'I'm sorry, it appears that Commies have stolen the last of our supply. The Computer has dispatched a Troubleshooter team to solve the problem.'
- 7-8 'Yes, of course, one moment while I get it for you.' [*Wanders off and doesn't come back.*]
- 9-10 'Are you implying The Computer forgot to assign you something, citizen?'
- 11-12 'For that you need to fill out Form #B5AT67.' [*When asked for the form, say it requires another form, and so on until they give up. If it looks like they will keep going, send them off to some remote location, where they will fall into a food vat or something.*]
- 13-14 No one anywhere in the entirety of PLC has ever heard of the requested item, or at least doesn't admit it.
- 15-16 The requested item requires a deposit of an insanely large number of credits.
- 17-18 'That item has been sent to our labs for testing due to apparent design flaws. We may still have some in stock, though, if you want me to go check...'
- 19-20 'Certainly, here you go.' [*The clerk provides an obviously mistaken order. Instead of the requested cone rifle, the Troubleshooters receive, say, 10 meters of twine.*]

Bouncy Bubble Beverage!

It's the MANDATORY thing! Drink more today!



Bureaucracy

An ungodly percentage of Alpha Complex works in the bureaucracy, processing forms, stamping vouchers, tracking resources and performing the thousands of myriad tasks necessary to keep bureaucrats occupied and out of trouble. The whole point of bureaucracy is to create a system that can continue, regardless of the stupidity of individual workers. So, though dull citizens find bureaucratic work challenging, most of those with IQs above that of your average clam tend to be surly and bored.

Here are a few tips on running a fun bureaucracy:

- ① **Make 'em wait:** The line stretches back from the counter, loops around the room twice, out the door, and down the corridor out of sight.
- ② **The old 'Wrong Office' ploy:** 'Oh, you must be looking for the Department of Routing, Internal. This is the Department of Internal Routing. Have a nice day.'
- ③ **Not all clerks are nice guys:** Uh, actually, *no* clerks are nice guys (something to do with sitting around all day and doing menial tasks meant for morons). Most clerks are unsympathetic at best, openly hostile at worst.
- ④ **Use lots of forms:** 'Listen, buddy, I'd like to help you out, but I can't give you a 498-C until you first fill out a 95757-13KE/4 and a 39411-B6.'
- ⑤ **Life ain't fair:** So what if the Troubleshooters are living in a high-rad zone? Tough! They still can't move until they receive a 4838/BRD-4 Housing Relocation Due To Excessive Radiation Transfer Form, and it takes at least a week to get the inspection team up there for confirmation (once the form is filled out, once you get the form...). In the meantime, issue them a spraycan of Rad-Away or something.

Random Bureaucracy Generation

These tables provide a general description of a bureaucratic office: room size, shape, security clearance and a brief description of the clerk in charge. To create an office, roll 1d20 once on each table. Of course, no tables can match your own twisted creativity. Take these examples as inspiration when you create a bureaucratic office of your own.

Room size

- 1-2: Cubicle
- 3-4: Cell or refitted closet
- 5-10: Small office (3-6 workers)
- 11-16: Normal office (7-30 workers)
- 17-18: Large office, room for 100 desks
- 19: Real large office, room for 500 desks, multi-tiered (but where are the stairs?)
- 20: Real, *real* large office. Think the Astrodome with a low ceiling. Citizens at the far end look incredibly small.

Room shape

- 1-10: Square (ho-hum)
- 11-12: Circular. Clerks stand behind a circular counter in the center of the room, surrounded by citizens seeking service. Clerks feel besieged.
- 13-14: Triangular
- 15-16: Pentacular
- 17-18: Hexagonal
- 19: Octangular
- 20: A maze of twisty-turny passages, all alike

What's wrong with this room?

- 1: Not enough desks. Deskless employees stand by edges of the room and charge toward any vacated desk. Fights are frequent, fatalities not unheard of.
- 2: Too many desks. Way too many desks. Desks piled on top of each other.
- 3: No desks. Citizens stand around. Some have a tape outline on the floor showing where their desk should go. Their files and papers are scattered all over their desk areas, making information retrieval rather difficult.
- 4-6: Room is in poor condition. Ceiling sags, cracks in the walls, exposed highvoltage lines, etc. Floor apt to give way at any moment.

7: Wrong security-clearance room. Way too high (maybe INDIGO). Clerks are all standing outside in the corridor expecting to get terminated for low productivity. They scream and scatter when Troubleshooters arrive.

8-9: One of the ceiling lights flutters and buzzes annoyingly. Can be fixed with a successful electronic engineering roll. Failure means the bulb explodes, showering everyone in the room with sharp pieces of glass shrapnel (damage 04W).

10: Very crowded. Hundreds of citizens are waiting in line, queued up and p'd off. Security clearances vary from INFRARED to GREEN. The line moves slowly. Citizens near the front look as if they haven't eaten for days.

