

# THE QUIET Agency

A setting for **RISUS** by Michael David Jr. Ver. 1.0

## RISUS CAMPAIGN RUNDOWN

**Genre:** Superhero/Conspiracy/Monster Hunting

**Tone:** Serious/Humorous Moments

**Campaign Options:** Options I, II, III, and IV from the Risus rules. Lucky Shots & Questing Dice, Sidekicks and Shieldmates, Eye of the Tiger, and Boxcars & Breakthroughs from the Risus Companion. Strip Risus? Sigh. If you must.

**Points/Dice:** 120 points or GM Choice

**Description:** The Quiet Agency is part superhero comic, part horror movie, and, yes, part X-Files. It is an organization of low-powered metahumans and superb normals gathered together by the enigmatic Mr. Smith. Their purpose: to investigate those mysteries that other superpowered beings won't or can't deal with. Their mysteries run the gamut from straight horror mystery to more four-color fare. The official universe of the Agency is called the Mandeville Universe, of which more will be written of later. It's a typical superhero universe setting with huge dollops of Saturday Morning cartoons and syndicated TV of the past 20 years. But use what you want and how you want. Go head.

## HISTORY

No one knows exactly when the QUIET Agency officially began. The first recorded case of the QUIET Agency was in 1998. A rash of metahuman murders in Chicago captured the headlines. Three precise blows killed each victim, even metas reported with invulnerability. Smith's first two agents were former government super The Eagle and Andrea Stoker, descendant of Salem witch hunters. They determined the killings done by a minor demon named Canaclas who wanted to use metahuman blood as a catalyst for a massive demon summoning. The Eagle and Stoker defeated the demon and its host.

The critical acclaim gained from the solving the "Chicago Meta Murders" gave the Agency several contacts and good press. It gave them a reputation for investigating cases involving the strange and the bizarre. Finally, contacts were made in the metahuman and occult communities that increased business and aid.

Over the next five years Smith gathered together the organization of normals and metahumans. The shadowy nature of their cases continued. Each case was analyzed and Smith called together the people he thought was best qualified for the situation at hand.

Not everything was praise and accolades. Some scholars were incensed that the Agency proved that a recently discovered lost gospel was actually an assassination tool designed by a mad sorcerer. Senator Jedikiah "Big Jed" Keane was censured and defeated in a recall election after an Agency investigation revealed his links to drug trafficking. Keane still has powerful friends and these friends can give the QUIET Agency trouble at inopportune times.

Past enemies and allies have plagued the Agency. The mysterious nature of their investigations has an air of disquiet that critics can play off of. The darkest moment of the Agency came when one of Senator Keane's political allies began a federal investigation. Agents from both the QUIET Agency

and the FBI joined forces to investigate the claims and found that Keane was behind the circus. Evidence was presented that disproved the accusations of the panel. The investigation was dropped.

Now, in 2006, the investigations continue.

## **THE AGENTS**

Smith fields about 40 agents at any one time. The agents are considered representatives of the QUIET Agency and are expected to act in a way that will not demean it publicly. Mr. Smith has no problems with dirty tricks and street tactics if the need arises. He frowns upon the unnecessary loss of life, especially innocent lives lost. Repeated "accidents" result in suspension or expulsion from the QUIET Agency.

Agents are picked by personal invitation by Mr. Smith himself. There is no set of circumstances that definitely secure recruitment. He does tend to choose people who are creative, independent, and able to think on his feet. Paranormal abilities, while present in several of the agents, are not a must.

The Agency fields what could best be described as an eclectic group of people. Former FBI agents, lycanthropes, and even a former god number themselves among their ranks. The Eagle and Andrea Stoker were chosen because of some friends of Mr. Smith. Detective Arlen Schlatter was the working officer with the first two agents. His clashing with some higher-ups in the police department led him to accept Smith's offer to join the Agency. Jeremy Merryweather was a renowned researcher scheduled to take a job with the Smithsonian. A chance encounter with the supervillain Bonelord and a page from The Necronomicon introduced him to another world. Bodyguard and former centerfold Jeanne Vercoutre was accused of murdering her last employer. The resulting hearing (and the carnage surrounding it) got her into the fold. The latest member of the Agency, Timothy Kay, was said to just of suddenly appeared in the QUIET Agency offices.

