

ALTERNITY®

Fig. 1

HoffmannInstituto

"The Voice" is an introduction to the Dark-Matter™ campaign setting for the Alternity® Science Fiction Roleplaying Game, a world not unlike our own—at least on the surface. Underneath lies a shadowy world of mystery, magic, and strangeness—a complex web of conspiracies covered up by the organizations and individuals who know the truth. The heroes in the world of Dark-Matter are looking to find that truth, often as agents of the Hoffmann Institute and other secret organizations.

# The Voice

by Stephen Kenson    Illustrated by Alan Rabinowitz

## What Do You Need?

To play this solo adventure, all you need is a pencil and some dice. Keep the hero sheet for Diana Hunter, agent of the Hoffmann Institute, handy as you play; you'll need to refer to it often in the adventure. Just start at "The Call," below, and read through it as the text directs; you'll learn the game mechanics as they're needed. Important game information is set apart from the main adventure text in sidebars.

The Alternity game uses the following dice: d20, d12, d8, d6, and d4. The d20 is the "control die." You always roll the control die when you need to make a roll. The other dice are "situation dice," which are added to or subtracted from the control die depending on the situation's difficulty. First read "The Game Mechanics" in the sidebar; other game mechanics are explained as the adventure unfolds, starting with "The Call."

## The Call

You're beginning to think your contact won't call, that you've wasted over an hour sitting in your car in one of the most run-down sections of town in the dead of night. It wouldn't be the first lead that turned out to be a dead end—and probably not the last, either. Then your cell-phone rings, breaking the silence.

"Hunter," you answer.

"Hello, Diana," comes the quiet voice from the other end of the phone. It's your informant. You call him the Voice. You don't know his real name or anything else about him, except that his information has been accurate so far. He knows things about secret U.S. government projects, things nobody should know, but which match information in the Institute's most secret files. All efforts to track him down have failed, but that's not surprising. If anyone knew the things that the Voice was telling the Institute, the Voice would have been killed by now.

"All right," you tell the Voice. "I'm here. Now what?"

"I'm glad you came, Diana," the Voice says, his calm tone reflecting some genuine appreciation. "I'm glad you decided to trust me."

"Don't push it," you reply. "Get to the point."

"Of course," the Voice says. "I want to

# The Game Mechanics

Using the dice described above, the basic ALTERNITY game rule is fairly simple. Roll a number equal to or less than your target score to succeed at an action. Target scores include your ability scores, skill scores, and action check scores. If you roll higher than the target score, your hero fails. You always want to roll as low as possible—the lower the roll, the more likely the hero succeeds.

The scores on the hero sheet are divided into three categories by slash marks. These represent the target scores for three possible results, respectively: **Ordinary**, **Good**, and **Amazing**. Rolling the appropriate score or lower is an Ordinary success, one-half the score or lower is a Good success, and one-quarter of the score or lower is an Amazing success. Any roll greater than the target score is a Failure (or, in the case of an action check, a Marginal success).

**Example:** Diana Hunter has an action check score of 13. A 14 or greater is a Marginal success. A roll of 13–7 is an Ordinary success, 6–4 is a Good success, and 3 or less is an Amazing success.

show you something important."

"What's that?" you ask.

"I can't tell you over an open line,"

Voice says. "You have to trust me."

Easier said than done... Still, the Voice has been right so far, and the knowledge he has is tantalizing. "All right," you say.

"Good. Just follow my directions. Did you receive the package I sent you?"

Your hand drops down to rest on the small cardboard box on the passenger seat. It arrived this morning from a post-office box registered under a false name.

"Yes."

"Good. Put on the headset from the box, then hang up your phone."

The box contains a small, sophisticated throat mike and headset. You take it out and put it on, then hang up the phone.

"Can you hear me?" the Voice says over the headset. You reply, "Yes."

"Now drive as I direct..."

You start up the car as the Voice guides you through the darkened streets toward an area filled with warehouses standing in dark rows. You stop the car in a nearby alley and kill the headlights.

"Go to the third warehouse building," the Voice says. "There's a side entrance with a coded lock, but I'm sure that won't prove too difficult for a woman of your talents."

"Then what?" you ask.

"Get inside, and you'll see," the Voice says. The headset falls silent.