11: Nobody's here. No workers, no clients, no nothing. Footsteps echo ominously off the walls, ceiling, and from beneath the floor.

12-13: Thermostat's broken. Temperature varies from absolute zero to the boiling point of lead.

14: One clerk, multiple windows. The clerk refuses to help the PCs because the Troubleshooters don't have something from one of the other windows. When the Troubleshooters shift windows they find the same clerk there (he changed windows also). Clerk keeps sending them from window to window, for approvals, loyalty oaths, etc., until the gag gets old... maybe longer.

15: Secret society stronghold. For instance, a Sierra Club office would have a hanging fern; sign on the fern reads 'Howard'. Clerks seem oblivious to the plant's presence. Service here is fast and efficient. Any threatening remarks about Howard, and every clerk in the room suddenly draws his laser and starts blasting. (After using this room once, vary the secret society and the treasonous item—fuzzy dice and Pink Floyd records in a Romantic's office, etc.)

16: Difficult accessway. Housing Preservation and Development has decided to save credits by making

[continued on next page]

BUREAUCRACY

corridors narrower. Exactly how narrow is up to you. Make the Troubleshooters stoop, crawl or even slither along on their bellies to reach the clerks inside.

- 17: Mixed security clearance room. Most of the floor is GREEN, except for not-very-wide-at-all BLACK paths that wind circuitously and eventually lead to the various desks. Trigger-happy Vulture goons armed with laser rifles stand on either side of the paths and yell, 'Boo!'
- 18: Lighting malfunction. Either pitch-black darkness or blinding light.
- 19: Something's *very* wrong here: biological contamination, radiation, firefight in progress. Maybe there's a dead citizen on the floor, and nobody seems to notice him. Citizens in front of the Troubleshooters step over the body as if it weren't there.
- 20: Nothing is wrong. This is a nice office (thank you very much).

■ Security clearance of workers

- 1-5. INFRARED
- 6-8. RED
- 9-10. RED with ORANGE supervisor
- 11-13. RED and ORANGE with YELLOW supervisor
- 14-16. ORANGE and YELLOW
- 17-19. ORANGE and YELLOW with one GREEN administrator visiting
20. None. Staffed entirely by clerkbots.

■ Waiting time

- 1-2: No wait, suspiciously efficient service
- 3-4: Five minutes
- 5-6: 10 minutes
- 7-8: Short line of citizens waiting; 30 minutes
- 9-11: Medium line of citizens, one hour
- 12-14: Long line, two hours
- 15-16: Very long line, four hours
- 17-18: Very, very long line, eight hours
- 19-20: Infinitely long line. Higher-clearance personnel keep cutting in front of the Troubleshooters. Serious Bootlicking, Bribery, Intimidation or Access required to do anything but starve slowly at the end of the line.

■ Personality of clerks

1. **Paranoid:** Confides to Troubleshooters his firm belief all other workers in the office are Commies. If Intimidation is used, clerk screams, 'You're not taking me alive!' and opens fire.
2. **Greedy:** Wink at your players. Rub two fingers together as if you're holding a coin. Say stuff like 'Sure, I think that can be (*wink, wink*) arranged.' Jingle the change in your pockets.
3. **Antagonistic:** Argues about everything. If accused of being antagonistic, will argue about that too. Would rather die than succumb to threats of physical violence—and probably will—die, that is.
4. **A dreamer:** This citizen doesn't really want to work in Bureaucracy Central. This citizen wants to be a HPD&MC vidstar. Talks endlessly about 'the big break' and popular reality vidshows. He shows around his portfolio of photographs.
5. **Robotic:** Devoid of all emotions. Talks in clipped sentences and uses lots of logic and other sense-making stuff. Troubleshooters might suspect clerk is a Commie android. (Maybe it is. You decide.)

6. **Dolefully docile:** Feebly laughs if Troubleshooters try to cheer him up, or gazes at them gratefully with tear-filled eyes. Breaks into spontaneous sobs. Swallows noisily. 'I'm s-s-sorry? (*Gulp*)'

7. **Annoyingly helpful:** Has to be in control of everything. Helps other clerks so often he doesn't have time to listen to the Troubleshooters. Favorite phrase: 'Back in just a sec.' Returns 10 minutes later.
8. **Vulture Squadron transfer:** Drummed out for excessive brutality (!). Greets everyone by saying, 'I could kill you in seven seconds. Maybe five.' Willing to prove it. Unwilling to do just about anything else.

9. **Inefficient and clumsy:** Troubleshooters who get pushy are in for a rude surprise. The clerk is an Internal Security agent on a task force assigned to investigate CPU reports of clerk harassment.

10. **Nervous:** Doesn't trust citizens with lasers (justifiably so). Tries to usher Troubleshooters out of room as quickly as possible, even if it means lying. Con Games rating 18.

11. **Harried:** Clerk buried beneath piles of paperwork. Protruding hands snatch the form from the PCs and stamp it a dozen times with a red stamp that reads 'Approved.' If the PCs don't have a form, a muffled voice inside the pile tells them to go away.