Mr. Smith provides transportation. A stipend is provided for lodging and other expenses. Smith expects agents to be careful with the transportation. One too many destroyed cars will result in a chunk being taken out of the paycheck. A package is available with necessary equipment (flashlight, first aid kit, communicator, etc.). The agent who wants them unless the situation demands otherwise must provide weapons and licenses.

In the case of several members of the agency, certain dependencies must be indulged in to ensure survival. Smith realizes this, but the agents are warned against overindulging in said actions. This can impede on Agency work and bring down the law. That is not good for anyone.

Agents can have personal lives. They are on call during their time of duty. The family of an agent is given death benefits when the agent dies. Smith considers the family and lovers of his agents as his responsibility. Enemies who harass, injure, or kill relative and friends of the Agency have a tendency to meet with "accidents". The Cult of Typhon was wiped out to the man after Andrea Stoker's sister was attacked and almost killed by the cultists. When asked about the Typhon situation, Mr. Smith makes a reference to striking the serpent that strikes your heel, then smiles.

## **CHARACTER CREATION AND OTHER STUFF**

For clichés, I recommend clichés that fit into a four-color superhero setting, but with a twist. The agents below give an example of the typical superpowered being that exists in this world. Think of archetypes and stock characters, and then go crazy. In the Quiet Agency Universe, appearances are deceiving. The Armored Hero might be a wealthy playboy representing his company. He could also be a spirit being inhabiting the armor as his vessel.

120 points for a basic character gives the ability to have a funky dice double pumped cliché or two and still allow for 2-3 clichés to flesh the character out.

For an initial list of clichés, I recommend Guy Hoyle's Anarchomerica: Character Creation section at the Risiverse wiki. The lists of Stock Characters (especially the Supers, Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror section) are essential for running any sort of cinematic style. More cliché ideas are coming in the future. Feel free to add some flavor. On Fire Guy (4) is good. Phlogiston Furnace (4) is good with extra icing on the top.

The QUIET Agency uses regular Risus Combat. For the most part, combat is normally handled as basic x vs. y conflict. In most superhero universes you have a great variety of clichés that interact on a regular basis, with a myriad of origins. Only in certain GM determined conditions are the Inappropriate

Clichés rules used. Most other situations are handled using the When Somebody Can't Participate rules.

For example, an Aerial Morphibot [4d12] can battle a Rune Festooned Golem [4d12] on equal footing. Said Morphibot [4d12] would be an Inappropriate Cliché versus a Three Headed Eldritch Ghost Lord [5d12], unless the player can come up with a really good reason why not.

## **ADVENTURES WITH THE QUIET AGENCY**

### *Investigation*

The main purpose of the Agency is this. Mr. Smith decides on what to investigate and sends the best-qualified agents to deal with the problem. Mysterious disappearances, unsolved murders, unusual robberies and bizarre origins have all been encountered by the Agency.

### *Artifact Retrieval*

Some of the Agency's funding is raised by retrieving lost treasures and property for museums and (on rare occasions) private collections. Often, Mr. Smith has his own reasons for finding the items that have nothing to do with charity. Supervillains and organized crime might also have some problems with agents who relieve thereof their ill-gotten gains.

### *Advisory Capacity*

Not all of the people who Mr. Smith has hired are field agents. Some serve as specialists in their chosen fields, and their expertise is another source of income and connections for the Agency. Superhero teams who do not have a resident sorcerer or super-scientist can contact the Agency for assistance in identifying artifacts or other interesting things.

### *Liquidation*

Vampires, werewolves and demons sometimes inhabit places where they are not supposed to be. Some of the more militant members of the Agency specialize in disposing of those beings that plague the living. Mr. Smith does not condone the compulsive or baseless slaughter of aliens or supernatural beings. He does this only in the most extreme circumstances such as the decimation of a town or threats to the fabric of reality.

### *The Past Returns*

The past of the Agents sometimes has a tendency to haunt them. A conglomerate of men, women, and things that forms the QUIET Agency all have enemies and situations that goes beyond the mere problems at hand. Old foes, rivals and unfinished business can add more layers of complexity to an already difficult situation.

### *Interactions with Metahumans*

The QUIET Agency can mobilize a decently powered force of metahumans in times of great crisis. Although most of the metahuman members of the Agency are not of the greatest power level, they are skilled and crafty. Individual members have contacts with other metahumans or agencies, and might get drawn into situations that require their help.

