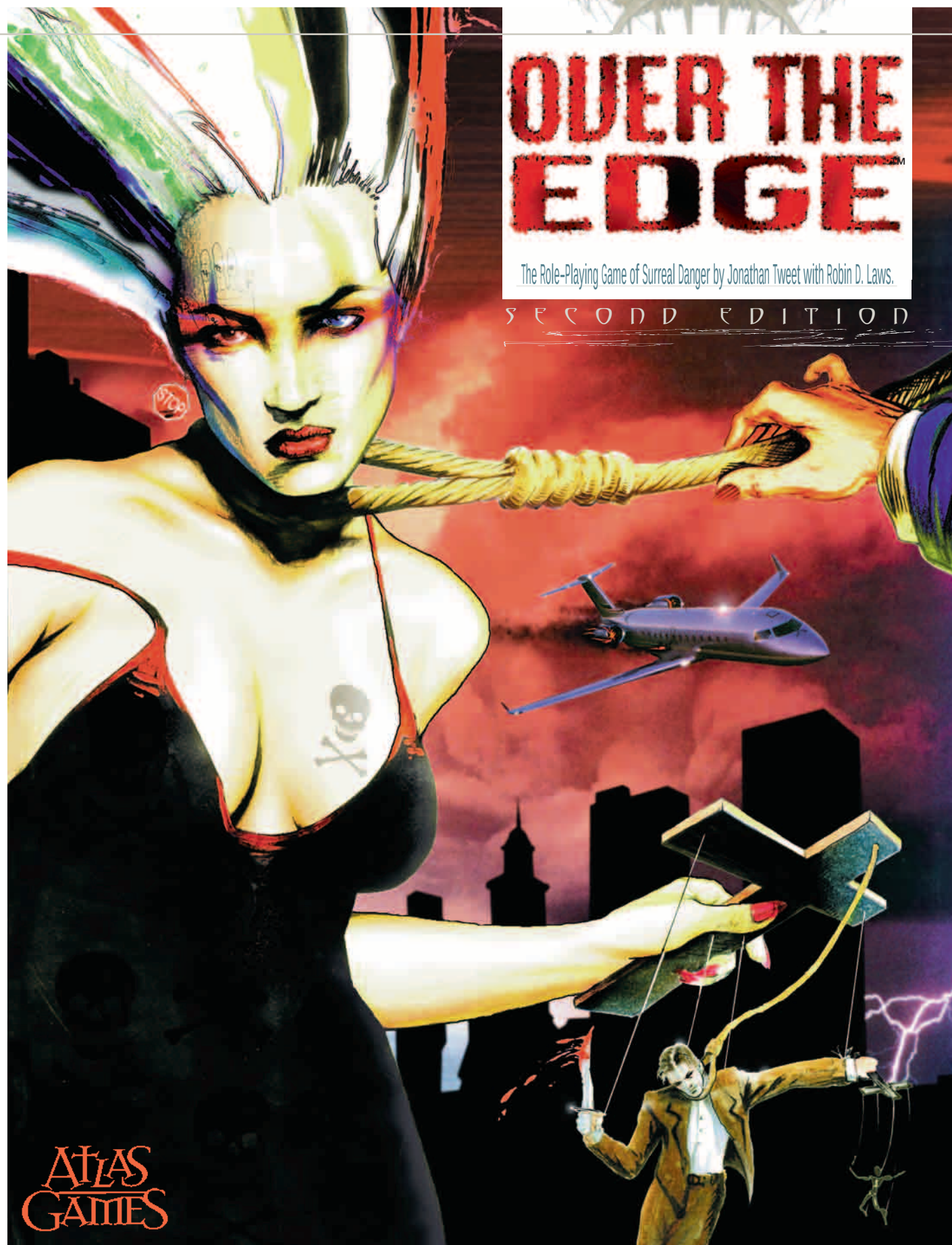


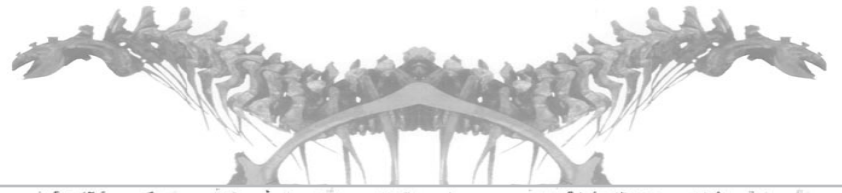
OVER THE EDGE

The Role-Playing Game of Surreal Danger by Jonathan Tweet with Robin D. Laws.

SECOND EDITION



ATLAS
GAMES



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*The Roleplaying Game of Surreal Danger
by Jonathan Tweet with Robin D. Laws*

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GAMES

Electronic Edition
Saint Paul, Minnesota
WWW.ATLAS-GAMES.COM



THIS GAME IS A CODED MESSAGE. YOU WILL DECODE THE MESSAGE IN YOUR DREAMS AND EXECUTE ITS INSTRUCTIONS IN THE SPACES BETWEEN MOMENTS OF WILL. NEITHER YOU NOR I WILL EVER KNOW THE CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE.

— JONATHAN TWEET, JUNE 1997

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DEDICATION

TO JAY FERM, WHOSE DEMENTED PERFORMANCE DURING THE FIRST-EVER OTE GAME SCARED US ALL.

LEGALESE

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DIGITAL EDITION VERSION 1.0

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS OVER THE EDGE™?

This is the section of the rules in which I get to explain why my game is so incredibly interesting that your life is incomplete unless you play it regularly, and that all the other games you may have pale in comparison, their game designers obviously suffering from degenerative neural ailments. This I accomplish under the pretext of summarizing the game for you. So what is *Over the Edge*?

First, let's look at the surface.

This game pits the player characters against all manner of decadent, evil, twisted, mind-boggling, blood-curdling, soul-rending, ego-shattering, world-turning experience. The Game Moderator (GM) is called upon to evoke an atmosphere of surreal danger. The players are called on to deal with this danger to body and soul, to thrive and accomplish their own goals in spite of it. Enjoy.

Over the Edge falls in the same amorphous genre as do the various movies, television series, and novels that take you over the edge of reality and into the dark and surreal world of human fears and delusions, insanity and danger, or sometimes just the inexplicably bizarre. As must be obvious to those who have read the book, *Naked Lunch* by William S. Burroughs was a major inspiration, but other works that make their mark here include *The Outer Limits* and *Twin Peaks* from television, movies such as *Repo Man* and *Liquid Sky*, the fiction of Borges and Phillip K. Dick,

and the collective unconscious as revealed in supermarket tabloids. Since the first edition of *Over the Edge* appeared in 1992, new surreal and conspiracy-oriented TV shows, such as *The X-Files*, have appeared and found popularity. Obviously, these

NOTHING IS TRUE

ANYTHING IS

POSSIBLE

EVERYTHING IS

PERMITTED

— WILLIAM S.
BURROUGHS

sources are very different from each other, and different parts of the island, different game moderator characters, and different plots will draw more or less from these various sources.

In terms of rules, *Over the Edge* emphasizes role-playing and storytelling over number-crunching. The mechanics are exceedingly easy and open to interpretation, so your imagination and common sense will come in handier than will your calculator.

But beneath the surface, what's going on here? What is the game really about? I developed the island of Al Amarja as a playground of the imagination. Why this setting? It is a

modern game so you can easily identify with the characters you create. The game does not need a list of skills or races or backgrounds for the PCs because this is (apparently) the real world. You know very well the kind of people that populate it, and you can easily imagine other kinds of people that you hope don't populate it. The present-day setting allows the GM and players to draw from their vast personal experiences to make the setting highly detailed and understandable.

And why the simple mechanics? Two reasons: First, complex mechanics invariably channel and limit the imagination; second, my neurons have better things to do than calculate numbers and refer to charts all evening. Complex mechanics, in their effort to tell you what you can do, generally do a fair job of implying what you cannot do. When I look back at the player characters my friends have invented in my games, and I review the adventures they have had, they stand out as people and events that I had never before seen in role-playing games: wild, strange, unique, mysterious, unpredictable, bizarre, personal. The more you rely on rules that someone else has written to define your character or the adventures that this character can undertake, the less of a creator you become. What's more, the rules in any game are a boat that takes you to the shore you want to reach. This book describes the shore in detail, but your boat is a purely functional construction without the elaborate detail and complications. It is my hope that the boat's simplicity will encourage you to concentrate on your goal (enjoyable role-playing) without getting caught up in the vehicle (the rules).

INTRODUCTION

The rules are the easiest system I could come up with to let you enjoy the setting. Like the laws of physics, they are imperfect but functional. Let the setting and your understanding of the universe guide your role as Game Moderator or player and simply use the rules as far as they work.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

With a grain of salt.

The statements and implications that the rules make about people, governments, and the universe in general are crafted so as to showcase the "Al Amarjan mindset." You're going to take issue with many of the statements or interpretations made. All that means is that you would take issue with many Al Amarjans when talking about these subjects. Don't take it too seriously. Remember that every statement in this book is false.

Chapter 1 is for all participants, players and GM alike. Chapter 2 is for players whose characters have lived on Al Amarja for a while; it outlines the island and its main city, the Edge, without revealing any secrets that would ruin suspense. The remaining chapters are for the GM only.

Chapter 1, which contains the rules, should be read straight through, but the other chapters are meant for browsing. The GM can read the whole thing cover to cover, or simply skip around, finding whatever is most interesting.

USING THE BOOK

While the GM will easily memorize the rules used in Al Amarja, the background sections will require frequent reference as the PCs wander about the island. To make this reference easier, GMs, make this book your own.

Write in the margins, cross out text you don't like, underline what you

think is important (and what you might forget in the rush of play), doodle in it, fill it with yellow sticky notes, and write cross-references that you use most often. This is a working handbook, not holy writ.

OTHER THINGS THAT WILL COME IN HANDY

Over the Edge uses only six-sided dice; you might want as many as six of them. Those dice with the skulls in place of the 1's are handy because if you roll all 1's when attempting to accomplish something, you screw up. Paper and pencil are also necessary. As a player, you will want to write down names, clues, addresses, phone numbers, quotes, and other tidbits that will help you sort out the secrets of Al Amarja. Honestly, keep good records. I can't tell you how many important clues slipped through my players' fingers because they didn't write them down.

GMs find props useful for making the setting more vivid. The GM may wish to use all manner of objects from the real world to serve as props, things that the



Illustration by Cheryl Mandus

player characters find in the course of their adventures. Since *Over the Edge* is a present-day game, it is relatively easy to find suitable props around the house, such as weird magazines, casual weapons, cigarettes, sunglasses, computer disks, scribbled notes, and whatever else might fit the plot.

Inspirational text and video can stimulate the imagination of both the players and the GM. Depending on your bent, you might look into the writings of William S. Burroughs and Philip K. Dick, or some of the stranger movies that Hollywood has offered us, or you might prefer the offerings of supermarket tabloids.

On the Edge™ game cards may come in handy. There are numerous differences between the *Al Amarjas* of *On the Edge* and *Over the Edge*, but many more similarities. Use *OnTE* cards to illustrate places and faces in your series, or to stimulate your imagination in devising plots, scenarios and characters.

As this book goes to press, there exists one *Over the Edge* novel: *Pierced Heart* by Robin D. Laws (ISBN 1-887801-54-5). For players and GMs alike, this fiction serves as a fine introduction to *Al Amarja*.

Miniatures can aid in marking out where characters are in relation to each other, but their use is strictly a matter of taste. By the way, good luck finding modern miniatures without firearms.

MANDATORY DISCLAIMER

The GM should read the following statement before and after every session of *Over the Edge*.

"All references to vices and to the supernatural contained in this game are for entertainment purposes only. *Over the Edge™* does not promote satanism, belief in magic, drug use, violence, sexual deviation, body piercing, cynical attitudes toward the government, freedom of expression, or any other action or belief not condoned by the authorities."

A PLEA TO REVIEWERS

Much of the enjoyment in playing *OTE™* comes from not knowing what you are up against. To the extent that the bizarre secrets and

plots found in the GM's chapters become common knowledge among gamers, the players' ability to enjoy this game will be diminished. Please, for the sake of players everywhere, keep these secrets to yourself as much as feasible.

This goes for the rest of you gamers as well.

GLOSSARY

Bonus Die — An extra die rolled with the normal dice for an attempted action when the character has some advantage. Drop out the lowest die before tallying the total for the roll.

Experience Pool — The number of dice that a character can use as bonus dice each game. They double as a measure of experience and can be "spent" to improve traits or develop new traits.

Fringe Powers — Powers not readily recognized as possible by the mundane world, including abilities that could be classified as psychic or magical.

Game Moderator (GM) — the person who coordinates the series, ("gamemaster" for those of you still stuck in the sexist, hierarchical mindset).

GM C — Game Moderator Character (= NPC, or non-player-character), a character run by the game moderator.

Hit Points — A measure of a character's ability to take damage and punishment. If reduced to 0 hit points, you're down and out of the fight. A character deep in the negatives is either dead or will die without medical care.

Meters, kilometers, kilos, etc. — It's metric, folks. Get with the program.

Round — In combat, or other intense encounters, a unit of time in which a character can generally take one action. Represents about 3 seconds of time in the game world.

Penalty Die — An extra die rolled with the normal dice when the character has some disadvantage. Drop out the highest die before totalling the roll.

PC — Player character, a character run by one of the players.

Psychic Pool — Represents how often a character can use psychic or fringe powers.

Series — a string of related game sessions, a "campaign."

Trait — A feature of a character, representing a skill, personal characteristic, fringe power, talent, or aspect of one's background. Traits are usually good, but some (called "flaws") are bad.

CHAPTER ONE

PLAYERS'

RULES

This chapter is for all players to peruse if they wish. It contains the rules that players use for designing their characters and playing them through their various plots, adventures, journeys, dangers, loves, trials, set-backs, victories, confusions, transactions, and realizations that compose life on Al Amarja. Please always keep in mind that the GM has final say over the application of all these rules. In fact, Chapter 7 has rules just for the GM to know, including suggestions on how to change the rules in this chapter. The following pages will let you know enough to play the game, but they certainly won't tell you everything. The best way to learn what works and what doesn't is through trial and error in the course of play.

CREATING YOUR FIRST CHARACTERS

Since your imagination and your GM's mercy are your only limit to the type of character you can create, it can be a challenge to fix on a concept for your first few characters. The GM, however, has three ready-to-play adventures that she can use to get your series rolling. Each of these adventures describes certain types of characters that would be most appropriate, which may make developing your first characters easier. Once you have experienced the world, the rules, and the process of creating a charac-

ter, doing so with less guidance shouldn't be a problem.

CREATING A CHARACTER

In *Over the Edge*™, you play a modern-day person in a strange environment. You have great freedom in determining what kind of person you will portray in the game. The more wisely you use this freedom, the more fun you will have. In creating a character for play, please keep in mind a few rules of thumb.

- 1) **Create a character that engages you,** someone you care about or identify with in some way.
- 2) **Create a character who is danger-worthy.** Your characters are likely to be put into danger from time to time, and they should have the resources to cope with it.
- 3) **Use your imagination!** I've sometimes had to restrict players' creations to keep them reasonable, but mostly I've let them get away with more than they first thought possible. As you will see, the rules for character creation are loose and easy, so take advantage of that freedom. Don't take the lists in this chapter as definitive; I mean them only as stimulants to your own creativity.
- 4) **Follow the GM's lead.** Your GM's series may be zany, high-powered, mundane, or whatever else she wants it to be. If you develop a character that does not fit the series that the GM has in mind, change your concept to fit. If you don't, the GM will have a hard time fitting your PC easily

into the series, and the PC may have a hard time surviving as a result.