You pause to check your equipment before heading out, your 9mm semiautomatic fully loaded and ready to go. You've also got a small flashlight, and you took the precaution of wearing some light body armor under your dark cloth-

ing, just in case. You're as ready as you'll ever be. You just hope that this isn't some kind of trap.

Stepping out of the car, you approach the warehouse carefully. There's no sign of anyone outside. Still, you approach cautiously.

**Make a Skill Check:** To approach the warehouse unseen, make a Stealth skill check for Diana. It's dark, and Diana is wearing dark clothing, so roll a d20, then roll a d4 and subtract it from the d20 roll. Compare the result to Diana's Stealth skill (11).

◆ If the roll is a success, go to 1.

◆ If the roll is a failure, go to 2.

1

You make your way cautiously to the warehouse door. It looks like reinforced metal with a small electronic keypad. The door is locked, but you should be able to decode the keypad to get it open.

**Make a Complex Skill Check:** Diana has to overcome the electronic lock to open the door into the warehouse. Fortunately, she has the Knowledge-computer operations skill to allow her to do so. Roll against Diana's skill of 13 with a d20.

Overcoming the computerized lock is a *complex skill check*, so Diana must accumulate more than 1 success. In this case, she must roll skill checks until she achieve 5 successes before rolling 2 failures. Each roll of the dice represents 1 minute of work on the lock. An Ordinary result counts as 1 success, a Good result counts as 2 successes, and an Amazing result counts as 3 successes.



## Combat and Damage

**Secondary Damage:** For every 2 points of mortal damage Diana causes to an opponent, she also inflicts 1 point of wound damage and 1 point of stun damage. For every 2 points of wound damage, she also causes 1 point of stun damage.

**Results of Damage:** For each point of damage inflicted, mark off one point of durability from a character (stun, wound, or mortal, depending on the type of damage). If all of a character's stuns or wounds are marked off, the character falls unconscious. If all of a character's mortal points are marked off, the character dies.

**Recovery:** Stun damage is temporary, and any stun damage a character has disappears at the end of a scene. (Each of the numbered sections is one scene.) Wound damage remains until healed by rest and medical attention. Mortal damage requires the use of Medical Science—*surgery* and medical attention to recover.

**Armor:** Some characters wear armor. After a successful attack, roll to see if the armor protects. For example, Diana's armor offers d6–2 points of protection against high impact (HI) weapons like guns. Any result of 0 or less means no protection. Any positive result is subtracted from the amount of damage inflicted.

### Diana Attacks

Diana's Modern Ranged Weapon—*pistol* score is 12. Because the fight with the guard takes place at short range, and the guard has no resistance modifier, roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the result of the d4 from the d20.

On Diana's hero sheet, notice that the damage for the 9mm pistol is divided into three categories, representing the effects of an Ordinary, Good, and Amazing attack. If you roll higher than Diana's score of 12, the attack misses.

Roll an attack. If successful, roll damage against the guard. So, if Diana rolls a Good attack against the guard, roll d4+2 to determine the number of wounds the guard takes. The guard has a durability of 8 stuns, 8 wounds, and 4 mortals. This is the amount of damage the guard can endure before being knocked out or killed. Note how much damage Diana does to the guard using the boxes below.

#### Guard #1

Stun	8	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	8	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Mortal	4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

### The Guard Attacks

If the guard is still able, he can make an attack against Diana. The guard has a skill score of 11 and rolls a d20 and "d0" because of Diana's resistance modifier. If the guard manages to hit, Diana's armor offers some protection. (See "Combat and Damage.") The guard has a 9mm pistol that does the same damage as Diana's: d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m.

- ◆ If you achieve 2 failure results before achieving 5 successes, go to 8.
- ◆ If you achieve 5 successes before accumulating 2 failure results, go to 12.

2

As you make your way along as quietly as possible, you suddenly spot a guard dressed in a nondescript dark jumpsuit and armed with a 9mm pistol. The guard spots you at the same moment, reaching for his weapon and ordering you to halt. You can't afford to be caught. You'll have to fight

**Make an Action Check:** Action rounds are broken down into 4 phases. Each phase is about 3 seconds long, enough time for a character to perform a single action. The phases are Amazing, Good, Ordinary, and Marginal, just like the results of skill and action checks. Characters can act in as many phases as they have actions per round, depending on the result of their action checks.