### *Conspiracy*

Although Mr. Smith acts for the most part on the side of good, his actions show that he is more concerned with his own agenda. At first glance there seems to be nothing connecting the various cases investigated by the Agency save a touch of the bizarre. Exploring further into the subject reveals a pattern of interference and balancing that goes beyond mere coincidence. Connections and favors are made to provide support for some unforeseeable goal. Some of the older members of the Agency (especially Arlen Schlatter) have come to realize this fact. Agents of the QUIET Agency may be well treated and well liked by Mr. Smith, they are only pieces in a games that Smith is playing with other conspiracies and forces in the world.

## **WHO IS MR. SMITH**

Who is Mr. Smith? A question like that has many possible answers, and will frame how the Agents interact with the missions and the world. The man who created and runs the Quiet Agency is the only one who knows the true answer to this query. As is his nature, Mr. Smith is not telling.

Below are a baker's dozen of possibilities for the unoriginally named Mr. Smith, and sometimes how this choice affects the Agents.

Mr. Smith is what he claims to be--a man born to wealth that gathered people together to solve mysteries and explore the unexplained. Helping metahumans is a way to make contacts and money. The more militant members of the Agency involve themselves in the more exotic and dangerous missions. Eventually the group will break up as agents seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Mr. Smith is one of the Secret Masters and the Agency is a tool of the Illuminati. As a roving branch of Warehouse 23, the Agency is designed to infiltrate the tight knit world of metahumans. The members of the Agency are chosen according to their worth and their access to the strange and the bizarre. Most of the artifacts and villains encountered are facets of the Conspiracy that need to be put under control. They are sent to Warehouse. Certain members are allied to different conspiracies, leading to interesting interactions.

Mr. Smith is the last living superhero of a world that does not exist anymore, destroyed in a forgotten crisis. He was the mightiest hero of his age, but even his power was not enough to avert the Cataclysm. Eventually he was reborn in this new world, remembering what had come before. The agents are current incarnations of some of his former comrade in arms gathered again to his side. The artifacts he collects and the evils he liquidated may be precursors to another Cataclysm.

Mr. Smith is a participant in the War between Heaven and Hell. What side he is on is open to debate. On the side of Heaven Mr. Smith gathers the vessels of angels (and truth be told, some of the pagan gods as well). Celestial reliquaries are preserved and distributed. Demonic ones are destroyed. On the other side of the coin, a Demonic Mr. Smith acts to manipulate his agents (who know his true leaning) to pervert the holy. The Agency on the side of hell actually causes more chaos than it solves. And in the middle Smith is a wild card in the War for the souls of Man.

Mr. Smith is a powerful astral being possessing a variety of bodies as he needs to. He seeks people and artifacts to create a balance between the forces of Law and Chaos before one or the other rules. This makes his goals seem more mercurial to the average viewer of the Agency's adventure and to the agents themselves. Many of the agents have powers that are based in the spirit world or my making pacts with lords of Law or Chaos. Anyone who can sense the supernatural can sense the power behind Mr. Smith. Witnesses claim that demons have cowered in fear when they meet with him and refuse to speak.

Mr. Smith is an experimental A.I. (from Warehouse 23) that is exploring a world that he cannot comprehend with mere logic. Magic and the supernatural fascinate him. Money is siphoned off of a multitude of government and corporate budgets. The "Mr. Smith" the agents encounter is an android, hologram, and a simple face appearing on a TV screen. Bizarre weapons are available for testing and the Agency is never at a loss for computer accessing information. Smith, while acting human, is still an A.I., though, and its loyalty and desired might be different from the mortals he employs...

Mr. Smith is a mad collector who seeks to fill his chambers with unique objects d'art. The Agency is his most public way to achieve his end. Eventually someone who works for him will discover this mania. Smith will then find very dangerous missions for the agents or employees who dare to challenge him to often. This Mr. Smith is very high strung.

Mr. Smith is the first interdimensional traveler to visit this world and he is staying to protect it. People and artifacts from other timelines have begun to infiltrate the once stable forces of history. Smith wants to maintain the basic integrity of the world as more random entries begin to wreak havoc

with history. The agents are entities from other dimension who Smith gathers to (a) counteract the machinations of other travelers who seek to profit from the chaos; and (b) eventually send them back to their own realities whether they like it or not.