- 5) **Be independent.** There are several ways you can mess yourself up by creating a character who is somehow dependent on other PCs or limited events in the game world. For instance, it might be interesting to run a PC who is tailing another PC and reporting back to "headquarters" on the other PC's actions, but what do you do when the player of that character doesn't show up, and you have nothing to do? Or what happens when the other PC gets killed and your mission is over? Similarly, you may run into trouble if your goal is limited and easily accomplished. If you are on Al Amarja, for example, to capture a specific criminal, then your reason for being in the game ends when that criminal is captured.
- 6) **Be cooperative.** If you intend your character to interact regularly with other PCs, have a character who is open to working with others. If your reason for coming to the island is so secret that you'll never allow others (other PCs) to help you, or you won't work with them, then you're in for a potentially boring game.

THE CHARACTER GROUP

If the players wish, they may decide to give their adventures some focus by making the PCs part of a group of some sort. This option gives the PCs a good reason to know each other and

work together. The group may be a mad scientist and his friends and supporters, an avant garde band, a theater troupe, a neighborhood watch, a street gang, a small corporation, or whatever other groups strike the players' fancy.

CONCEPT

First, get an idea of the character you will portray. It might help to look over the steps detailed below. Have a

good idea of who you want to be before you start any details.

For ideas as to what type of character to play, look everywhere: modern-day movies, pseudo-cyber books, supermarket tabloids, childhood daydreams, *On the Edge*™ game cards, other role-playing games, advertisement illustrations, New Age philosophy, and your own twisted imaginings.

Stuck for ideas? A lot of people come to Al Amarja to sell their services as bodyguards, mercenaries, and such. Play one of these thugs if nothing else comes to mind. This concept gives you fight-worthiness and a reason to get involved in various plots as you search for employment and ways to improve your skills. Now just ask yourself where you come from and what special skills you have to offer a potential employer, and your concept is ready to go.

SAMPLE CONCEPTS

Former drug runner fleeing from former partners, who now want to kill you.

Incarnation of Atlantean high priest.

Zombie who is breaking free of voodoo control and seeks complete freedom with the help of a wizard rumored to live on the island.

Psycho-killer commando who escaped from CIA brain-washing program when the programming failed.

Creature of goodness from a higher plane trapped in a mortal body and trying to gain release.

Decadent dilettante seeking stimulation for jaded tastes.

Addict of a strange drug who has followed the supply line to the island, where the drug is plentiful.

Unsuspecting tourist.

Professor on sabbatical studying decadent social systems, strange medicines, weird science, unorthodox archaeology, etc.

Beneficiary/victim of Hitler's secret *Übermensch* project.

Charlatan religious leader spreading the word on Al Amarja.

Photographer compiling a photo profile of strange lands.

Ex-Green Beret looking for work as a mercenary or assassin.

Playwright looking for inspiration from Al Amarja's avant-garde theater community.

New Age dupe told by "the cards" to seek his destiny on Al Amarja.

Master of New Age wisdom who has been guided to Al Amarja by a higher power.

Unfortunate mutant who has heard that the "genetically challenged" have an easier time of it on Al Amarja.

A tough biker-gal.

A doctor on a compulsory vacation after her "unorthodox" treatments were uncovered by hospital authorities.

Writer of experimental fiction.

Retired politician living it up on the winnings of several profitable decades as a corporate lapdog.

Defense Department research scientist who's faked his own death after inventing a weapon too terrible for the human mind to accept.

Expatriate Russian scientist, a specialist in some secret scientific techniques.

Italian cabbie running from an unhappy love affair.

Quechuan mystic.

Socialite youth running away from home.

Avant-garde musician whose music has met with poor reception in less open-minded locales.

Libyan laborer looking for work.

TRAITS

Each character has four traits. One trait is the character's central trait, usually defining who that character is. Two traits are side traits, additional skills or characteristics. Of the above three traits, one is chosen as superior. The last trait is a flaw or disadvantage. Each of the four traits entails a sign, some visible or tangible aspect of that trait.

Let's look at the traits one at a time.

Central Trait

First, you have one central trait, essentially your identity — who you are, what you do. This trait can take into account a variety of aptitudes, skills, or characteristics. When you, as a player, describe your character, you are likely to use this trait as the central concept. For example, "I'm a model," or "I'm a former secret agent." If you want to be something weird, this trait must cover that identity.

Look at the Example Central Traits on the opposite page for the kind of identities your central trait can cover. Keep in mind that this list is not something from which you

must choose, but merely a series of examples to show you how to invent your own central trait.

Unknown Attributes

An interesting way to speed up character creation and bring some mystery to the process is to identify certain attributes as unknown to you and to the character. For example, you might be an escapee from an experimental mental illness treatment that has given you powers that you don't even know much about yet. In that case, tell your GM that you want one or more of your traits undefined at the start. Or your motivation for coming to the island might be to follow certain clues, the significance of which you do not yet fully understand. Your GM might well appreciate the freedom that this tactic gives her in manipulating your character into the plots that she will lay for you and your fellow players.

Side Traits

Once you have your central, identifying trait chosen, choose two side traits. They may or may not be related to your central trait. Unlike the central traits, these side traits are very specific, representing discrete characteristics or skills.

Just because a trait is your "side trait" does not mean it is insignificant to your character. For example, a professor with the side trait of "hack writing" might be on Al Amarja to pursue her writing career, and her attempts to gain inspiration for her fiction may be more important in play than her teaching career. Indeed, she may be better at writing than teaching.

Look at the Example Side Traits on page 10 to see how these can work.

More About Traits

The GM looks over your traits and may veto or edit any that she judges to be out of order. She'll probably allow traits like "Exceptionally tough," but might disallow "Completely impervious to all manner

EXAMPLE CENTRAL TRAITS

The phrases in parentheses are example signs that might be associated with the trait. (Of course, you should invent your own signs for your traits.)

The numbers at the end of the description indicate the number of dice that would be assigned to that trait normally (the first, lower number) and how many dice would be assigned if it is the character's superior trait (the second, larger number; see below for an explanation of superior traits). If the scores listed are "4/6," this represents higher than normal scores for "narrow" traits. See that optional rule later in this chapter (p. 12).

Aristocrat — Wealth, familiarity with valuables, knowing how to conduct yourself among the elite. (Regal bearing, disdain for work) 3/4

Cat Burglar — Casing buildings, sneaking, overcoming security equipment, and finding fences for one's loot. (Stealthy step, night owl) 3/4

Doctor — Includes ability to diagnose diseases, perform surgery, prescribe drugs, perform first aid, and charge outrageous fees with a straight face. Probably entails wealth, certainly education, though this education may be narrow. (Terrible handwriting, clinical air) 1/2

Military Background — Includes fighting bare-handed and with a variety of weapons, first aid, keeping cool under fire, and possibly one specialty field, such as mechanics or demolitions. (Wears camo clothes, battle scars) 3/4

Musician — Includes the ability to sing and probably play a few instruments, possibly familiarity with illicit drugs, knowledge of how things really get done in the music scene, a personal style, and the ability to self-promote. May entail wealth or poverty, depending on talent, luck, and other factors. (Flamboyant dress, uses slang constantly, self-satisfied demeanor) 4/6

Painter — Producing attractive paintings, though the audience for this art may be limited if the painter is truly talented. (Paint-stained clothes, grumbles about the limited tastes of the "bourgeoisie") 4/6

Photographer — Perceptive, familiar with a variety of photographic techniques, can develop own film, may have connections in the publishing industry. (Carries a camera everywhere, delights in visual imagery) 3/4

Private Investigator — Surveillance, phone-tapping, subterfuge, and brawling. (Keeps receipts out of habit, does Bogart impersonations.) 3/4

Professor — Well-educated, including at least one specialty, academic contacts, possible recognition for work done in area of specialization, potential for grants to do special work, status among the intelligentsia. (Wears slightly out-of-fashion clothes, left-wing views) 3/4

Religious Charlatan — Good at conning people, appearing innocent, and convincing people to donate money to the cause. Also may be familiar with a specific religious or mystic tradition. (Unnaturally dark and full hair for someone that age, sincere smile, quotes the Bible out of context) 3/4

Scientist — Familiar with science in general, with one field of science as a specialty. Depending on the specialty, you may be able to analyze chemicals, construct useful devices, and figure out innovative scientific devices. (Uses big words, often lost in thought) 3/4

Unusual — If you want to have an unusual character, perhaps the kind of thing that does not exist in the real world, you must take that trait as your central trait. Be sure to be clear to the GM what skills, abilities, and characteristics this trait covers. If you have a weird, unusual power, the GM may give you a "psychic pool," which represents how many times per day you can use that power. This pool may contain 3 shots (uses per day), or you can roll a die to see how many shots it contains. (If you have several fringe powers, you can roll the die once for each and take the highest roll.) GM rules for fringe abilities are found in Chapter 7 (pp. 180-189).

of attack, damage, threat to life, or heartache.”

Take care in naming your trait. Make each unique. If you want your character to be a beautiful woman, for example, is she a “bombshell,” a

“knock-out,” a “natural beauty,” a “model,” or a “hot babe”? If you want your character to be a good fighter, is he a “street fighter,” a “martial artist,” a “bar room brawler,” or a “vicious little beast of a fighter”?

If your character is to have a way with words, is she “well-spoken,” “manipulative,” or “silver-tongued”? While the distinctions among these terms may be slight, they affect your perception of the character and can affect

EXAMPLE SIDE TRAITS

The phrases in parentheses are possible signs that can be associated with that trait. The numbers at the end of the description indicate the number of dice the character receives for a normal and superior version of that trait, respectively. If the scores listed are “4/6,” this represents higher than normal scores for “narrow” traits. See that optional rule later in this chapter (p. 12).

Beautiful — Improves reactions that others have toward you, although you may also attract unwanted attention. (Perfect skin, fashionable wardrobe) 3/4

Brawling — Fighting with bare fists, broken bottles, chains, knives, and impromptu weapons. Use for both attack and defense rolls (see rules for combat on p. 20). (Missing teeth, calloused knuckles) 3/4

Casing — Looking over an area to find easy means of illicit access, suitable hiding places, useful escape routes, etc. (Always aware of surroundings) 3/4

Cool — Remaining unfazed in dangerous or mind-blowing circumstances, attracting those of appropriate gender orientation, impressing people. (Self-assured demeanor, carefully chosen wardrobe) 3/4.

Double-Jointed — Slipping out of a pin, freeing yourself from manacles, avoiding injury from blow that would break the joints of others. (Very limber, loose-fitting clothes) 4/6

Foiling Security Systems — Spotting and disarming alarms, picking locks, anticipating placement of security devices. (Wears gloves, protects hands from possible harm [won’t help change a tire, for example]) 3/4

Fringe Power — Any unusual type of power, usually called “magical” or “psychic.” If you go this route, do yourself a favor and invent a unique and interesting fringe power. Most likely you have a “psychic pool,” representing the number of times per day you can use this power. You can have 3 shots in your pool, or roll a die to determine the number of shots. If you have several fringe powers, you can roll the die once for each and take the highest roll. GM rules for fringe abilities are found in Chapter 7 (pp. 180-189). (Sign depends on the nature of the power) 1/2

Hypnotism — Calling up repressed memories, implanting post-hypnotic suggestions, getting another character to act like a chicken. Hypnosis cannot force someone to behave contrary to their nature. (Penetrating eyes, calm manner) 1/2

Intelligent — Putting clues together to form a valid hypothesis, understanding the meanings of obscure names and words, impressing similarly intelligent or erudite people. This trait represent a broad intelligence, whereas a trait like “scientist” includes intelligence highly focused on the specific area of knowledge. (Does crosswords rapidly and in pen, uses big words) 3/4

Tells Good Jokes — Useful for putting people at ease, passing the time, or picking up lovers. (Can improvise witty remarks, loves to hear others’ jokes) 4/6

Martial Arts — Use this score in combat, both attack and defense, when using bare hands or weapons appropriate to the martial art you have learned. (Does origami, effects an ersatz Japanese style) 3/4

Ladies’ Man — Impressing, charming, and seducing women. (Has a “little black book,” winning smile) 3/4

Good Negotiator — Settling differences, either personal ones or disagreements between others. A good negotiator is often a middle child. (Frequently intervenes in arguments, rarely disparages others) 3/4

Personal Manipulator — Getting others to trust you or to do what you want them to do; usually involves convincing them that such actions are in their best interests. (Air of self-confidence, has no long-term friends) 3/4

Quick — Can move and react quickly. Use this score for either attack or defense rolls, but not both in the same round. (Good reflexes, lithe body) 3/4

Straight-facing — Lying, dissembling, and bluffing without showing emotion. (Reserved demeanor) 3/4

Strong — For attacks in combat (but not defense rolls), breaking down doors, pinning a captive, etc. (Big muscles, works out a lot) 3/4

Tough — Resist poisons, pain, and fatigue. (Big-boned) 3/4



the character's abilities in special circumstances. (A jaded millionaire, for example, may have had his fill of models, with their careful hairstyles and fascination with primping; while a natural beauty may really catch his attention.)

No two traits are exactly alike. For instance, let's look at a useful trait like "athletic." What does that mean? Below are three ways the trait "athletic" could be made part of a character.

Athletic — I'm a natural sportsman, and I love sports. I've excelled at college-level basketball, football, and hockey. Sign: An air of self-confidence.

Athletic — I'm pre-occupied with physical perfection, and to this end I spend large amounts of time working out, building strength, agility, and endurance. Sign: Well-shaped physique.

Athletic — Thanks to a strict regimen of spiritual, mental, and physical purity, I have exceptional physical prowess. Actually, my capa-

bilities are what should be normal for the human body, but MSG, unfocused thought, and uncontrolled desires weaken most people. Sign: Strict diet.

Scores for Traits

Now you have your three positive traits: one central trait and two side traits. Next, you must assign a score to each. The score represents how many dice you roll when using the trait. Two factors determine your score for a given trait: whether it is "superior", and whether it is the kind of trait that most people normally have. (See also the optional rule for "narrow" traits, p. 12.)

First, you choose one of your three traits to be superior. Choose the one you like the most or think is most important to your character.

Most traits are better or worse versions of traits the average person has. For instance, a strong character is stronger than average, but even the average person has some strength. Some traits, however, are unusual or

technical, and the average person has no skill (0 dice) in that trait. If this is the case, a character with this trait has fewer dice than normal, to represent the fact that he would normally have no dice at all in that trait. Medicine, channeling, and quantum physics are examples of technical or unusual traits.

See the charts below for specifics. Below the label for the kind of trait are a few examples of traits that fall in that category. "Superior" indicates your score if this trait is your superior trait. "Good" indicates your score if you have chosen the trait, but not as your superior trait. "Average" means the score for someone who does not have that trait at all.

Of course, some traits cannot be given a score. A character in my group, for instance, was able to swallow and belch up gases voluntarily. Can you give that a score? If the trait is not related to a score, make sure you and the GM agree to what this trait means.