Diana has two actions per round and an action check score of 13. If you roll a Marginal success, she acts only once, in the Marginal phase of the round. If you achieve an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing

success, choose which two phases Diana acts in, starting with the phase that matches the degree of success.

The guard acts in the Ordinary phase of each round and can perform only one action.

Using a d20, make an action check for Diana.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to 3.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary success, go to 4.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal success, go to 5.

3

You manage to get the drop on the guard before he can draw his weapon, grabbing your own 9mm pistol and taking aim. You can fire two shots before he realizes what's happening.

**Make a Skill Check:** Diana acts before the guard and can use both of her actions before he can react. First, read "Diana Attacks" in the adjacent sidebar. If the guard survives the first two attacks, then see "The Guard Attacks" and continue with the following rounds until the guard is defeated (go to 6), or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

4

You draw your own gun and level it at the guard as he does the same. You only hope that this place has enough budget problems that it can't afford the finest security. Otherwise, this could be a problem.

**Make a Skill Check:** Diana acts in the same action phase as the guard, the Ordinary phase. See "Diana Attacks" and "The Guard Attacks," then apply damage simultaneously. Continue with the following rounds normally until the guard is defeated (go to 6), or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

5

The security guy catches you off guard. As you move to bring your gun to bear, the guard already has his out and trained at you. You're playing for high stakes here, a matter of life or death.

# ALTERNITY Science Fiction Roleplaying Game

## Solo Adventure Hero Sheet

### Diana Hunter

Profession: Free Agent

Career: Hoffmann Institute Field Agent

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res. Mod.
Strength	9	4	0
Dexterity	11	5	+1 step
Constitution	9	4	0
Intelligence	12	6	+1 step
Will	10	4	+1 step
Personality	9	5	0

ACTION CHECK SCORE		Actions per round: 2	
Marginal 14+	Ordinary 13	Good 6	Amazing 3

#### DURABILITY

Stun	9	□□□□□□□□
Wound	9	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	5	□□□□□

	Skills	Rank	Score (0/G/A)
<b>STR</b>	Unarmed attack		9/4/2
<b>DEX</b>	Modern Ranged Weapons		11/5/2
	Pistol	1	12/6/3
	Stealth		11/5/2
	Shadow	1	12/6/3
<b>CON</b>	Stamina		9/4/2
<b>INT</b>	Knowledge		12/6/3
	Computer operation	1	13/6/3
	Deduce	1	13/6/3
	Law		12/6/3
	Law enforcement	1	13/6/3
<b>WIL</b>	Administration		10/5/2
	Bureaucracy	1	11/5/2
	Awareness		10/5/2
	Intuition	1	11/5/2
	Investigate		10/5/2
	Interrogate	1	11/5/2
	Research	1	11/5/2
	Search	1	11/5/2
<b>PER</b>	Deception		9/4/2
	Bluff	1	10/5/2
	Interaction		9/4/2



Weapons	Damage	Type
9mm pistol	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m	Hl
Armor		
Battle vest	d6-3 (L), d6-2 (Hl), d4-2 (En)	

Gear	Identification papers, rental car, cell phone, miniature toolkit, flashlight
------	--

## Fighting the Guards

Diana has a Modern Ranged Weapons—pistol skill of 12. Roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the d4 from the d20. If Diana hits, her pistol inflicts the damage listed on her hero sheet.

The guards have Modern Ranged Weapons—pistol skill of 11 and roll a d20 and a d0 because of Diana's resistance modifier. Their pistols inflict the same damage as Diana's. They each have a durability of 8 stuns, 8 wounds, and 4 mortals.

### Guard #2

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□

### Guard #3

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□

### Guard #4

Stun	8	□□□□□□□□
Wound	8	□□□□□□□□
Mortal	4	□□□□

You're just hoping that it doesn't turn out to be your death.

**Make a Skill Check:** The guard acts before Diana in the Ordinary phase. If Diana survives, then she acts in the Marginal phase of the round. Since she acts in the Marginal phase, Diana gets only one action this round, rather than two.