Mr. Smith is actually the created son of Adam, the first creation of Frankenstein and his Eve, a clockwork woman created by a doctor in Germany. Abel F. Smith gathers other outcasts and unique beings to battle the forces of supernatural evil. The artifacts that are gathered are dangerous items that must be contained or destroyed. He has no problem with destroying those who threaten him and his associated. The Agency is considered an unwelcome enemy by any organization of monsters that meddle in the affairs of man.

Mr. Smith is the creation of the three original members of the Agency: Andrea Stoker, The Eagle, and Arlen Schlatter. After the Chicago Meta Murders, the trio realized the need (and potential financial gain) in investigating the unexplained. Mr. Smith, portrayed by former B-Movie actor Tarl McIntyre, is useful in acquiring additional clients and publicity. Most of the other agents do not know this. If anyone finds out the true origin of the Agency it could cause problems.

Mr. Smith is the latest incarnation of Merlin who is very concerned as to the nature of his recent reawakening. As the time for the calling of Arthur approaches, he gathers together the incarnations of the lesser-known Round Table Knights as his agents. The retrievals and the quests are Smith/ Merlin's way of testing the mettle of the knights and gathering tools for the battles ahead. Other supernatural forces (including Morgana Le Fey) are aware of the powers Smith is gathering and react accordingly for good or ill.

Mr. Smith is one of the last dragons that exist in the mortal world today. The surge of magic that caused by the rise of metahumans awoke the slumbering Smith (his real name is hard to pronounce by humans). The Nazis captured him to use his inherent magic to power a Hitlerian infernal device. A band of Allied heroes rescued the weakened Smith from this horrendous fate. To pay back the ingenuity of the humans who saved him, Smith created the agency to help them with the identification and collection of strange artifacts; not only is he helping old friends, but is accumulating a horde of artifacts and money (dragons are like that). He is usually found in human forms but when angered his draconic nature reveals itself.

Mr. Smith is a servant of Eris the Goddess of Discord or one of the 1000 faces of Nyarlthotep. Gods knows what either of these two beings wants. The agents are along to ride the chaos that only these purveyors of chaos can provide. Hail Eris! All praise the Crawling Chaos!

## **SAMPLE CHARACTERS**

The following characters are typical of the type of agents Mr. Smith fields. Each agent is built up to 120 points. More background on the characters will be found in future versions of The Quiet Agency.

### **PETER DEREVENKO**

A former law student who dropped out of law school when strange incidents began to happen to him. Piotr is a descendant of the mythical Bogatyri, the mythical hero knights of Russian legend. He often times has dealings with creatures of that myth cycle. He was hired after an incident with one of the daughters of Baba Yaga.

#### **Cliches:**

Descendant of the Bogatyri (4d10)

Construction Worker (4)  
Ex-Law School Student [3]

**Hook:**

*Myth Magnet:* As a descendant of the Bogatyri, Piotr is a magnet to mythological beings, especially faeries. While sometimes this is useful, this can also cause problems in GM-decided situations. Ex.: die penalty when sneaking because a nymph in the park your hiding in likes you; penalty sneaking in a build because the house fey doesn't like him.

**Natasha** (Real Name Unknown)

A Russian fey who has become close to Piotr. Most people consider them a couple, but both of them deny it.

**Cliches:** Drop Dead Gorgeous Vila Fey (3), Mistress of the Crossbow (3)

**Hook:** Impulsiveness

**SARA BANNISTER**

The game is all that matters to Sara Bannister. She comes from a long line of con men and grifters that have traversed the US and Europe. Sara is currently "retired" from the business. After a situation that she refuses to discuss, she was pardoned by the federal government and "directed" towards the Agency. Her skills are quite useful in investigators, but she is also used in delicate "retrieval" scenarios. Sara is carefully watched around the valuables.

**Cliches:**

Silver Tongued Ex-Grifter (4d8)  
Gorgeous Actress (4)  
Well Connected Player [3]  
Vicious Dirty Fighter (3)

**Lucky Shots:** [ ] [ ] [ ]

**Hook:**

*Hard to Resist the Con:* Sara's greed sometimes overwhelms her more altruistic aspirations. 1 die penalty in situation where she can get away with conning someone.

**AUTHORS NOTE**

This is a long time coming. The Quiet Agency first appeared in an article in the GURPS APA All of the Above back in 1997. I did several articles for the APA, then some notes here or there. I plan to do some character profiles, sample missions, and universe integration someday. But I wanted to get at least this version out for people to take a gander at now. Thanks for Reading.

Mike David Jr, April 2007