Standard Trait

Stealth, strength, straight-facing	
Superior	4 dice
Good	3 dice
Average	2 dice

Technical or Unusual Trait

Doctor, fringe powers	
Superior	2 dice
Good	1 die
Average	0 dice

Optional Rule:**Narrow Traits**

Some players may wish to invent PCs with traits that are important to characterization but are of marginal use in the dangerous world of Al Amarja. For example, a character may wish to be a painter. This trait is nowhere near as useful as “good fighter,” “tough,” and so forth, so the GM may award the PC with extra dice in that score, to compensate partially for the trait’s marginal usefulness. Traits such as “chess,” “folk-singer,” and “telling ghost stories” may be considered narrow. No fighting skill counts as “narrow.” For “narrow” traits, use the charts below to see how the scores work:

Narrow Trait

Public speaking, cooking	
Superior	6 dice
Good	4 dice
Average	2 dice

Narrow & Technical Trait

Helicopter pilot, dentistry	
Superior	4 dice
Good	2 dice
Average	0 dice

Flaws

Once you have determined your first three traits (the central trait and two side traits), decided which of those three is your superior trait, and assigned scores appropriately, it is time to choose a flaw. A flaw is any disadvantage that your character will

EXAMPLE FLAWS

Believes in an Imaginary Friend — You believe in an imaginary being of some kind and often turn to it for advice. (Talks to “self,” repeats crazy information and refuses to reveal the source)

Bungling — Two left feet, clumsy, klutzy, whatever you want to call it. Receive a penalty die on all actions involving agility and coordination. (Constantly knocks things off tables, food stains on tie)

Closed Mind — Unable to accept ideas that run counter to pre-established beliefs. (Mocks any mention of that which his culture or faith does not accept or understand)

Disgusting Appearance — Penalty die on rolls to impress people favorably. (Scraggly beard, unkempt hair, unwashed face)

Dopplegänger — Someone who looks just like you appears in your life from time to time, often causing trouble for you. (Makes a habit of not showing her face)

Drunk — Addicted to alcohol. (Always saying “I need a drink”)

Enemies — Somebody is out to get you; you may not be sure who that is. (Continually looking over his shoulder)

Fat — Penalty die on feats of endurance, inability to fit in tight places, need for custom-tailored clothes. (Fat)

Hard of Hearing — Penalty die on eavesdropping, hearing people sneak up on you, or noticing the ticking sound coming from the package you’re about to open. (Pretends to follow conversations she can’t hear)

Heavy Smoker — Penalty die on feats of endurance; need for nicotine. (Bad breath, nicotine stains on fingers)

Hypochondriac — Always wasting time and worry over imaginary ailments; may suffer an actual ailment that friends ignore out of habit. (Carries ready supply of medicines)

Nerd — Penalty die in social situations. (Poor taste in clothes and hair styles, uncomfortable around members of the opposite sex, talks endlessly about his powerful characters in role-playing games)

New Age Dupe — Likely to trust untrustworthy people, books, remedies, and “psychic” tools. (Fusses over crystals & proper foods, talks about “vibes” and means it)

One-Track Mind — Unable to keep track of two goals at once. (Constantly forgetting things)

Paranoid — Believes that others are out to get her, may cry wolf once too often, unable to distinguish the people who are *really* out to get her from everyone else. (Eyes always dart from side to side)

Prone to Reckless Violence — When frustrated, there is a one in six chance that the character will fly into a fit of uncontrollable rage. (Sullen demeanor)

Sucker for a Pretty Face — Penalty die when resisting manipulation by an attractive person. (Always talking about this or that good-looking man or woman)

Technophobe — Inability to deal with technology, such as computers, answering machines, and VCRs. (Clothes too small because he can’t get the hang of the drier settings, asks others to make phone calls)

Weak — Penalty die on attacks and feats of strength. (Thin limbs, sunken chest)

have in play. It must be important enough that it actually comes into play and makes a difference. (Being a bad cook just doesn't cut it.) Ideally, your flaw should be something directly related to your central trait or side traits, or to your character concept, rather than just a tack-on disadvantage. For example, if your character is a professor, long-windedness may be his flaw.

Often a flaw causes one to roll penalty dice. For example, someone with strong B.O. may get a penalty die when rolling to make a good first impression. Other flaws cause problems that the player simply must role-play.

See the Example Flaws for ideas as to what your flaw might be like.

Signs

For each trait, including your flaw, describe one sign related to it that others can notice. Use these signs when describing your character. That way you can tell other players, "I'm a tall, slim man who walks with a confident gait and wears a strange gold medallion around his neck." Isn't that better than, "I'm agile; I come from a wealthy British family; and I dabble in magic"? Some signs are not always apparent. They might appear when you use the trait in question, or only occasionally. Each of the example traits above lists at least one possible sign that might go with it. Look at those for ideas.

HIT POINTS

Your "hit points" represent the amount of punishment, damage, and pain you can take and still keep going. The more hit points you have, the harder you are to take down.

Hit points are determined by any trait you may have that is relevant to fighting, toughness, strength, mass, or other aspect of your character that indicates the ability to take damage. If this trait is ranked as 4 dice, your hit points are 28. If ranked as 3 dice, your hit points are 21. Lacking such a trait, your hit points are 14. (You do not have fewer than 14 hit points for having a trait like "weak.")

The astute among you will realize that you get 7 points per die, and that relationship makes it easy to roll your hit points randomly, if you want. Simply roll double the number of appropriate dice (e.g. 6 dice for a trait ranked as 3 dice), and your total is your hit points.

WARNING TO POWER GAMERS

You power gamers out there have no doubt noticed that you could pretty easily create quite a powerful character. Believe me, I've seen players get away with incredible violations of game balance, and you can do the same. Just let me warn you that the more powerful you are, the deeper you get into trouble before you realize you are in serious danger. Consistently, the most powerful characters tend to be the shortest lived.

In addition, a powerful character is seen as a threat or a potential tool by the various power groups on Al Amarja. Those powerful enough to attract attention to themselves may find themselves the targets of assassination attempts or kidnapping and brainwashing.

If a powerful character is what you want, go for it. Just don't say I didn't warn you.

If you have more than one trait that could affect your hit points, roll for each trait separately and take the highest roll for your total. For example, if you are a 4 die martial artist and also have 3 dice strength, you could roll eight dice and six dice, using whichever roll results in the higher figure.

Want to get complicated? Here we go. If you have two traits related to hit points, you can take one of them as "average." Don't roll for it at all; just take the hit points listed above. Then roll for the other, using

the result only if you actually roll over the average score for the first trait.

The strong martial artist in the example above could take 28 points for his 4 dice of martial arts and then roll six dice for being strong, taking whichever result is higher. Or he could take 21 points for being strong and then roll eight dice for the martial arts, again taking the higher result. To be fair, you must decide whether you are rolling or taking the average hit points for any trait before you begin rolling for any others. The strong martial artist could not first roll the six dice for being strong and then decide whether to roll the eight dice for martial arts ability. You've got to decide ahead of time whether to hedge your bet, and how.

Once you've determined your hit points, attach a descriptive word or phrase to them to represent what they mean for your character. For instance, a strong character might call his "Brawn," indicating that his resilience in the face of physical punishment comes from his well-developed musculature. Another character's hit points might be "guts," relating to sheer internal toughness and resolve, rather than to any purely physical trait. These personal descriptions can lead to colorful player banter, such as "I don't feel so brawny

any more," or "The thing just splashed my guts all over the wall!"

Descriptions of hit points also give your character more personality. A character who can take a lot of punishment because he is determined is conceptually different from someone who keeps going because he is too big (or too stupid) to notice his wounds.

The GM can also use your description of your hit points to bend the rules to fit an unusual situation. For instance, imagine a weapon that stimulates pain nerves

on contact. A big guy's hit points might not be too effective against the attack, since increased size might just mean he has more pain nerve endings; but someone whose hit points come from being determined might be able to shrug off the pain and keep going. (In this example, the GM can either penalize the big guy to keep his extra hit points from protecting him, or give a bonus to the determined character to represent his superior resistance to pain. Which option the GM picks depends on whether she's had a good day.)

Players often have a lot of fun making their enemies lose hit points, but the characters usually lose some of their own in the process. See the section on combat later in this chapter for the gruesome details.

EXPERIENCE POOL

As a beginning character, you have one die in your experience pool. This means that once per game session you can use this die as a bonus die on any roll you make, improving your chances for success. Once you use this die, you cannot use it again for the rest of the session.

The experience die represents your experience, will, wits, and special circumstances. You must justify the use of the die in these terms. If the GM does not tell you what a roll is for, you cannot use an experience die to modify it because you cannot justify its use. (See "Using Your Experience Pool.")

As the series progresses and you become more experienced, the GM will award you more dice for your experience pool to represent the experience gained. That means you can improve more of your rolls each session, but you cannot use more than one die on a single roll. Once a die is used, you may not use it again for the rest of the game session.

If you want to be most classy, get some distinctive dice to use as experience dice. Set them out on the table in front of you at the beginning

of play. As you use them, put them away because, once used, they are out of the game for the rest of the session.

As you gain more dice in your pool, you can "trade them in" for improved traits. See the rules for experience later in this chapter.

Using Your Experience Pool

Justify the use of your experience dice whenever you use them. Make up facts if necessary. Here are some examples of how you might justify using an bonus die when doing each of the following actions:

intimidate someone: "Being on Al Amarja has toughened me and put a fiendish glint in my eye."

block a knife thrust: "This has got to be the third knife-fight I've been in this week, and I'm getting used to it."

break open a door: "I've learned that on Al Amarja people play for keeps, and I don't hold back like I used to do when I was managing a convenience store back in Peoria."

overcome pain: "These guys just gutted my friend, and I'm not letting them get away with it."

wow a fab babe: "I knew a woman like her back in Tokyo, and I know just how to approach her."

Optional Rule: Multiple Experience Dice

The GM may allow you to use more than one experience die, but only if you can give one good justification for each die that you intend to use. You only use a bonus die for each justification that the GM accepts, and the GM may refuse to use this optional rule altogether.

MOTIVATION

Choose a motivation for your character. Why have you come to Al Amarja? What do you want out of life? What are you trying to accomplish? The character might not be fully aware of his own motivation. (After all, how well do we really understand why we do what we do?) A good motivation inspires your character to action so the GM can use it to involve you in events on the island. The GM might also use the motivation to bring your character into contact and cooperation with the other player-characters. Beware of motivations that will make your character hard to play.

SAMPLE MOTIVATIONS

- To win power & glory
- To become wealthy
- To defeat Amaless, the Heartless Mage*
- To find your long-lost daughter*
- To write the great American novel
- To escape the law
- To find employment in your rare vocation
- To make the world a better place
- To live an exciting life
- To penetrate mysteries and gain secret knowledge

**If this is an easy task, accomplishing it will leave your character without a goal, so be careful with a motivation like this one. Of course, your GM can see to it that this is no easy task.*

SAMPLE SECRETS

Fleeing from law because you killed your family
 Psychosis barely controlled by your medication
 You are a cannibal
 Perverse tastes (specify what they are)
 You're actually a former criminal who only poses as a reporter
 You are gay and feel the need to keep this a secret
 You worked for the CIA (or still do)

SECRET

Choose some secret, some hidden fact that few others, if any, know about you. Pick a dark secret, if you can, something you desperately want to keep hidden from others. Again, this secret can help you get involved in the plots and intrigues to be found on the island.

IMPORTANT PERSON

Choose one person who was important in your past, and decide how that person was important to you. It could be someone you know personally, or merely someone you admire, even a fictional character.

DRAWING

Draw your character. All my players complained when I told them they had to draw their characters, but they all did it, and the characters are much richer for it. Give it a

SAMPLE IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Attila the Hun, who inspired your thirst for power
 Your grandmother, who taught you hexing
 David Koresh, whose fiery martyrdom sparked your quest for spiritual enlightenment
 Your father, who kicked you out of the house when you were sixteen so you could learn to fend for yourself
 Edgar Allen Poe, whose mystical symbolism you alone have deciphered
 Timothy Leary, an old friend of yours, now distant
 The pet lizard you had as a child, who first told you of your *true* identity and destiny



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

shot. I take this step very seriously indeed.

If you want to wimp out, claiming congenital failure of artistic ability, then draw something: your car, your family coat of arms, a prized possession.

This step is important because it carries the creation process beyond the verbal and establishes hyper-neural connections among centers of your brain that are not directly connected (specifically motor control and vision centers).

BACKGROUND & EQUIPMENT

Fill in all the details you want about your character's background. List the possessions the character brings to the island and have some idea of the financial resources he will have. Choose items and finances appropriate to the character concept.

Your character might be a destitute wanderer who will live hand to mouth until finding an income on Al Amarja. Or maybe he's independently wealthy and doesn't have to worry about cash. Perhaps he's on the island through large loans and credit card advances, which he intends never to repay. What do you think will be fun? (Personally, I find independent wealth to be a cop-out, but I'm entitled to my cop-outs, and you're entitled to yours.)

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

Let's look at creation of a sample character to see how the whole process works. As our example, we'll take a look at Arthur Pendrick, an invention of mine.

Concept

I want someone intellectual, creative, and a little weird. How about a wandering, manipulative expert in mythology, someone who has begun to take his inquests into mythology a little too seriously?

Traits

For the central trait, I take "mythology." The GM wants to know what I intend to do with that. I decide that my knowledge will cover all varieties of mythology, and may even include some ability to perform impromptu exorcisms and blessings. The sign I pick is a ring engraved with a Sanskrit prayer from the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

As my first side trait, I take "manipulating people," because I see this guy as a schemer. The sign will be his ingratiating smile. And I need something to keep him alive when blades flash, so I make him a "scrap fighter." I don't see him as physically impressive or well-trained, but he's got a killer instinct under this classy façade. The sign for this will be the leer that replaces his ingratiating smile when he realizes it's time for a fight.

Now for a flaw: he's beginning to lose his grip on reality. His studies of obscure mythological lore have infected his daily life, and he is beginning to see ghosts in every shadow. The sign for the flaw is the prayers from various religions he mutters when things get weird. The GM asks whether Arthur suspects he may be losing it, or whether he is slipping away without realizing it. I decide that he does suspect, but he cannot be sure.

Of the three positive traits, I select the central trait, mythology, for my superior trait, giving it 4 dice. Scrap fighting and manipulation get scores of 3 each.

Hit Points

Since he's a scrapper (3 dice), Arthur could have 21 hit points, or I could roll six dice. I decide to roll, and the dice come up 22. I describe his hit points simply as innate, animal toughness.

Experience Pool

Like everyone else, Arthur gets one die in his pool to start with.

Motivation

Arthur's motivation is to understand mysteries and to figure things out, especially things arcane and hermetic. This motivation will make it easy for him to involve himself in the various adventure opportunities that will present themselves, and it fits his concept nicely. Why come to Al Amarja? His tarot cards told him it would be a good idea, but he does not know what to expect here.

Secret

A few years back, Arthur became an initiate of the Silver Order of Isis. In addition to witnessing and partaking in a few special rituals on which the authorities would not look kindly, he earned the wrath of the Order's leaders when he decided that their organization was a silly hoax and left it. Whether the Order is serious enough to act on its vows of vengeance remains unknown.

Important Person

Arthur never knew the man's name; he was a homeless person that hung around the park near Arthur's home. When Arthur was sixteen, the man approached him and said, "You do not understand anything you see." Arthur speculates that the man may have been psychotic, but those words caused something to gel in his mind.