First see "The Guard Attacks" and make the necessary rolls there. Then move on to "Diana Attacks" to resolve her action. Continue with the following and subsequent rounds until the guard is defeated (go to 6), or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

6

Your shot catches the guard and spins him to the side. He crumples to the floor in a heap, his gun dropping from his hand. You holster your pistol and keep heading for the door of the warehouse. You only hope that you haven't already raised the alarm.

◆ Go to 1.

7

Burning pain stabs through you, and the world seems to tilt out from under you as you spin and drop toward the ground. As you start to black out, you hear the Voice speaking to you over the headset. "Diana? Diana, what's happening? I need your help. You don't know what they've done to me. Please..."

The desperate plea is the last thing you hear as the darkness smothers your senses and overtakes you completely.

The End

8

You work feverishly over the electronic keypad to decipher the code to enter the warehouse complex. First, you try cross-circuiting the system, but you must have picked the wrong wires. A red light flashes at the top of the panel and you step back from it in alarm. Suddenly, a security guard comes running around the corner. He spots you and charges in your direction.

**Make an Action Check:** The security guard acts in the Ordinary phase and has one action. Roll a d20 for Diana's action check.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to 9.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary Success, go to 10.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal Success, go to 11.

9

When the guard comes charging around the corner, you're ready for him. You fire twice at him before he even has a chance to react. If you can take him down quickly, this mission might still succeed.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts twice before the guard, then the guard returns fire in the Ordinary phase, if he is still alive and able to act. Continue the combat until the guard is defeated (go to 12) or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

10

The guard is expecting trouble, but he doesn't know who he's dealing with here. You only hope you're the better shot as you both level your weapons at each other and fire.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana and the guard act at the same time, in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts again in the Marginal phase. Continue the combat until the guard is defeated (go to 12) or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

11

The sudden appearance of the guard throws you off-balance, and you turn toward him just as the guard raises his gun at you and fires. You just hope that he's a lousy shot.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. The guard acts first in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts in the Marginal phase. She gets only one of her usual two actions this round. Continue the combat until the guard is defeated (go to 12) or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

12

You manage to override the computerized locking mechanism on the door and get it open. Behind it is a nondescript corridor lit with pale fluorescent lights. You close the door carefully behind you and look around. No one is in sight.

"Okay," you whisper into your throat mike. "I'm inside. Now what?"

"There's a way to close down the security systems from in here," the Voice says in your ear. "I'll guide you. Go down the hall, take a right, and go to the first door on the right. That's the security station. There should be two guards on duty there."

Following the Voice's directions, you move quickly and quietly down the hall, pressing flat against the wall to avoid being seen. You gently grasp the knob and twist, then fling open the door and level your pistol into the room. The two guards inside react with surprise.



**Make a Surprise Check:** When it is possible for one side to get the drop on the other, a surprise check is required. Make an Awareness-intuition check for the guards (their target score is 8).

◆ If the guards fail the surprise check, go to 13.

◆ If the guards make the surprise check, go to 14.

## 13

You've caught the guards by surprise. Before they can even blink, you have a chance to fire off a shot.

If an opponent fails a surprise check, a special phase called the Surprise phase is added to the beginning of the combat round. Diana can take one action in this phase, then the normal round begins. See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar, then go to 14.

## 14

Two guards, one of you—not very even odds. But then, you're hardly going to let them go and get more guards to even things out!

**Make an Action Check:** The security guards act in the Ordinary phase and have one action each. Make an action check for Diana using a d20.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to 15.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary success, go to 16.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal success, go to 17.

## 15

The guards are reacting fast, but not fast enough! You fire twice before either of them manages to regain his bearings and return fire at you..

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts in the Amazing and Good phases, or in the Good and Ordinary phases, while the guards return fire in the Ordinary phase, if they are still able.

Continue until the guards are defeated (go to 18) or Diana is defeated (go to 7).



"The guards are neutralized," you say into your throat-mike.

## 16

The guards recover from their surprise fairly quickly, drawing their weapons and opening fire on you. You have some cover from the doorway and return fire.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts in the Ordinary phase along with the guards, then again in the Marginal phase.