12. **Snob:** Feels superior to any other citizen who doesn't understand and appreciate the bureaucratic runaround as well as he does. This means just about anybody. Loves to make things difficult for poor PCs.

13. **Defensive:** Favorite phrase: 'Oh, I suppose you could do it better?' If pushed, rises and says, 'Okay, smarty, you're in charge now. Have fun!' Then he stalks off.

14. **Crazy. Schizoid. Whacked-out:** Seems normal at first, but, if any pressure is brought to bear, starts dancing around the room singing, 'Can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!' and current loyalty songs.

15. **Prematurely old:** A thick layer of dust covers his arms and head; cobwebs cling to his clothes (the hygiene officer should note and remedy this). Nods off in the middle of conversations. Looks up from time to time and says, 'Maggie-O, is that you?'

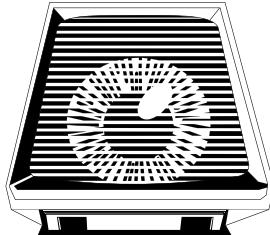
16. **Former hygiene officer:** Wants everything done exactly the way he likes it done. Refuses to accept forms or vouchers even slightly smeared or crumpled. Won't even speak to anyone but a hygiene officer, then trades anecdotes about 'the good old days.'

17. **Bully:** Tries to intimidate customers. Favorite phrase: 'You and what service group?' Intimidation 15; tries to extort items from the PCs in exchange for 'favors' that never materialize. Heavily armed to back up his threats.

18. **Depressed:** Completely bored with existence. Infuriatingly slow. Refuses to help Troubleshooters if they don't have the correct forms filled out properly. Immune to all Management skills. Doesn't care if Troubleshooters blast him.

19. **Cheerful and competent:** Likes his job. Smiles and answers all questions in a clear and concise manner. If he can't help the Troubleshooters, he knows precisely where they should go and to whom they should talk. This should completely unnerve them.

20. **Just like #19, but totally incompetent:** Confidently and helpfully sends Troubleshooters down wrong hallway to get wrong form from wrong department. If encountered at a different time from #19, this could be the exact same guy in a new clone backup body.



PARANOIA™

CHARACTER SHEET XP

Troubleshooter: _____ - 1 2 3 4 5 6 _____

Name _____

Clearance _____

Sector _____

Clone number _____

Troubleshooter's gender: M F Other Player: _____

Service group and firm: _____

Tics: _____

MANDATORY BONUS DUTY

- Team leader
- Loyalty officer
- Hygiene officer
- Comm & recording
- Equipment Guy
- Happiness officer
- _____

ACTION SKILLS

Management

Bootlicking _____
Chutzpah _____
Con Games _____
Hygiene _____
Interrogation _____
Intimidation _____
Moxie _____
Oratory _____

Stealth

Concealment _____
Disguise _____
High Alert _____
Security Systems _____
Shadowing _____
Sleight of Hand _____
Sneaking _____
Surveillance _____

Violence

Agility _____
*Energy Weapons (Violence +4) _____
Demolition _____
Field Weapons _____
Fine Manipulation _____
Hand Weapons _____
Projectile Weapons _____
Thrown Weapons _____
Unarmed Combat _____
Vehicular Combat _____

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

Hardware

Bot Ops & Maintenance _____
Chemical Engineering _____
Electronic Engineering _____
Habitat Engineering _____
Mechanical Engineering _____
Nuclear Engineering _____
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance _____
Weapon & Armor Maintenance _____

Software

Bot Programming _____
C-Bay _____
Data Analysis _____
Data Search _____
Financial Systems _____
Hacking _____
Operating Systems _____
Vehicle Programming _____

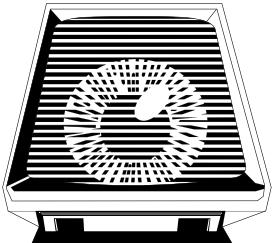
Wetware

Biosciences _____
Bioweapons _____
Cloning _____
Medical _____
Outdoor Life _____
Pharmatherapy _____
Psychotherapy _____
Suggestion _____

HAPPINESS IS MANDATORY

PARANOIA™

KP CHARACTER SHEET (SECRET SIDE)



Mutant power: _____ Registered

Secret society: _____ Degree: _____

Current society mission: _____

Attribute ratings: Power **CLASSIFIED**

Access **CLASSIFIED**

SECRET SKILLS

Uncommon

Unlikely

Unhealthy

EQUIPMENT

Personal

Assigned

Treasonous

OTHER STUFF

Credits

Perversity

Treason codes

and evidence against others

SECRET STARE TREASON

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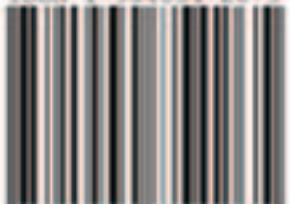
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