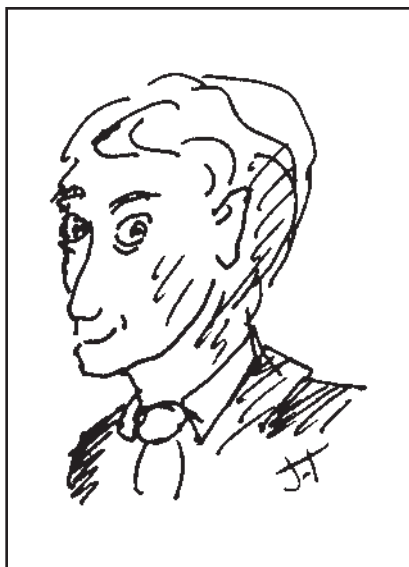


Illustration by Jonathan Tweet

He began to question the fundamental knowledge of the world he had taken for granted and came to take interest in mythology. To this day, those words remind him not to take things as they first seem and let him feel at home in mystery.

Drawing

See bottom of the page to the left.

Background & Equipment

First, I need to figure out how Arthur makes a living. With his skills at manipulating people, he could be in sales, or he could make money from his interest and ability in mythology. I settle on a combination: he has made quite a bundle by running pricey weekend seminars for wealthy but shallow yuppies who are willing to turn to mythology in search of some kind of meaning in their lives. With his knowledge of mythology and his ability to manipulate others, he can put on quite a show and convince his clients not only that they were fulfilled, but that they should come back and be fulfilled over and over again. Certain indiscretions with clients, however, have made it advisable for him to take an extended vacation. His tarot cards told him that Al Amarja would be just the place for him.

So he is a wealthy man ready for a long stay. He has plenty of clothes and traveler's checks, plus his very personal collection of mythic icons, statuettes, medallions, and other such items. He also has brochures from his seminars, in case Al Amarja turns out to be a good place to run his familiar scam. He does not, however, have weapons, false ID, and other items that some characters find useful.

BASIC MECHANICS

These are the rules for play, how to tell if you succeed or fail at the various tasks and efforts you attempt. The special case of combat is covered in the next section.

GENERAL ACTIONS

Whenever your character tries to do something, the GM will respond in one of three ways, depending on the difficulty of the task. The task might be automatic, chancy, or impossible, as ruled by the GM. For example, consider Arthur attempting each of the following actions:

Automatic Action

Arthur: "I light a cigarette and take a few puffs."

GM: "OK." (That's an appropriate response for an automatic action.)

Chancy Action

Arthur: "I light a cigarette, take a few masculine puffs, and stare at the beautiful redhead in such a way that she thinks I'm desperately cool."

GM: "Roll three dice." (More on what this means below.)

Impossible Action

Arthur: "I light a cigarette and stare at the wall, melting it under the heat of my frustration."

GM: "OK." [to the other players] "You see Arthur looking intently at the wall. Nothing happens."

CHANCY ACTIONS

We all know what happens when you try something that's automatic or impossible. These rules let us find out what happens when you try something that's chancy. Basically, you roll some dice, add the numbers up, and the better you roll, the better the result. Specifically, your total is compared to some other number. Three results are possible.

- 1) *Your total beats the number.* You succeed at what you were attempting. The greater the difference between your roll and the number, the greater the success, as ruled by the GM.

- 2) *Your total equals the number.* Draw, stalemate, or inconclusive results are thus indicated.
- 3) *Your total is less than the number.* You fail, and the greater the difference between the numbers, the more severe your failure, as ruled by the GM.

Simple, isn't it? But two questions remain. How many dice do you roll, and to what number do you compare your roll? Let's answer them one at a time.

How Many Dice Do You Roll?

Generally, you roll two, three, or four dice, depending on the action and your traits (see pp. 11-12). If you are trying something that directly involves one of your traits, roll the number of dice equal to your score in that trait. If the action has nothing to do with any of your traits, you roll two dice. That means that the average person attempting the average task rolls two dice.

For example, Arthur is smoking his cigarette and trying to look cool. He is good at manipulating people (score of 3), so the GM tells him to roll three dice. The higher the number, the cooler he appears. A normal person would only get to roll two dice, and a nerd would roll two dice but suffer a penalty die (see below). If Arthur had chosen to have "manipulating people" as his "superior" trait, he would have gotten to roll four dice, but since he decided that mythology would be his superior trait, he only gets three dice when manipulating people.

"It can't be that simple," you think. And you're right. Let me introduce you to bonus dice and penalty dice.

If you try something at which you have some kind of edge or advantage, you get a bonus die. (These bonus dice are awarded by the GM in the situation; they do not come from your experience pool.) Roll it right along with your normal dice, but drop out the lowest die you roll. Your total is still composed of the same number

of dice as normal, but they're likely to be higher rolling dice. That's how your advantage translates into game mechanics.

If you try something at which you have some special difficulty or hindrance, roll a penalty die along with your regular dice. Now drop out the highest rolling die and use the total of the remaining dice as your roll.

If you get a bonus and a penalty die for the same roll, they cancel each other, and you roll normally. You can use an experience die to cancel a penalty die, but then you cannot use the die again for the rest of the gaming session.

The GM assigns bonus dice and penalty dice depending on her judgment of the situation. You can ask for a bonus die when you think you deserve one, but ask politely. Some GMs will doubtless find cause to assign multiple bonus or penalty dice, but I rarely do. If a situation is that far out of balance one way or another, I can pretty much tell what's going to happen without the dice.

For example, if Arthur, before trying to impress this good-looking woman, had successfully watched her for a few hours, noticing how she interacts with other men and trying to get an idea of what kind of guy she'd like, he would get a bonus die on his roll (roll four dice and take the best three). On the other hand, if Arthur, unknown to him, had a splotch of ketchup on his tie, he would have to roll a penalty die (four dice, take the worst three). If he had done his research and had ketchup on his tie, he would get neither bonus nor penalty, as they balance each other out.

Comparing Your Roll

There are two ways to determine what number to compare to your die roll.

When you are working against an inert force, the GM assigns a difficulty factor (see p. 35). That's the number to which you compare your roll, and the more difficult the task, the higher the difficulty factor. Alternately, the GM can roll dice for the strength of the inert force, introducing more chance

into the equation. The harder the task, the more dice the GM rolls. An easy task would get one die, a moderate task (for the average person) would get two dice, a hard task would get three dice, a really difficult task would get four dice, and a "pack it in and go home" task might get five or six dice.

When working against an active opponent, the opponent rolls a number of dice, just like you do, depending on the opponent's traits and bonus or penalty dice, if any. You and the opponent compare your rolls, with the specific results determined by the GM. Generally, the higher roll wins.

For example, Arthur is trying to impress the woman he's met at Sad Mary's. She notices this, and in turn tries to impress him and gain the upper hand. They chat calmly over drinks while in their brains, the gears are spinning. The woman, it so happens, is good at impressing men. She gets to roll three dice just like Arthur. Basically, they are dead even as to who will walk away most impressed by the other. Now if Arthur has been watching her carefully, he'll get a bonus die (and thus an advantage). If he has ketchup on his tie, he'll get a penalty die (a disadvantage). Arthur's player and the GM (running the woman) each roll their dice, and the GM interprets the results depending on who beat whom.

Note that the GM need not tell you what she rolls for a GMC, or even how many dice she is rolling. The GM only needs to tell you the results of your action as your character perceives them.

A Special Case: Technical Traits

With technical skills (such as "acupuncture"), even a score of 1 die indicates the character can do things that the average person would have practically no chance to do. (The average person has a score of 0 in acupuncture.) A 1 die acupuncturist might not be very skilled or experienced, but he is still able to do things that even a score of 3 or 4 in another skill would not permit. Assume that

someone with such a skill can automatically perform any related action that an unskilled person could do but would have to roll for, as well as most normal functions related to that skill. Generally, a character only rolls for a technical trait in some unusual situation, such as diagnosing an unusual disease or piloting a helicopter through a storm.

In GMC descriptions, technical or fringe traits, where the average person would have no dice in the trait, are indicated with an asterisk (e.g., "*Neurosurgery*, 1* die").

The Rule of Common Sense

Sometimes the dice will dictate an event that runs counter to common sense, something that would strain the players' willing suspension of disbelief. There are two possibilities when this happens.

First, remember that strange things happen all the time on Al Amarja. Go with the result, no matter how bizarre. Maybe the GM will invent a justification for it, maybe not.

Second, don't bother to roll the dice in the first place, if common sense makes clear what's going to happen. The dice are a way to answer the question "What happens?" Don't ask questions that you already know the answer to.

Among all the strange people with strange abilities wandering around the island, the GM has quite a job determining just what is "common sense." Make the job easy for her and don't argue when she makes a ruling.

The Hand of Fate

Sometimes a chancy situation develops in which no trait truly applies, but the outcome is uncertain. In this case, roll two dice. A high roll means a result good for the players, a roll around 7 means a mediocre or average result, and a lower roll means a bad or dangerous result.

For example, Arthur is taking his date out on a picnic, and the weather has not yet been determined. The GM lets Arthur roll the dice, and he

gets a 5. It's hard to have bad weather in the Mediterranean, so the GM rules that the 5 means an annoying wind that keeps blowing the picnickers' napkins away, but nothing serious.

OPTIONAL RULES

The use of these rules is up to the GM. The GM may use an optional rule all the time, some of the time, or none of the time, according to her preference.

Botches

When you roll all 1's for a given action, you have botched. Not only have you automatically failed in your attempted action, but something really bad happens. (Of course, on Al Amarja, really bad things happen all the time, so this might be *really* bad.) The GM determines the outcome of the botch. I hope, for your sake, she's merciful.

Note that a penalty die greatly increases your chances of a botch, which is as it should be. Likewise, a bonus die greatly decreases botch frequency.

For example, Arthur is trying to break through a locked door. He throws his shoulder against it, hoping to break it open with brute force. He rolls two dice, and they come up snake-eyes. The GM rules that, not only did the door fail to budge, but Arthur has inadvertently broken the strange electronic device he is carrying in his pocket. (He stole it recently and hasn't figured out what it can do. Now, maybe he'll never know.)

In another example, Arthur is conning a gullible fellow into trusting him (always a mistake). Unfortunately, Arthur is a bit tipsy at the moment, so he gets a penalty die. He rolls four dice, and they come up 5, 1, 1, 1. That comes to 3, total, and a botch. The gullible GMC rolls one die for resisting Arthur's schemes, and gets a 2. Even though this is lower than Arthur's 3, Arthur's roll was a botch, so he fails. The GM asks Arthur's player, "How could you

have screwed this up?" The player says, "I'm a little drunk, and as I see the guy falling for my pathetic charade, I murmur 'gullible little twerp' under my breath. He hears it." The GM thinks this explanation works fine, and suddenly the "gullible little twerp" is pointing a big knife in Arthur's direction.

Blowing the Top Off

This optional rule eliminates the maximum from a character's rolls. If the player rolls all 6's on any given roll, he rolls another die and adds it to the total he already rolled. If that die is a 6, he rolls it again and adds it, and so on. There is therefore no upper limit to what a character could roll. If you don't like the idea of artificial limits to a character's possible roll, this system may be what you're looking for.

Keep in mind that if you use this optional rule, penalty dice and bonus dice are going to have a bigger impact than if you don't use this rule, just as is the case for the botch rule above.

The Unstoppable Six

If any of your dice are sixes, you obtain some positive result, even if you are not successful in the roll. Just what this "limited success" entails is up to the GM (of course). Also, the more 6's you get, the more powerful your "loser's revenge" will be.

For example, Arthur comes face to face with the shrieking ghost of an Atlantean priest. While the other PCs look disconsolately at their useless weaponry, Arthur says that he is dredging his mind for charms, spells, or chants that could bind this ghost to his control. The GM goes along and says he does indeed remember such a spell, and has the player roll four dice. (Arthur is excellent at mythology, and he's happy to see it do some practical good.) He rolls a 13, against the priest's roll of 6, 3, 1, for a total of 10. Arthur wins and the GM says he can direct the spirit to inhabit a physical object. Thinking quickly, Arthur puts the thing in his walking cane. What he doesn't know is that

the ghost rolled a 6, and that the GM decides that this result means that the ghost has kept itself from being completely controlled. Slowly, subtly, the ghost uses its powers to attempt a full possession of Arthur's body.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS

You may attempt more than one action in a round, but by doing so you take a penalty on each action. If you attempt one extra action, you suffer a penalty die on all actions (including defense rolls). If you attempt two extra actions, you roll one fewer die on all actions undertaken in that round. Three extra actions means two fewer dice than normal, four extra actions means three fewer dice, and so on.

TANGENTIAL TRAITS

Sometimes you have a trait that does not exactly apply to the task at hand. In this case, the GM may allow a bonus die (if the trait is 3 dice) or an extra die (if the trait is 4 dice or better).

For example, consider a model with 3 dice in the trait "model." This central trait covers good looks, use of make-up, and possibly bad acting. What if she tries to use make-up to alter her own appearance? A "disguise" trait would properly cover changing one's appearance, but with her familiarity with cosmetics, she should be better than most characters at disguising herself. Give her two dice plus a bonus die; that's better than average but not as good as someone with the trait "disguise."

GROUP EFFORTS

When working together, PCs can improve (or sometimes decrease) their chances of success. Depending on how well a given task can be accomplished by more than one person, the GM can call for one of the following resolution systems.

Simple Addition

In tasks that two people can easily do simultaneously without getting in each others' way, add the dice of both characters together.

For example, Arthur and Samantha are trying to lift a stone that's covering a chute to some underground passage. The stone is so heavy that the GM decides that a roll of 13 is necessary to move it. (That means an average person wouldn't have a chance of moving it alone.) Arthur and Samantha each get two dice for brute strength, and they roll a 4 and a 10, for a total of 14. They move the stone and descend into the darkness.

Combining Dice

In tasks where two can work together effectively, but not perfectly, roll all the dice and take the highest, a number of dice equal to the number normally rolled by the best of the cooperating characters. (Effectively, the dice rolled by lesser characters become bonus dice for the best.)

For example, Arthur and Samantha find a cache of ancient Atlantean texts, partially translated into barely coherent English. Under time pressure, they rush through the texts looking for something that would give them a hint about the Atlantean powers they are up against. Since Arthur is the expert in mythology, Samantha decides to let him do the real work while she helps him out by skimming what she gets her hands on and handing him what looks most interesting. He rolls four dice, she rolls two, and they take the best four dice between them to see how much information they can glean before the sound of pursuit puts them to flight.

Their escape is cut short, however, when a gang of pubes under domination of a malignant spirit surrounds them and piles on them. Arthur's a scrapper, so this is the kind of fight he likes. He's up against five of the pubes, who roll two dice in combat. The GM rules that the pubes really don't fight in any kind of coordinated pattern, and that not all five can get to Arthur at once, so they only get

"combining dice." He rolls three dice for 14, while the pubes roll ten dice and take the best two, a 5 and a 6. Arthur manages to beat off the adolescents, but (because of the unstoppable six), he suffers a nasty kick in the groin while doing so (5 hit points damage). Samantha, meanwhile, has used the sacrificial scimitar she's just found to good effect on the mob that had attacked her.

Note: This fight was an example of "gestalt" combat.

Either/Or

Sometimes characters split up a task so that only one of them (determined randomly) has a chance for success. In this case, all the PCs might roll, but only the one with a real chance for success counts.