Continue until the guards are defeated (go to 18) or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

## 17

The guards' surprise lasts for only a moment, then they're moving into action instantly. You're caught a little off guard by their sudden response, and they both shoot at you before you can return fire.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Guards" sidebar to resolve combat. The guards go first in the Ordinary phase, then Diana acts in the Marginal phase, if she is still conscious. Diana acts only once this round.

Continue until the guards are defeated (go to 18) or Diana is defeated (go to 7).

## 18

After taking down the guards, you check out the security console in the room. You should be able to shut down the security systems from here, enough to give you access to the rest of the facility.

"The guards are neutralized," you say into your throat-mike.

"Good work," the Voice says. "Now you can deal with the security systems. Don't shut them down; there's another option. Just do as I tell you."

"How did you know I was thinking about shutting the system down?" you ask.

"There's no time to explain," the Voice replies. "Trust me."

Yeah, sure, "trust you," you think. Your fingers fly over the keyboard as you set to work.

**Make a Complex Skill Check:** To overcome the security countermeasures, Diana must override the computer's security lockouts and make some programming adjustments. This is a complex skill check using her Knowledge-computer operations skill. Diana is getting some help from the Voice for this one, so she gains a positive situation die. Roll a d20 and a d8

## Fighting the Technician

Diana's Unarmed Attack skill is 9. Roll a d20 and a d4 (for using a broad skill). Add the result of the d4 to the d20. If she hits, her unarmed attack inflicts the following damage: d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s. She can also choose to draw her gun, but she takes a d4 penalty drawing and firing in the same action; roll a d4 and add it to the result on the d20.

The technician has an Unarmed Attack score of 8 and inflicts the same damage as Diana's attack. Roll a d20 plus a d4 for his skill check. The technician has a durability of 6 stuns, 6 wounds, and 3 mortals. He is otherwise unarmed. Unarmed attack damage is considered low impact (LI) for purposes of Diana's armor.

### Technician

Stun	6	□□□□□□
Wound	6	□□□□□□
Mortal	3	□□□

against Diana's skill of 13. The roll on the d8 subtracts from the roll on the d20 to determine the result.

Making the necessary changes to the system is a complex skill check. Diana needs to accumulate 8 successes before she accumulates 3 failures. Each roll of the dice represents 30 seconds of work in this situation. An Ordinary result counts as 1 success, a Good result counts as 2 successes, and an Amazing result counts as 3 successes.

◆ If you achieve 3 failure results before earning 8 successes, go to 19.

◆ If you achieve 8 successes before earning 3 failure results, go to 20.

## 19

Once you make the modifications to the security system as the Voice instructs, you put on a white lab coat you find in the closet, right where the Voice said it would be. Slipping your pistol and headset into the large side pockets and clipping a security pass from one of the guards on the breast pocket, you make your way down the hall as you've been instructed, passing various closed-off doors marked with security warning signs. You spot the door the Voice mentioned at the end of the corridor. Just

then, the door opens and a white-coated technician steps out into the corridor.

He eyes you suspiciously as you approach. You prepare to hand him a line and your pass when he suddenly holds out a hand.

"Hold it right there," he says.

◆ Go to 21.

## 20

Once you make the modifications to the security system as the Voice instructs, you put on a white lab coat you find in the closet, right where the Voice said it would be. Slipping your pistol and headset into the large side pockets and clipping a security pass from one of the guards on the breast pocket, you make your way down the hall as you've been instructed, passing various closed doors marked with security warning signs. You spot the door the Voice mentioned at the end of the corridor. Just then, the door opens and a white-coated technician steps out into the corridor.

He eyes you suspiciously as you approach. You smile and hope your security modifications pass muster.

"Transport orders," you mutter, indicating your pass with a wave

**Make a Skill Check:** Diana has to bluff her way past the technician. Make a skill check against Diana's Deception-bluff score of 10. The technician has no resistance modifier, and Diana's disguise and adjustments to the security system give her a situation die bonus of d8. Roll a d20, then roll a d8 and subtract the result from the d20 roll. Compare the result against Diana's skill of 10.

◆ If you fail, go to 21.

◆ If you succeed, go to 22.

## 21

The technician glares at you and says, "I don't think you're authorized to be here." He takes a step toward you, giving you a momentary opening.