For example, Samantha and Arthur decide to search the bodies of the fallen pubes for anything of interest. One of them has a note from a significant villain tucked in her sock, and that's all there is of interest here. Each PC searches half of the pubes, so only one will even have a chance to find the note. The GM rolls and determines that Samantha is searching the relevant pube. Being perceptive, she rolls three dice plus a penalty die for the darkness of the chamber; she gets an 8, good enough. Meanwhile, Arthur rolls a 4, and the GM tells him he found nothing. He doesn't know that there wasn't anything for him to find, anyway.

Now if these two PCs weren't running for their lives, they might have gone over each of the pubes together (using combining dice). As it was, they sacrificed thoroughness to save time and are once again fleeing for an exit from the cavern.

Worst Roller

When two or more characters attempt something that should really be left to one of them, they all roll, and the worst roll is used to determine the result.

For example, Arthur and Samantha have finally found an exit to the caverns, a tunnel that opens onto

the private grounds of a wealthy Al Amarjan. While sneaking through an elaborate garden and looking for a way out, they are discovered by a security team armed with tasers. Immediately Arthur pretends to be happy to see them and launches into a quick tale of how they had been chased here by traitorous fascists. Hoping to help, Samantha speaks up and adds some details about their imaginary pursuers. The GM tells each player to roll for the effectiveness of their stories, three dice for Arthur (who is good at manipulating people) and two dice for Samantha. Arthur, with his roll of 9, beats the guards' roll of 7, but Samantha rolls only a 6, and the guards become suspicious. Rather than take chances, the guards taser the two of them and drag them off to an interrogation room.

If Arthur and Samantha had taken time to invent and rehearse a story, they would have been able to use combining dice (best three out of their five dice), but since they didn't coordinate their subterfuge, the guards had a much easier time seeing through their ruse.

COMBAT

The rules above rely a lot on common sense, the GMs ability to adjudicate ambiguous results, and your good-natured acceptance of the GMs rulings. In combat, when things happen fast and your life is on the line, you probably need more specific rules. Here they are.

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

Sometimes you will want to know just how long it takes to get from one place to another. Assuming a 3 second round, you can move at the following speeds:

Walking (3 km/h) 2.5 m/round
Hurrying (6 km/h). 5 m/round
Jogging (9 km/h). 7.5 m/round

Running, steady
(12 km/h) 10 m/round
Running, fast
(18 km/h) 15 m/round
Sprinting (24 km/h) . . . 20 m/round

For reference, remember that a “4 minute mile” means running at about 24 km/h for four minutes. Not many people can do it, though some can run that fast or faster for much shorter periods of time. Also remember that characters usually do not have light clothes, running shoes, a generous warm-up, and a clear track on which to run. That 24 km/h figure is impossible for most PCs in most situations.

INITIATIVE

When the fight starts, each player rolls for initiative. Use whatever traits are appropriate. For example, traits such as “agile,” “good reflexes,” and “martial artist” count. Lacking any such trait, a character rolls 2 dice. The GM can roll for all the GMCs with one roll for simplicity’s sake. The GM or a helpful player writes down the characters from highest roll to lowest. This is the order in which they will act each round.

Or skip the formalities and have each of the players act in the order they are seated around the table, with the GM acting first or last.

ROUNDS

Each round is long enough for each character to do one thing. That way everyone stays involved all the time. Generally, a round equals 3 seconds of action in the game world.

The GM calls on each player in turn, depending on their initiative rolls. When you are called, you get to do one thing that you could do in a few seconds, such as try to hurt somebody, run away, use a fringe power, scream for help, try desperately to patch a bleeding wound, find that necessary implement in your backpack, or whatever. If you try to do too much, the GM will only let you perform part of the intended action.



The most common thing my players do is try to take a piece out of their opponents, rules for which are below.

You may also wait to act until later in the round, in which case you just interrupt when you want to take your turn. (By waiting, you can coordinate a simultaneous action with another character.)

How Long is a Round Anyway?

About as long as you need. Really. If a combat represents a lightning fast exchange of blows between kung fu masters, each round might be a second, or even less. If the combat is a duel between two sophisticates who like to insult their opponents and hold a nasty dialogue while pounding on each other, then a round might be ten seconds or more. Unless the GM rules otherwise, assume a round is about three seconds long.

ATTACKS

When it is your turn to attack, roll your relevant attack trait, such as “Strong,” “Martial Artist,” or “Good with a Baseball Bat.” If you get a penalty die or bonus die, add it in.

The target of your attack makes a defense roll, using traits such as “Fast on My Feet,” “Good Brawler,” or “Slippery as an Eel.”

Note: A non-combat trait cannot be used for both attack and defense in a single round. If you are “Agile,” you must decide each round whether to use that trait for your attack or defense roll. A specifically combat-oriented trait, such as “Good Knife-Fighter” can be used for both attack and defense rolls. This rule preserves game balance. Since a trait like “agile” has non-combat applications that “good knife-fighter” does not have, it wouldn’t be fair to allow such a broad trait to equal a strictly combat-oriented trait in a fight, now would it?

On the other hand, someone who is “Strong as an Ox” and has “Good Reflexes” to boot could use “Strong as an Ox” for the attack roll and “Good

Ranged Attacks Table

	Defense Dice
Distance Point Blank	1
Short Range	2
Medium	3
Long Range	4
Very Long Range	5
Cover	1 or 2
Target Moving	1
Attacker Moving	1
Target Dodging	bonus*
Darkness, fog, etc.	1 or 2

*Defender gets bonus dice equal to the number of dice normally rolled for “agility,” “quick reflexes,” etc. (The default is 2 dice.) Someone with “fast, 4 dice,” for example, would receive 4 bonus dice on the defense roll. A clumsy character receives only one bonus die for dodging.

The target rolls the number of dice indicated from among the above factors as his defense roll.

Weapon Ranges

Weapon	1	2	3	4	5
Thrown, balanced*	2m	4m	8m	16m	32m
Thrown, awkward**	2m	4m	6m	8m	10m
Crossbow	2m	10m	20m	40m	80m
Taser	1m	2m	5m	†	†

Weapon Range Table Notes

To find the “distance dice,” find the number that is equal to or higher than the distance to the target. Now find the number at the top of that column, that’s the number of “distance dice” rolled for defense. For example, if you throw a baseball (“thrown, balanced”) at someone 6m away, the target gets 3 dice for the defense roll (plus other modifiers besides distance).

*Such as a ball or throwing knife.

**Such as a sword or blender.

†Those little electric cords don’t extend past 5m.

If the GM wishes, she can use “half-dice” when characters do not deserve full dice under the rules above. For instance, someone under very light cover might just get a bonus die instead of an extra die on defense, or someone standing 5m from a knife-thrower might get 2 dice plus a bonus die for range, rather than jumping straight from 2 dice to 3 because of the difference between 4m and 5m.

Some weapons may, at the GM’s option, have ranges different from their general types, based on design. After all, some weapons are just better than others.

an Ox" for the attack roll and "Good Reflexes" for the defense roll. Got it?

So you've rolled your attack roll and the other guy has rolled defense. Compare the numbers. If your attack roll is less than or equal to the defense roll, you have failed to connect for significant damage. If your attack roll is higher than the target's defense roll, you've scored a hit and will do damage. Subtract the defender's (lower) roll from your (higher) roll. Multiply this result by the damage factor for the weapon you are using, and the total is the damage you have just dished out (more tasty details below).

Bear in mind that making an attack roll does not represent a single swing or lunge; it represents three seconds of trying to get the other guy. A high roll might mean that you have pounded your opponent in the head several times, not just once.

Ranged Attacks

For missile weapons like guns and crossbows, the system is a little different because it is harder to hit someone at a distance with a single shot than it is to stab somebody next to you during three seconds of your best effort. With missile weapons, the target receives a defense roll based on such factors as range, movement, cover, and so on. The GM assigns the defense roll, based on the factors in the "Ranged Attacks" table to the upper left.

The distance terms are highly subjective as they depend on the type of weapon being used. The Weapon Ranges chart on the opposite page lists the range in meters at which the target receives various defense dice, based on the type of weapon used. If the distance in meters exceeds the number listed, use the next higher number of dice. For example, if your friendly neighborhood Peace Officer opens up with his Heckler & Koch MP5 while you are 30 m away, you will get 3 defense dice for range, in addition to dice for dodging, moving, cover, and so on.

PREDICTABLE ATTACKS

If you ever make a predictable or boring attack on an opponent, the GM has the right to give you a penalty die on the attack. Here are some examples:

This gets a penalty die in my games: "I swing at it."

This doesn't: "I pull back for an all-out blow at that thing's lower face."

Penalty die: "I try to hit it in the gut again." (After trying the same thing the round before.)

No penalty die: "Well, it's gut is pretty well protected; I'll drop to the ground and sweep its feet out from under it."

Get the idea? There are two reasons for this rule. First, if you try the same attack repeatedly or attack without planning (as evinced by phrases like "I swing"), then your opponents are going to have an easy time defending themselves. Second, I've heard the phrase, "I swing" about a million times over the last eighteen years of role-playing, and I don't want to put your GM through the same thing.

By the way, the GM has enough work already, so she does not have to think up an interesting attack for each GMC each round. The "predictable attacks" rule does not apply to GMCs.

HOW MUCH DO I HURT THE GUY?

If you've scored a hit, now you take the difference between your roll and the defender's, multiply it by a damage factor (see below), and the result is the number of points done in damage. Certain types of armor subtract a certain number from each attack that does damage. Only the points in excess of the armor's rating can do damage. These points are deducted from the target's hit points.

Damage Factor

Unarmed combat	X1
Knife, lead pipe.	X2
Sword, axe	X3
Throwing knife, slingshot	X1
Crossbow, throwing axe	X2
Taser.	X5*

* All damage from a taser is temporary. Record it separately; it all comes back when the character recovers.

Tasers

Since firearms are illegal on Al Amarja, tasers are popular among private security forces. Tasers hit you with a massive amount of voltage, probably enough to knock you down and keep you down for a while, but they do no permanent physical damage (unless you have a weak heart...). They have a damage factor of X5.

Versus armor, tasers are an exception to the general rule because the damage comes from electric shock rather than kinetic energy or penetration. Roll the dice for armor as if for a normal (non-bullet) attack. If the dice match or exceed the number by which the attack roll exceeded the defense roll, the armor has prevented the taser from penetrating, and you take no damage. If the roll is less than the number by which the attack roll exceeds the defense roll, the taser does full damage. In other words, either the armor stops the taser or it doesn't; there is no middle ground.

Messed Up

If the target is now at half or less their normal hit points, they suffer a penalty die on all actions until they recover to more than half their normal hit points. The GM may assign more specific debilities for characters that have received specific wounds, such as decreased mobility from a knee shot, decreased vision from a blow to the eye, and so on.

Down for the Count

If the target is at 0 hit points or below, they are out of the fight. "Out of the fight" can mean a lot of things,

depending on the type of weaponry used and the number of points below 0 that the target is at.

When you have taken enough damage to be out of the fight, but not enough to kill you outright, you may find yourself in any of various states of disrepair.

Someone dropped to 0 by fists and kicks is likely hurt, unable to fight, demoralized, in great pain, and probably suffering some broken bones. The situation, however, is rarely lethal, and most vital organs are well-protected by a body structure carefully shaped by millions of years of evolution. Such an injured character should be able to return to impaired function with time or the help of friends and eventually recover completely.

Someone at 0 or below from application of clubs, cudgels, monkey wrenches and the like may well have badly broken bones and internal bleeding, but they're likely to be in stable condition. They might be able to resume mobility after a while even if left on their own. (A concussion, though, can really mess you up.)

Knives and other sharp, pointy things that get you down are likely to leave you incapacitated and bleeding. Untended, you could easily bleed to death (especially from a slashing weapon) or die from internal injuries (especially from a puncturing weapon).

Guns — well, you really shouldn't get shot if you're a law-abiding tourist on Al Amarja, but guns and other heavy duty stuff are likely to leave you in shock, dying, bleeding, helpless, and hopeless. Emergency medical attention may well be required to save you. (May I personally recommend Ahmed's Kwik Klinik, as gunshot wounds are likely to reach the attention of the authorities if treated at the D'Aubainne Hospital, and since only the Peace Force has guns, well... you know the meaning of the term "*prima facie* evidence," right?)

Shuffling Off This Mortal Coil

As a rule of thumb, a character dies when he has taken twice as many points of damage as he has hit points. If you have 21 hit points and drop to -21 through wounds, you are either dead or checking out. In order to survive, you need medical attention and a reason to live.

At that point, you face the decision of recovering or letting go. Attempting to recover means piecing your broken body back together, suffering prolonged pain, possibly facing permanent injury, and perhaps dying anyway after undergoing all that tribulation. Letting go is often the easier option, letting yourself slip into the great white light, where the damage inflicted on your body will not be an issue at all. At the point of death, you can only direct your will to recover if you have a good reason to live. Tell your reason to live to the GM; if she agrees it is sufficient, you live. Otherwise, you slip off into the great beyond. (Of course, the GM may wish to make a roll or two when deciding whether you live, so as not to bear the full burden of her authority.)

NOTE TO GMS: BUZZWORDS FOR COMBAT

Game Moderators, if you want combat to be graphic, don't forget to spice it up with the following misfortunes: exit wounds, lacerations, splintering bone, loose teeth, blunt trauma, sickening crunches, hot blood, sucking wounds (a hole in chest cavity that sucks in air when the wounded character inhales), compound fractures, exsanguination, shock, tourniquets, and impalement.

ARMOR

Armor comes in two types: regular armor and bullet-proof armor. These rules deal with regular armor, since bullet-proof armor is illegal on Al Amarja. See the rules for Firearms at the end of the chapter for details on

bullet-proof armor and the effect of regular armor against firearms.

Regular Armor

The rating for regular armor represents the number of dice rolled and deducted from each attack.

Very light armor (generally leather clothes and the like) has a rating of "1 pt." It stops only one point of damage versus normal attacks.

Heavy armor can slow you down, causing you to take a penalty roll on every action that requires agility (including attack and defense rolls). The most common armor on Al Amarja that causes a penalty die is the Duro-Trench.

The protection offered by armor is cumulative, but "stacking" armor causes a penalty die for each extra layer of armor worn. For example, someone wearing thick leathers under their Duro-Trench would roll 2 dice and add 1 point for protection, but they would also suffer two penalty dice on agility-related actions (one for the Duro-Trench, the other for the extra layer of armor).

Armor can be exposed to some pretty rough treatment, and may degrade after suffering significant punishment, but this circumstance is best left to role-playing rather than number-crunching.

Regular Armor

Type	Rating	Penalty?
Leathers	1 point	no
Armored Jacket	1	no
Duro-Trench*	2	yes

* See the good folks at Gun Metal to find out what this is.

RECOVERY

Think about it: in action movies, characters get shot, beaten, mauled, and knocked out of the fight. But rather than let the action end there, soon enough the characters are up and fighting again, until they are once more beaten down. But the action continues, and our hero (or the nasty villain) rebounds to fight again, albeit

a bit weakened by the ordeal. Only after a few such fights is the character comatose, indefinitely unconscious, or just plain dead.

Recovery rules simulate this cycle of action. For game purposes, assume that about half of the damage (in terms of hit points lost) comes from pain and shock. Only the other half is "permanent." Thus, after a fight is over and the characters have some time to rest, every character recovers half of the lost hit points.

Hit Point Recovery Conventions

- 1) The character recovers hit points when the GM sees such recovery as reasonable. Generally, after a character receives some rudimentary first aid and has a chance to regain spent strength, the hit points return. Alternately, the GM may allow recovery under special circumstances, as when an impressive leader orders an incapacitated follower to get up and keep moving, or when dire need arises.
- 2) Hit point level after recovery is halfway between the wounded level and the last level after recovery. Do not use the starting (unwounded) level of hit points as a base unless the character started the fight unwounded. For example, Arthur takes 10 points of damage and drops from 22 to 12 hit points. He then recovers half the lost hit points and now has 17 hit points. Again he takes 10 points of damage, dropping to 7 hit points. He recovers to half-way between 7 and 17, not to half-way between 7 and his normal level of 22. He now has 12 hit points and will only get more through medical attention or prolonged rest.
- 3) Round hit points up, if half-way recovery results in a fraction. (This means that being wounded for 7 points twice will leave you 6 points down from normal, whereas being wounded for 14 points once will leave you 7 points below normal. Multiple small wounds

are slightly easier to recover from than a few large wounds.)

- 4) The GM can require rolls of any kind to determine whether a character recovers. For example, if very little time has passed since a fight (normally not enough to allow any recovery), the GM may allow someone trained in first aid to make a roll, and only a success in the GM's eyes will allow hit point recovery.
- 5) The GM has the right to change the recovery from half-way to more or less than that. For example, it might be relatively easy to recover from being beaten with fists (two-thirds of the loss recovered), and relatively difficult to recover from serious gunshot wounds (one-third recovered). The GM has sole arbitrating power over this variation, so she can make the system as complex or as simple as she cares to.

HEALING

Once a character has recovered, he can start regaining the remaining lost hit points. Hit points are regained each day, with the points regained based on the activity undertaken that day. See the Long-Term Healing table, below, to see how many hit points you recover each day.

SPECIAL EFFECT ATTACKS

When a character tries an attack that is intended to do more than just some damage, the attack roll is made normally, but only half the normal damage is done. The special effect succeeds only if the attack roll exceeds the defense roll by an amount the GM judges to be sufficient.

Special effect attacks include tackling, disarming, knocking your opponent's feet out from under him, immobilizing a limb, headlock, and so forth.

ATTACKING FROM ADVANTAGE

Whenever you have the edge over an opponent because of something besides your traits, you can ask the GM to give you a bonus die on your combat roll. Common advantages are:

Ganging Up

Someone can defend normally against one opponent for each die they have in fighting ability. (An average person, therefore, can defend normally against two attackers.) Each addition-

Long-Term Healing Table

Activity	Mobile	Bed-Ridden	Critical
Active	0*	—	—
Rest	1	1 per 2 days*	0*
Medical Care	2	1	1 per 2 days

Active means exerting oneself normally.

Rest means taking it easy and sleeping a lot.

Medical care means being under the care of competent physicians.

Mobile means you have 1+ hit points (and can move around).

Bed-Ridden means you have 0 or fewer hit points.

Critical means you are severely wounded (GM's option).

*May lose hit points, at the GM's option.

al attacker receives a bonus die on attacks against that character. The defender gets to choose which attackers get the bonus die.

Attacking With Surprise

The GM might require a roll to see how stealthy you are compared to how alert your target is. If you hit the guy when he's totally unaware, the GM might grant you more than just a bonus die.

Better Weaponry

If you have a club and your opponent is bare-handed, you've got an advantage (better reach, something to block with that doesn't bleed, and a psychological edge). The same goes if you have a sword against someone's switchblade. Remember that this bonus die depends not on how much damage you do, but on how handy the weapon is in combat. Imagine you have a quarterstaff and your enemy has an axe. He does more damage, but in terms of reach and blocking ability his weapon is no better than yours, so he doesn't get a bonus die. If he had some weird science vibrating knife that did horrendous damage, *you'd* get the attack bonus because the quarterstaff is longer and better for parrying. Of course, if he hit you, you'd suffer worse than he would if you hit him.

Better Position

On top of them, above them, behind them, and so forth.

Psychological Advantage

You've just convinced you opponent that their chances of beating you are worse than Monique D'Aubainne's chances of winning the Nobel Peace Prize. The next round (only) you get a bonus die on your rolls. Using a nasty-looking weapon helps a lot, even if it's no more effective than a regular one.

Or, if your seven-year-old daughter is whimpering helplessly in the closet behind you as you defend her from a maniac, you get a bonus



Illustration by Cheryl Mandus

die on your rolls for the duration of the combat as primitive parenting instincts wash your body with glorious epinephrine.

OPTIONAL RULES FOR COMBAT

The GM decides when and whether to use these rules. The GM may use any given rule always, sometimes, or never.

Desperate Defense

A character normally gets one attack roll and one defense roll per attacker each round, but if you give up your attack, you may get a bonus die on each defense roll for that round.

Alternate Damage

Some GMs do not like doing a lot of subtraction and multiplication, so here's an easier system for determining damage: If the attacker scores a hit, they roll one die for each number in the damage factor for the weapon. If the attack roll is twice the defense roll, the attacker multiplies the result by two.

For example, a knife does 2 dice of damage, or 2 dice times two if the attack roll is at least double the defense roll.

A character may not use bonus dice for damage rolls, only for the attack rolls.

You may use this system when an "attack roll" is not called for, such as when an explosive goes off near a character and the GM simply rolls some dice to determine damage.

Serious Wounds

In addition to losing hit points, a character can suffer a "serious wound." Serious wounds do not always heal completely on their own. Without medical attention, these wounds may "mis-heal" (causing a permanent impairment) at best or lead inevitably to death at worst. Examples of serious wounds include compound fractures, internal bleed-

ing, penetration of intestines, damage to internal organs, severed tendons, and more.

A serious wound that mis-heals without medical attention, such as a severed tendon or a compound fracture, heals at half the normal rate and leaves the character with a permanent disability, such as a penalty die on agility-related actions or the inability to manipulate certain joints.

A serious wound that leads to death, such as a severe infection or severe damage to the liver, causes the character to lose hit points every day until proper medical attention is applied. Hit points lost can be anywhere from 1 to 15 per day, depending on the wound. Such a character is usually bedridden while the doomed body makes its last-ditch effort to save itself.

When is a wound a "serious wound"? One rule of thumb is when at least 20 points of damage are suffered in a single blow, but it is possible to take a serious wound from a relatively minor attack, such as a badly broken arm that doesn't incapacitate you but won't heal well on its own. Another possibility is that a botched defense roll leads to a serious wound. The GM, of course, may prefer to play serious wounds by ear.

(Players, hope that your GM is not familiar with human anatomy. If they are, the wounds your PCs suffer may be unfortunately realistic.)

Gestalt Combat

Some GMs use the gestalt combat system when they want to speed through a fight, while others will use it exclusively instead of the more detailed system, if the idea of blow-by-blow combat does not excite them.

In the gestalt system, you make one roll to determine the general outcome of the fight. The players total all their rolls, and the GM totals all the GMCs' combat rolls. (The GM determines what rolls are made and how, depending on the circumstances of the fight.) Whichever side rolls highest wins the fight, but the GM keeps the GMCs' total a secret, so the players don't know who will win.

Then the players and GM talk through the fight, with the GM adjudicating the actions based on the rolls already made. The GM can go into any level of detail desired, including dishing out damage to individual PCs that rolled poorly, or even altering the result of a close fight if the players use effective tactics.

The GM can even simply declare the results of the fight with no play-by-play descriptions if she wants to keep things moving at a rapid pace.

For example, I used gestalt combat once near the end of an adventure. The mission had already been accomplished, and two PCs were fighting a lone operative. As far as I was concerned, the fight was no longer exciting or vital enough to play out round by round. All I needed to know was whether the PCs killed or captured the operative, and whether they took serious wounds in the process. We all rolled some dice, I looked them over, and arbitrated the result: They captured the operative but one PC took 6 points of damage in the process.

As a GM, use gestalt combat whenever the detail of normal combat seems pointless.

SAMPLE COMBAT

Arthur is minding his own business, finding his way back to Bienvenidos Hotel after an evening of rumormongering in Four Points. Unfamiliar with the twisting streets, he turns down the wrong alley. There, in the dark, lurks a predatory street maggot named Zipper. Mistaking Arthur for a helpless burger, Zipper pulls a big, rusty wrench out of his belt and tries to ambush our hero. Zipper is fast, but no other traits apply to his fighting ability. Arthur has not yet noticed Zipper.

Initiative

Zipper is fast, so the GM rolls three dice for his initiative; total = 12. Without explaining what's going on, the GM tells Arthur to roll initiative. He's a good scrap fighter, so he rolls three dice; 10. Zipper has initiative.

Round 1

Zipper waits silently for Arthur to move close to him, then launches a rapid attack with his wrench. Since Zipper has no particular stealth skills, and Arthur no particular perception skills, both roll 2 dice. Zipper rolls 4 and Arthur rolls 7, so Arthur at least sees what's coming before it hits him. The GM tells Arthur that he sees a figure lunge out of the shadows brandishing some sort of weapon. Arthur says that he will duck and roll out of the way, giving up his attack for this round.

Zipper uses his "fast" trait for offense, and so gets three dice to see if his attack succeeds. In addition, he gets a bonus die for what amount of surprise he managed. Arthur, on the other hand, uses "good scrap fighter" for defense, and also gets a bonus die for giving up his attack and concentrating on getting out of the way. Zipper rolls 13, Arthur rolls 12. Zipper wins by one point, doing 2 hit points of damage to Arthur. Arthur now has 20 hit points left.

Round 2

Now Arthur swings around to see who his attacker is. Zipper holds his wrench in the air menacingly and says, "Gimme your wallet and your watch, burger. Or maybe you want I should splash your brains all up and down this alley, huh?" Arthur in turn says, "Run along home, you acne-ridden mutant. Try anything funny with that wrench, and I'll feed it to you."

The combatants are spending this round trying to intimidate each other. Zipper rolls three dice because he's streetwise. Arthur rolls three dice for his skill at manipulating people, and his player uses a bonus die. The GM asks the player to justify the bonus die, and he says, "I'm not only good at manipulating people, but I'm a good fighter, and that skill lends credence to my intimidating glare." Arthur wins the contest by 3, not enough, the GM rules, to scare Zipper into leaving. But Arthur does notice that his opponent looks a little more nervous than he did a second ago.

Round 3

Arthur decides to kick Zipper in the groin. Zipper goes for a blow to the elbow or wrist, hoping to soften Arthur up for the kill. Zipper has initiative, and he will use his speed for offense, leaving him nothing special for defense. Arthur can use his fighting ability for both offense and defense.

Zipper's attack gets a bonus die because he is better armed than Arthur, but he loses the bonus die because Arthur intimidated him in the last round. Zipper gets lucky with a 15. Arthur also gets a bonus die for having psyched Zipper out, but he only rolls an 11. That's a difference of 4, times 2 for the wrench's damage factor equals 8 hit points. Arthur has 12 hit points remaining. The GM rules that Zipper got a good blow to Arthur's left elbow and followed up with another strong blow to the shoulder.

Since Arthur's attack was a kick to the groin, the GM rules that the blows to the left arm have no detrimental effect. Arthur rolls three dice plus a bonus die for having psyched out Zipper on the previous round; total is 12. Zipper only gets two dice; total is 5. That's 7 points of damage, less 1 for Zipper's heavy clothing, equals 6. Not good enough for an incapacitating groin shot, but a solid kick in the belly nonetheless. Zipper is down to 8 hit points.

Round 4

The force of Arthur's kick put some distance between the combatants. Zipper decides to move in and swing low at Arthur's gut. Arthur announces that he is going to grab Zipper's forearm and bite his wrist so hard that he has to drop the wrench.

Zipper's attack fails, and Arthur's succeeds, but only by 2 points. Arthur blocked Zipper's blow, grabbed his arm, and is chewing away at his wrist. Since this was a "special effect" shot, it only does half damage, or 1 point. The GM rules that Zipper's heavy outfit does not cover his wrist, so he takes that point of damage without benefit of armor, but

he still holds onto the wrench. Zipper is now down to 7 hit points, half of his original 14, so he gets a penalty die on all further actions.

Round 5

Zipper tries to pry himself loose from his rabid attacker, while Arthur tries to wrench Zipper's arm and force him to the ground. Rather than use attack and defense rolls, the GM simply calls for a straight compared roll. Zipper gets 3 dice for being fast, but a penalty die for being messed up. Arthur gets 3 dice. Arthur wins the contest by 7 points, pins Zipper to the ground, and knocks his wrench free. Zipper takes 7 hit points, divided by 2 (for the special effect attack) equals 3 points. Again the GM rules that his thick leather clothes will not stop Zipper from getting his arm severely wrenched, so it does not stop any of the damage. He is now at 4 hit points and pinned.

Round 6

From his advantageous position, Arthur decides to snatch the fallen wrench and pummel Zipper with it. Zipper is simply trying to wriggle free. Arthur gets a bonus die for advantage, and Zipper gets a penalty die for wounds. Arthur's roll beats Zipper's by five points, but one of Zipper's dice comes up 6. The GM rules that Arthur can beat Zipper senseless, but not before taking a knee to the side of the head for 2 hit points of damage. Arthur is now at 10 hit points, less than half his original 22, so he will suffer a penalty die on actions until he can recover.

Afterwards

Arthur rummages through Zipper's pockets and finds \$1.62 in change, a length of dirty string, and a piece of paper with a cryptic diagram scribbled on it. As Arthur is trying to revive his assailant to find out what the diagram signifies, a baboon patrol comes to the end of the alley. The human guard gets Arthur's version of the story, warns him against fighting in Four Points, and takes a \$25 fee for

his trouble. (Wounded and outnumbered, Arthur is not ready to fight over \$25.)

After leaving the alley, Arthur stumbles to an all-night diner for some lightly jumped coffee. By the time he sets off again for his hotel, his hit points are back up to 16, half-way between his wounded state of 10 and his original 22. The other 6 hit points he will only recover with days of rest.

EXPERIENCE

Through experience, you can improve your skills or learn new ones. Your experience is represented by your experience pool. At the end of every game session, the GM can award bonus dice to the characters who partook in the action, and these dice are added to your experience pool, as previously explained. In addition, you can “spend” the dice from your experience pool to buy new skills or improve ones you already have. Each kind of improvement requires a certain number of dice that are permanently lost from your pool and some action in the game world. The GM must approve every trait improvement, and you can improve a trait any time immediately after meeting the requirement.

DEVELOPING A NEW TRAIT

It costs 5 dice from your pool plus game-world experience to develop a new trait. If the trait is something casual, such as brawling or reading people, you can pick it up without any special training. If it is technical or specialized, such as kung fu or computer programming, you need some kind of training.

Once you have satisfied the need for training (if any) and spent the dice from your experience pool, you have one die better than normal in your new skill. If it is a technical or unusual skill, you have a score of 1 with the trait. If the trait is standard, something most people can do, if not well, then you now have a score of 3.

All such traits developed in this way are the equivalent of side traits. In other words, they are quite specific, not the global traits possible to beginning characters as central traits. You can learn to foil security systems through this method, but you cannot become a “good burglar.”

Traits that are not subject to easy development might require more than a little training. For example, you cannot gain the trait “strong” just by mucking around in the Al Amarjan underworld for a while. If you want to develop a trait such as “strong,” you might need to undertake intense training over weeks, and a regular exercise regimen to maintain your strength once you have developed it.

Use your common sense when deciding what it takes to develop a new trait.