**Make an Action Check:** The security technician acts in the Ordinary phase and has one action. Roll a d20 for Diana's action check.

◆ If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to 22.

◆ If you achieve an Ordinary Success,

go to 23.

◆ If you achieve a Marginal Success, go to 24.

## 22

When the technician moves toward you, you get the drop on him. You use a karate move to take him down.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Technician" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts twice before the technician, then the technician attacks in the Ordinary phase, if he is still alive and able to act. If you want, Diana can draw her gun using one of her actions to fire at the technician. Continue the combat until Diana or the technician defeats the other.

◆ If Diana defeats the technician, go to 25.

◆ If the technician defeats Diana, go to 7.

## 23

The technician is expecting trouble, but he doesn't know just what kind of trouble he's got on his hands. When he approaches, you lash out with a hand and try to take him down.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Technician" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana and the technician act at the same time, in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts again in the Marginal phase. Continue the combat until Diana or the technician prevails.

◆ If Diana defeats the technician, go to 25.

◆ If the technician defeats Diana, go to 7.

## 24

You make your move, but the technician sees it coming and tries to hit you. It looks like he's taken a few self-defense courses, but you're better.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Technician" sidebar to resolve combat. The technician acts first in the Ordinary phase. Then Diana acts in the Marginal phase. She gets only one of her usual two actions this round. Continue

the combat until Diana or the technician wins.

- ◆ If Diana defeats the technician, go to 25.
- ◆ If the technician defeats Diana, go to 7.

## 25

Getting past the technician, you open the door and move into the room. It's dimly lit with fluorescent tubes running along the ceiling, filled with a strong smell of antiseptic and the faint bubbling and humming of machinery. There's no one else inside as you sweep the room with your gaze. You come to the rear wall of the room and stop dead in your tracks.

Resting on top of a complex bank of machinery is a row of three glass jars filled with a greenish liquid that gurgles and bubbles slightly. Inside of each jar, connected to the bottom by trailing wires, is a human brain, floating freely in the liquid. As you stand and stare in shock at the disembodied brains, you hear the Voice speaking to you again.

"Hello, Diana," it says. "I'm glad you're finally here. I knew you couldn't resist a mystery."

Your hand automatically reaches up to touch the headset when you realize that it's still in the pocket of your lab coat. The Voice is coming entirely from inside your head.

"Who ... what are you?" you ask, "and how do you know about me?"

"I knew you'd come because it's what I would have done," the Voice says. "You see, Diana, I am you. The real you."

- ◆ Continue with 26.

## 26

"What?" you exclaim. You've seen some weird stuff in your time working for the Institute, but never a brain in a jar that claimed to be you.

"It's true," the Voice says. "You're the result of an experiment in cloning and memory implantation. I'm the real Diana Hunter. I was investigating this project when I slipped up and got captured. As far as I can tell, they removed my brain from my body and created a clone duplicate, programmed with my memories, to infiltrate the Institute. That's you."



"Hello, Diana," it says. "I'm glad you're finally here."

"There's a tiny implant in your brain that allows them to send you commands. You're working for the enemy, Diana, and you don't even know it."

"What they underestimated was the power of the human brain. Somehow, outside of our bodies, we've learned to harness certain mental abilities, the way I'm speaking with you now. They allowed us to learn things about the project, and to make certain things happen. They also allowed me to contact you and convince you to come here. I'm sorry to trick you, but I couldn't tell you the truth."

"Obviously," you mutter. "Do you really expect me to believe this?"

"It doesn't matter what you believe," the Voice says. "You're here, and we need your help."

"To do what?"

"To put an end to our existence. We need you to shut down the equipment here so we can finally escape from this half-life. I know you don't want us to suffer, Diana, because that's not what I would want."

"Will you stop saying that!" you reply. "You're not me!"

"Believe whatever you want," the Voice says. "But will you help us?"

- ◆ If you agree to help, go to 27.
- ◆ If you refuse to help, go to 32.

## 27

"All right. I'll do it," you say.

"Thank you," a chorus of Voices replies in your mind. Suddenly you know how to shut down the equipment in the room. You start moving toward the control panel when you hear a noise from the doorway.