Invent a sign for each trait you develop.

IMPROVING A CURRENT TRAIT

For a trait listed as 1 or 2 dice, you can increase the score by 1 for every 5 experience dice you spend. Once a score is at 3 or higher, however, it becomes much harder to improve.

First, you definitely need training to raise any score to 4. This training takes at least a year, if you are carrying on other activities at the same time, or six months, if you are training full time. In addition to the training, you must spend 10 experience dice.

Raising any trait to 5 requires highly specialized, nearly full-time training. You might be able to undertake an adventure or two while training, but you will not have time to hold down a job. The training you need costs at least \$1,000 per month, and even finding a qualified trainer will be difficult. You are more likely to find a trainer by having the right connections than by looking in the yellow pages. In addition to the training, you will need to spend 15 experience dice.

Raising a score to 6 is pretty much beyond the scope of the rules. It may not even be possible. You could shell out lots of money and spend a year working at it, and still see no significant progress. Getting such a high score is a matter of role-playing rather than rule-playing.

Of course, some skills lend themselves to gradual development over years of time. It is possible to develop a score of 6 in a skill just by applying yourself single-mindedly for years on end, but that’s out of the scope of the game, wouldn’t you say?

The above rules are for discrete traits — side traits or those you develop during play. For your central trait, double the time and dice required. This extra expense is required because the trait actually covers several skills.

INCREASING HIT POINTS

If your trait relates to hit points, you may earn more hit points by developing the trait or increasing your score in it.

If this trait is the only one on which your hit points are based (or if you had no traits to improve your hit points), you may take +7 hit points or roll two dice and add the result.

If another trait besides this one had a hand in improving your hit points, then roll double the number of dice that your newly improved trait offers. This is your new hit points score. (You may not raise your hit points by more than 12 points by this method.)

For example, if Arthur works out and develops the trait “strong, 3 dice,” he can roll 6 dice. If this total beats his current hit points of 22, he gets the new roll as his hit points. If he manages to beat the odds and roll 35 or 36, however, he only gets to keep 34 hit points, 12 better than his previous score.

ADVICE TO PLAYERS

It's a fair bet that *Over the Edge*™ is a different game from what you're used to. For your own enjoyment, listen to some advice, and take it if you wish.

Play Your Character Well

Most OTE™ characters are quite interesting. Play up your interesting traits, revealing and withholding secrets the way a good author does, so that the other players know enough to be curious but not so much that their curiosity is immediately sated.

Keep Notes

The events on Al Amarja are connected, and the guy who shines your shoes in October might be a vital clue in January. Keep notes of what you think is important, or you will miss a lot of vital information.

Think

Since the rules are loose, the tricks that you as a player invent and the actions you have your character undertake are probably more important than your character's skills or rolls. Your character is simple, so you can pay attention to the world your character inhabits.

Pay Attention

My players missed some interesting mysteries that were right in front of their faces because they didn't pay attention. If something seems weird, even if the natives take it for granted, it might be worth looking into. Don't get jaded by the weirdness.

Make Contacts

Do you know what they call a friendless person on Al Amarja? "D.O.A." It pays to have someone sticking up for you, especially someone who knows the island.

Be Cautious

In some games, you can keep yourself out of trouble by staying out of the really dangerous areas. Not possible on Al Amarja, as you will see. Just because a GMC is in an adventure doesn't mean that the GM thinks you can take them on and win. Use your head.

Enjoy Yourself

For all the hype and the murders and the perils to body and soul, Al Amarja is still a liveable place (as proved by the hundreds of thousands of people who live here). Don't be afraid to kick back, relax, and enjoy yourself.

FIREARMS

This section covers rules for gunfire. They are here at the end of the chapter because you generally won't need to trouble yourself with these rules, but they're here if you need them.

FIREARM ATTACKS

Use the rules for ranged weapons, using the ranges and damage factors on the table below. Note that encumbrance from armor does not affect firearm attack rolls.

ARMOR VS. GUNFIRE

For game purposes, there are two types of armor: regular armor (as described earlier, in the Combat section of this chapter) and bullet-proof armor (described below).

Regular Armor

Regular armor, described earlier, is only half as effective (round down) versus gunfire. If you roll 5 points of protection for your reinforced jacket, it only stops two points of damage against a gun.

FIREARM RANGES

Firearm	Dice for Defense Roll				
	1	2	3	4	5
Pistol	2 m	10 m	20 m	40 m	80 m
SMG	2 m	25 m	50 m	100 m	200 m
Rifle	2 m	50 m	100 m	200 m	400 m
Shotgun*	4 m	8 m	16 m	32 m	64 m

DAMAGE FACTORS: FIREARMS

Light handgun or SMG	X3
Medium handgun or SMG.....	X4
Large handgun or SMG	X5
Light Rifle.....	X6
Heavy Rifle.....	X7
12ga shotgun.....	X10*

*Divided by "distance dice" from the Firearm Ranges table above (see p. 32)

Bullet-Proof Armor Types

Armor	Rating	Penalty?
Kevlar Vest	1b	no
Kevlar Suit	2b	no
Military Body Armor	3/2b*	yes

*First number is regular armor, second is bullet-proof armor.

Bullet-Proof Armor

The rating for bullet-proof armor represents the number of dice rolled when hit by a bullet or shotgun. Divide the damage by this number. (On a roll of a 1, the armor has no effect, meaning that the bullet hit an area not protected by the armor.)

Against normal attacks, such as knives and punches, subtract the armor's rating from the damage.

For example, if you rolled a 5 for your kevlar vest, you would divide the incoming damage by 5. If someone stabbed you with a knife, however, you would only subtract 1 point from the damage.

When a character wears both types of armor, handle the regular armor first, and then the bullet-proof armor.

Bullet-proof armor has a "b" by its rating in order to differentiate it from normal armor.

GUNFIRE OPTIONS

Firearms of various types allow different firing tactics.

Revolvers

You can get one good shot per round with a revolver.

Automatic Pistols

You can get up to two shots per round, but the second receives a penalty die due to recoil from the first.

Sub-Machine Guns

Each round you can fire two single shots, one three-round burst, or one full auto shot (see below). If firing two single shots, you take a penalty die on the second due to recoil.

Rifles

You can fire one shot per round.

Automatic Rifles: You can fire up to two shots per round, one three-round burst per round, or fire at full auto (see below). If you fire two single shots, you take a penalty die on the second.

Three Round Burst

A burst sends more bullets at the target, increasing the chance to hit, but the recoil on the second and third bullets makes them less accurate than the first. The farther the target is from the characters, the more detrimental

EASY GUNFIRE EXAMPLE

Arthur and Samantha have unwittingly cornered a desperate operative in a docked ship. The operative, armed with a .22 revolver, fires a shot at Arthur from his hiding place. Arthur is within short range (8m away), so he gets two dice for his defense roll. The operative is a crack shot (4 dice) and has leisure to aim (bonus die). The GM rolls a 16 versus Arthur's 6, that's a difference of 10 points, times 3 for the damage multiplier of a small caliber pistol, is 30 points of damage. Arthur is wearing a reinforced jacket and rolls 3 for the armor, but it's divided by 2 because regular armor doesn't work too well against bullets, so Arthur's armor stops only 1 point of damage. Arthur takes 29 points of damage, dropping him to -7. Since 29 points can kill the average person outright, the GM rules that the shot was a solid chest hit, and that Arthur could be in deep doo-doo. (She won't bother to rule precisely on his state of injury until Samantha takes the time to check him out.)

Recognizing the better part of valor, Samantha breaks for the door, weaving as she goes. The GM rules that the operative is a good enough shot to fire on Samantha before she moves out of short range, so she only gets two dice for distance, but she gets a third die for moving and four bonus dice for dodging. (The average character gets 2 bonus dice, but Samantha is extremely agile.) The GM rolls four dice and gets 17. Samantha's player rolls seven dice and takes the best three: 15. She takes 6 points of damage. Luckily, she is secretly wearing an illegal kevlar vest, and she rolls 4 on her one die. Six divided by 4 is one and a half, rounded off is 2 points of damage. With a nasty bruise, Samantha hustles out of the room.

As you see, a revolver using standard ammunition isn't very different from any other weapon, except for the new armor rules. More advanced firearms and specialized ammunition, however, requires some special rules.

this recoil is to the accuracy of the second and third bullets. A burst adds a bonus die to the roll to hit regardless of range. At point-blank or close range, it also adds +1 to the weapon's damage multiplier, but not at medium, long, or very long range. These modifiers represent the increased likelihood to score a hit as well as the probability that the victim will be hit by more than one bullet. If the resulting damage is low, assume that only one bullet hit. If the damage is very high, assume all three hit. If medium, assume two of the three have connected.

Full Auto, One Target

Full auto puts a lot of bullets in the air, but the massive recoil makes the extra bullets considerably less effective in hitting a single target. After the first few shots, the recoil is so great that the extra bullets have relatively little effect. Most of them go astray. Still, it is a little better than the burst. Full auto is most useful for pinning down the enemy or messing up a large number of targets. It is also the most effective method known for wasting huge amounts of ammunition. At point blank or close range, full auto trained on a single target provides a bonus die to hit and +2 to the damage multiplier. At medium range, take a bonus die and add +1 to the damage multiplier. At long or very long range take a bonus die, but there is no addition to the multiplier. You must have at least 10 rounds in your clip to qualify as "full auto."

Full Auto, Spread

You can target one person for every five bullets fired. You cannot skip a target between two people who you do target. For instance, if your friend is between two enemies that you fire on, you must target the friend as well. At point blank range you receive a bonus die on each attack and +1 to the damage multiplier. At close range you receive a bonus die on the attack but no modifier on the damage factor. At medium range, you receive no bonus, other than the ability to target several opponents at once. At long range,

Gunfire Tactics Summary

Tactic	Range				
	Point Blank	Close	Medium	Long	Very Long
3 round burst	b/+1	b/+1	b	b	b
full auto, 1 target	b/+2	b/+2	b/+1	b	b
full auto, spread*	b/+1	b	—	p	2p

* Target one character per 5 bullets fired.

Key to Gunfire Tactics

b: bonus die on attack roll

+1: +1 to damage multiplier

p: penalty die on attack

+2: +2 to damage multiplier

2p: two penalty dice on attack

you receive a penalty die against every target. At very long range, you receive two penalty dice against every target. Full auto does a lot of collateral damage as stray bullets hit the area around the targets.

Shotguns

One shot per round. Divide damage by the number of defense dice rolled for distance. For example, at 10m the defender gets 3 dice for distance, so you divide your damage by 3.

AMMUNITION

In addition to standard rounds, most firearms can take specialized ammunition.

Armor-Piercing Rounds

Armor-piercing rounds do half normal damage, but armor is much less effective versus an armor-piercing round. Subtract the rating of the armor from damage, whether the armor is bullet-proof or normal. For example, a kevlar suit would provide 2 points of protection, while a military armor would provide 5 points of protection, 3 for its regular armor component and 2 for its bullet-proof component. This reduction in armor protection comes off the damage before it is divided by 2.

In the example with Arthur and Samantha, if the operative had been using armor-piercing rounds, the 29 points of damage he did to Arthur would have been divided in half to 15 points. Samantha's armor, however, would have reduced the damage only 1 point, rather than dividing it by 4, so she would have taken 5 points instead of 2.

Hollow Point Rounds, Safety Slugs

Hollow point rounds sacrifice penetrating power for extra damage and safety. (They will not pass through the body, allowing one to strike an enemy with less chance of the bullet traveling through the body and striking someone else, perhaps after ricocheting off a bone or two.) The damage factor for a hollow point or similar bullet is +2 more than normal, but armor of all kinds has twice its normal effect.

If the operative who shot Arthur had been using hollow points, his damage factor would have been X5 instead of X3, and he would have done 50 points of damage. Arthur's roll of 3 for his armor, however, would have been doubled to 6, so he would have suffered only (!) 44 points total, just enough to kill him, actually. The bullet hitting Samantha would have done 10 points of damage

instead of 6, but her roll of 4 would have been doubled to 8, so the bullet would have only done 1 point of damage. (Ten divided by 8 is 1.25, which rounds off to 1.)

Complicated Firearm Example

Below are examples of firearms that fall into the various categories listed for damage. Remember, players, these things are illegal on Al Amarja. They are here mostly for the GM, who needs to know how badly slain you are when you run afoul of the Peace Force.

Sub-Machine Gun

Heckler-Koch MP5

A precision tool, used by the Peace Force on Al Amarja. Can be equipped with long or short barrels, laser sight, silencers, and either a 15 or 30 round clip of 9mm shells. Can fire semi-auto, bursts, or full-auto. Damage X4.

Shotgun

LAW-12

An Italian gun used by the Loyal Defenders on Al Amarja. Its tubular magazine holds 8 shots, plus one in the chamber, but the user must re-

load one shell at a time. Costs \$500 - \$700 in countries where they are legal. Damage X10, divided by "distance dice."

Light Rifle

M16A3

A US Army weapon. Fires 5.56mm shells from a variety of clip sizes (5 to 100 rounds), in semi-auto or burst fire. (The full-auto option was intentionally left off this weapon, because the Army considers it mostly a great way to waste ammunition.) Can have a short barrel and telescoping stock (in which case it has range like a SMG), while a heavy-barreled target version could be a sniper rifle. Damage X6.

Heavy Rifle

FN-FAL

A 1950's-era assault rifle chambered for 7.62mm rounds. It fires semi-auto or full auto (but not burst) from a 20 round clip. Damage X7.

Armor/Attack Summary

Attack	Armor	
	Normal	Bullet-Proof
Normal	full	minimum
Bullet	half	divide
Armor Piercing*	minimum	minimum
Hollow Point**	double	divide double

Key

divide: divide damage by roll

divide double: divide damage by double the roll

double: subtract double the roll from damage

full: subtract full roll for the armor from damage

half: subtract half the roll for the armor from damage

minimum: subtract number of dice (not roll itself) from damage

*Divide damage from armor piercing bullets by 2 after armor points have been deducted.

**Hollow point bullets have +2 added to the damage factor.

For example, a reinforced jacket (rating: 1) would stop 1 die of damage from a knife, 1 die divided by 2 from a bullet, 1 point from an armor-piercing round, or 1 die times 2 from a hollow point shell.

A kevlar vest (rating: 1b) would reduce normal damage by 1 point, would divide bullet or shotgun damage by the number rolled on 1 die, would reduce damage from an armor-piercing round by 1 point, and would divide safety slug damage by double the roll on a die.

A reinforced jacket over a kevlar vest would stop 1 die +1 point from normal attacks. Against a bullet, it would first stop 1 die divided by two (for the jacket), and then divide the remaining damage by a roll on 1 die (for the kevlar). Against an armor-piercing round, it would reduce damage by 2 points, one for the jacket and the other for the kevlar. Against a hollow-point round, it would first subtract double the roll on one die (the jacket), and then divide the result by double the roll on one die (for the kevlar).

EXAMPLE GUNFIRE COMBAT

A Peace Officer surprises (and is surprised by) three criminals in a warehouse, two armed with Colt .38's (medium handguns) and the other armed with a throwing knife. All three are wearing tough leathers (1 point protection). The Peace Officer is wearing the Peace Force uniform (1 die of regular armor) and carries an MP5. They are 5m apart.