"Hold it right there, Diana," a familiar voice says. "Don't do anything foolish." You spin to see a figure standing in front of the door, holding a 9mm pistol leveled in your direction. A cruel smile crosses her face as you face off against ... yourself.



## Fighting the Doppelganger

Diana's opponent has the exact same skill and ability scores as she does. See Diana's hero sheet for this information. The duplicate is armed with a 9mm pistol that does the same damage as Diana's, but she is not wearing any armor. Since both Diana and her double have a +1 resistance modifier for their Dexterity, roll a d4 and add it to the d20 when making Modern Ranged Weapons—pistol skill checks for either of them in the fight.

### Doppelganger

Stun	9	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	9	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Mortal	5	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

**Make an Action Check:** Diana's duplicate acts in the Good and Ordinary phases. Roll a d20 for Diana's action check.

- ◆ If you achieve an Amazing success, go to 28.
- ◆ If you achieve a Good success, go to 29.
- ◆ If you achieve an Ordinary Success, go to 30.
- ◆ If you achieve a Marginal Success, go to 31.

28

Although you're confused by all that you've seen and heard, you don't hesitate when faced with danger. You spin toward your doppelganger and bring up your pistol. Your sudden burst of action seems to have startled her. Funny, you think you'd be smarter than that.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana acts before her double in the Amazing phase, then again in the Good phase. The duplicate Diana acts first in the Good phase, if she is still alive and able to act. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to 33.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to 7.

29

You and your double move at the same time, almost like mirror images of each other. You try to figure out how this

could possibly be, but you're too busy fighting for your life at the moment. Let's just hope she's not as good as you are, or at least not as lucky.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana and her duplicate act at the same time, in the Good and Ordinary phases. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to 33.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to 7.

30

You make a move, but your duplicate has the drop on you. She shoots once before you can bring your own weapon to bear. You hope she's not as good a shot as you are.

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana's duplicate acts first, in the Good phase, then again in the Ordinary phase with Diana. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to 33.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to 7.

31

Too slow! You're too confused by what's going on here. Even as you start to move, your doppelganger starts shooting at you. The Voice speaks loudly in your head "Get it together, Diana! Don't give up now!"

**Make a Skill Check:** See the "Fighting the Doppelganger" sidebar to resolve combat. Diana's duplicate acts first, in the Good and Ordinary phases. Diana acts in the Marginal phase (if she is still able) and gets only one action this round. Continue the combat until one character wins.

- ◆ If the duplicate is defeated, go to 33.
- ◆ If Diana is defeated, go to 7.

32

"I'm sorry, Diana, but you give us no choice," the Voice says in your head. Suddenly you feel a powerful stabbing pain in your mind as the disembodied brains try to force their will upon you.

You try to concentrate and shut them out. What were you thinking? Oh, yes, that's right...

◆ Go to 27.

33

As your duplicate drops to the floor, you become aware of a snapping and crackling sound. You turn to see that a couple of stray shots have damaged some of the machinery. Leaking chemicals pouring onto the floor ignite in a whoosh of flames, sending a searing wave of heat across the room to slap you in the face. Fire alarms suddenly begin blaring inside the complex.

"Run, Diana!" the Voice says in your mind. "Save yourself! There's nothing more you can do for us." You begin to protest, but you realize that it's true. There's nothing you can do. You head out of the room, pausing for a moment by the door to look back at the disembodied brains, then down at your double, lying on the floor. Then you turn and don't look back.

The place is in chaos, so it's an easy matter for you to slip past the guards and make it outside. By the time you're out of the complex, the fire appears to be spreading rapidly. You make it to your car and call the fire department on your cell phone. When the authorities show up, some people are going to have a lot of explaining to do. They'll manage to cover it up—they always do—but at least the people involved in this project will know that someone is on to them.

As you drive away from the darkened warehouse, with flames and smoke rising from one side, you hear a faint voice speak into your mind.

"Thank you, Diana. Thank you for our freedom. Take your life and live it well." The Voice fades and is gone. You may never know for sure if what it told you is true, but you plan to find out.

What happens next? Pick up a copy of the Dark•Matter campaign setting and search for the truth!

*Stephen Kenson is a freelance writer and a fan of conspiracy theories and high weirdness. He's fairly sure that he's really who he thinks he is, although he occasionally has doubts.*