Round 1

The criminals win initiative and open fire before the Peace Officer can move to cover. They each roll 3 dice with their weapons. The only modifier on the defense dice is distance. Four meters is beyond point blank range and within close range, so the Peace Officer rolls 2 dice versus each gun. Versus the throwing knife he rolls 3 dice.

1st .38: Attack roll of 9 vs. Peace Officer's roll of 9. A miss.

2nd .38: Attack roll of 11 vs. Peace Officer's roll of 7, a hit by 4 points. Damage factor is X4, so the Peace Officer takes 16 points of damage. He rolls a 3 for his armor, divided by two because it is against a bullet, for 1 point of protection. He takes 15 points of damage, dropping from 21 hit points to 6.

Knife: Attack roll of 14 vs. defense roll of 10, a hit by 4 points. The damage factor for a throwing knife is X1, and the Officer rolls 5 for his armor, so he takes no damage from the knife.

Now the Peace Officer takes cover behind a wooden box and opens fire. He could go full auto and attack all three criminals, but since he is badly wounded and dodging, he is going to suffer two penalty dice. He decides instead to target one gunman with a three round burst. He gets a bonus die, which cancels one penalty die, and gets a +1 bonus on his damage factor, taking it to X5.

He makes an attack roll of 9 vs the gunman's defense roll of 6, for 15 points of damage. The gunman's leathers have no effect (1 point, divided by two, rounded down, is 0), so he takes the full 15 points, dropping him to 6 hit points.

Round 2

Hearing the gunshots, a Loyal Defender steps through the door and assesses the situation. The Loyal Defender automatically goes last because he is new to the situation. The two gunmen take cover and open fire on him, while the one who threw his knife dodges behind cover. They will take a penalty die for taking cover and firing in the same round.

1st Gunman: Rolls 10 versus the Defender's roll of 7, a hit by 3 for 12 points of damage. The Defender's military armor subtracts 3 from the damage (now 9), and divided the rest by a roll of 2 dice. He rolls a 4 on the two dice and takes a measly 2 points of

damage, dropping him to 26 points.

2nd Gunman: Rolls 8 versus the Defender's roll of 6, for 8 points total. Minus 3 for regular armor and divided by 10 for the bullet-proof armor, leaves .5 damage, rounded off to one point. The Defender now has 25 hit points.

The Defender goes full auto with his AK-47 (heavy rifle). He can unload 20 of his 30 rounds in 3 seconds, which he promptly does. He gets 4 dice for his skill, a bonus die for

points, X7 damage factor is 42 points, dropping the gunman to -36 hit points. He dies instantly.

Vs. unwounded gunman: Attack of 15 vs. defense of 11, hit for 4X7 damage, or 28 points, dropping him to -7. He is seriously wounded and out of the fight, but he's still breathing.

Vs. dodging criminal: Attack of 16 vs. defense of 15, hit for 1X7 damage, equals 7 points, dropping him to 14. He receives a flesh wound from a single bullet and keeps on running.

The Peace Officer was firing on the wounded gunman, so he doesn't even bother to roll.

Round 3

The last standing criminal is dodging and fleeing behind boxes and shelving. By now he is 12m away, still in close range for SMG's and rifles. He gets 2 defense dice for distance, 2 for cover (he has put more cover between him and his attacker's), 1 for moving, plus 2 bonus dice for dodging equals 5 dice plus 2 bonus dice.

The Defender empties the 10 rounds in his clip at the criminal, giving him a bonus die and X9 damage factor. The Peace Officer fires a 3 round burst to preserve ammo, giving him a bonus die (to cancel the penalty for wounds) but no bonus on damage.

Defender: Attack of 17 vs. defense roll of 20, a miss.

Peace Officer: Attack of 11 vs. defense roll of 19, another miss.



Illustration by David Brown

the drugs in his system, and another for going full auto at close range. He takes a penalty die for wearing military-class armor, leaving him with 4 dice + 1 bonus die. The two gunmen receive 3 dice for defense (2 for distance and 1 for cover). The other criminal receives 4 dice plus 2 bonus dice for dodging.

Vs. wounded gunman: Attack of 16 vs. defense of 10, hit for 6

Round 4

The criminal ducks out a back door and is gone. The Loyal Defender radios to HQ and checks the criminals for signs of life. The Peace Officer catches his breath and looks at his wounds. He took 15 points from a .38, so he might have a "serious wound," such as a splintered rib, but that is up to the GM to decide.

OVER THE EDGE™ RULES BRIEF

This page may be photocopied for personal use. Use it as a quick-reference sheet.

CHARACTER CHECKLIST

Your character includes:

- **Concept** (who or what you are)
- **Traits & Signs:** One central trait and two side traits, one of the preceding three traits is your superior trait; one flaw; a sign for each trait (including the flaw).
- **Hit Points**
- **One Die in Your Experience Pool**
- **Motivation** (why you do what you do)
- **Secret** (the thing you don't want others to know)
- **Important Person in Your Past** (someone who affected your life)
- **Drawing** (draw your character, at least a rough sketch)
- **Name, Background, Equipment, Finances, Etc.** (be reasonable)

MECHANICS

When you use a trait, you roll a number of dice equal to its score (usually three dice, or four dice for your superior trait).

If you get a bonus die (by having some advantage), you roll an extra die along with your normal dice and then drop the lowest die out of the bunch. If you have to roll a penalty die (from having some disadvantage), roll an extra die along with your normal ones, but drop out the highest one.

You compare your roll vs. that made by the GM, usually representing a GMC's traits. You succeed if you beat the GM's roll or the difficulty factor she assigns.

Sample Difficulty Factors

Task	Difficulty Factor	or Dice to Roll
Easy	4	1
Moderate	7	2
Hard	11	3
Really Difficult	14	4
Near Impossible	18+	5 or 6

YOUR EXPERIENCE POOL

You can use the die in your experience pool to improve one roll per game session. Once you use the experience die, you cannot use it again in that session. The dice from your experience pool act as a bonus dice. As you play, you can acquire more dice for your pool.

OVER THE EDGE COMBAT BRIEF

Initiative: Roll a combat, agility, or speed trait at the beginning of a combat. Actions proceed each round from highest roller to lowest.

Attack: Roll a combat, strength, agility, or similar trait. Compare it to the defender's roll. A non-combat trait can only be used for either attack or defense each round. You hit your opponent if you beat your opponent's defense roll.

Defense: Roll a combat, agility, or similar trait. A non-combat trait can only be used for either attack or defense each round. You get one defense roll for each attack made against you.

Damage: On a successful hit, subtract the defense roll from the attack roll. Multiply the result by the weapon's damage factor to calculate the damage done.

Armor: The defender determines armor protection (usually 1 point for casual armor, or one or two dice for good armor). Subtract this protection value from damage done to get damage taken.

Lost Hit Points: Subtract the damage that exceeds armor from the target's hit points. If the target is at half hit points or below, they take a penalty die on further actions. If at 0 hit points or below, the target is out of the fight. If at a level of hit points equal to the negative of their normal hit points (e.g. -21 for a character with 21 hit points), they are purchasing agricultural real estate.

Recovery: After a chance to rest and recuperate (maybe half an hour), you recover half the hit points you lost. After that, you recover only by rest or medical care.

Damage Factors

Unarmed combat	X1
Throwing knife	X1
Knives, lead pipes, throwing axe, etc.	X2
Swords, axes, etc.	X3
Light handgun or SMG	X3
Medium handgun or SMG	X4
Large handgun or SMG	X5
Light Rifle	X6
Heavy Rifle	X7
12-gauge shotgun	X10*
Taser	X5**

*Divided by "distance dice" (see "Weapon Ranges," p. 23)

**All damage from a taser is temporary. Record it separately; it all comes back when the character recovers.

CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW

Since it explains much of what's going on in the crazy world of Al Amarja, this chapter is only for GMs and for players whose characters have spent some time on the island itself. Players may read all of it or certain sections only as directed or permitted by the GM.

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

Al Amarja is a small island in the Mediterranean south and a little east of Italy. It is roughly oval, about 80 km long and almost 60 km wide. Of volcanic origin, the island has a single, low mountain at the center. The landscape is rough and convoluted, featuring dry, slow-growing forests and fields of scrub, small coves, cliffs, twisting streams, and sandy beaches.

The climate is typically dry and sunny in the summer, cooler and sometimes rainy in the winter. Temperatures are always moderate, and the sun shines clearly most every day.

On the western tip of the island lies the urban center where most island inhabitants live. Circling a bay is the ancient port Skylla. Just to the south is a city called the Edge; it is actually poised on the edge of cliffs that overlook the sea. Monique D'Aubainne built this city up when she liberated the island, and it is the heart of Al Amarjan culture. Just south of the Edge lies Traboc, a city that expanded greatly during the prosperity of the Sixties.

Along the coast of the island stand private mansions of the very wealthy, along with the occasional

THERE IS NO
EXCELLENT
BEAUTY THAT
HATH NOT
SOME
STRANGENESS
IN THE PRO-
PORTION.

— FRANCIS
BACON

resort, catering to wealthy and decadent tourists. The center of the island is wooded and primarily undeveloped. Private mansions, sometimes virtual fortresses, also dot the hillsides that slope up to the central volcanic basin.

On the far eastern end of the island is Freedom City, the capital of the island. Here Monique D'Aubainne and the various legislators, bureaucrats, functionaries, and lobbyists live in wealth and luxury. Freedom City is heavily guarded.

POLITICS

Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne established the island as an independent nation, a self-described democracy. (D'Aubainne's

official title is "President.") Actually, it is an anarchic monarchy, or perhaps a monarchic anarchy. The elections, which D'Aubainne always wins, aren't fooling anyone.

D'Aubainne has eschewed any connection with the United Nations, declaring it a fascist, pro-Communist, anti-freedom organization designed to put the powerful and far-seeing minority under control of the small-minded majority. Individual relations between Al Amarja and other countries are scant at best, at least officially. D'Aubainne must be exerting some kind of covert pressure on the politicians of other nations to allow her to continue her libertarian policies. Indeed, she prefers that few people even know about Al Amarja, and she's succeeded in dampening any significant media coverage of the place.

There are no embassies on the island, and no Al Amarjan embassies in other countries. Whether there are clandestine negotiations between the Al Amarjan government and other governments is a matter of rumor and speculation.

On the island, D'Aubainne's word is law. Primarily, however, she lets people do as they please. The result is an ever-changing political scene in which money, information, and power rule. The government only interferes in personal life when the government has something to gain thereby. On Al Amarja, the government is something to be universally avoided. In this way, it is essentially like the United States, although without the elaborate façade of participatory democracy.

HISTORY

The Hellenic Greeks colonized Al Amarja long ago, subjugating the native population. Their colony, however, was soon abandoned, and Al Amarja was free until Rome colonized it. Remnants of Rome survived the fall of the Empire, but eventually lost control of the island to North Africans who were spreading Islam and literate culture as far as benighted Spain. The Muslims gave the island the name "Amerjá" or "Al Amerjá." When Barcelona became a major sea power and Catalonia conquered much of the Mediterranean, they threw out the Muslims and corrupted the name to Al Amarjá. When the Castilians came to dominate the Iberian peninsula, they retained this island's name, but came to pronounce the "j" like an English "h," whereas it was originally pronounced "zh" by the Catalans and "j" by the Muslims. They also dropped the terminal stress, so that the middle syllable of "Amarja" came to be stressed. The name thus reached its current form. The island changed hands a few more times as a result of European squabbles, and finally ended up under Italian control in the 20th century.

Then came World War II and Monique D'Aubainne. In 1940 she liberated the island and installed herself as President. In hopes of creating a glorious nation, she modelled it after the nation she considered to be the best and most powerful in the world, the United States of America. She imposed English as the national language and adopted the U.S. dollar as the official currency.

She has indeed brought prosperity to the island, though not to the majority of its inhabitants.

LAW

The laws of Al Amarja are designed to protect Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne and her kin. A few specific examples should suffice.

Guns and explosives are strictly forbidden, and laws against them are

tightly enforced. D'Aubainne reasons that if no one has easy access to firearms, it should be hard for some nut or fascist to assassinate her.

Psychics are also outlawed, to protect her secrets from exposure and her life from paranormal threats. Psychics are allowed to operate on the island if they register with the government and cooperate when the government needs information.

Drugs outlawed in the U.S. are outlawed here as well. This law is rarely enforced, and drug use is nearly universal in the population. The preponderance of illegal drugs makes it easy for D'Aubainne's Peace Force to arrest just about anyone they want to on legitimate charges. The official charge is possession of drugs, but the actual offense is usually personal or political.

Citizens have practically no rights against harassment, spontaneous searches, invasion of privacy, or any of the other techniques so popular with police forces everywhere. Rights of free speech, free assembly, freedom of religion, and so forth are part of the Constitution, but anyone who ticks off the government probably won't last too long.

The laws, however, are not all strict. Prostitution and gambling are both legal, and fire codes and such regulations are minimal.

The laws of Al Amarja are served by the ever-competent Peace Force. The Peace Force has about the same relation to peace as the fire department does to fire. Peace officers in riot helmets, wearing dark blue suits (armored), and carrying sub-machine guns are a common sight on Al Amarja, but it is the intelligence branch of the Peace Force that you've really got to be worried about.

ECONOMICS

The island relies on international trade for its prosperity. The wealthy bring in money from their various investments and spend it here. Skylla serves as a stopping place in shipping lanes, though the more professional

shipping lines avoid it entirely. The Edge provides financial services for the island's inhabitants and for foreigners who want their finances to be inaccessible to authorities. It also receives large infusions of hard currency from wealthy, decadent tourists who cannot find anywhere else in the world to amuse them in quite the same way. Traboc has a substantial industry, specializing in cheap imitations of expensive, brand-name goods. And overall, the drug trade brings in plenty of wealth, thanks to countries that enforce their drug laws and keep prices high.

Al Amarja is home to some of the world's richest and some of the world's poorest people. The wealthy approve of this contrast, as the desperately poor provide cheap labor. The Peace Force, as well as private security forces, keep the disparity from threatening the lives and sensibilities of the wealthy.

THE POPULACE

Al Amarjans are a mix of cultures, mostly from the Mediterranean. Greeks, Libyans, Moroccans, Spaniards, Catalans, Italians, Egyptians, Algerians and others from the Mediterranean coasts compose the bulk of the population, but ever since Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne liberated the island, more and more people from northern Europe, the United States, and Canada have been coming here to live or to play. More recently, waves of immigrants from Asia and sub-Saharan Africa have arrived, driven by political turmoil and economic hopes.

BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

The primary virtue in Al Amarjans' minds is personal loyalty — loyalty to those individuals who have helped you and worked with you. Loyalty to abstractions, such as ideologies,

deities, nations, ethnic groups, and so forth, is regarded as immature.

Al Amarjans are markedly tolerant of differences between people, probably because they are accepting of their own internal contradictions. Rather than cleaving to a specific self-image, and then judging people who are different from that self-image, Al Amarjans see themselves as theoretically capable of all manner of human behavior. Lifestyle is a question of taste on Al Amarja, and inhabitants are likely to view an argument between people of different religions in the same way they'd view an argument between devotees of different styles of music.

Like all people in unpredictable circumstances, Al Amarjans are partial to superstition, and followers of many different superstitions are found here. The following are taken seriously by at least some of the populace: lucky numbers, talismans, voodoo, animal sacrifice (especially for getting computers to work smoothly), pyramid power, palm-reading, human sacrifice (especially for christening a ship or improving the chances for a big business deal to go through), Eckankar, Christian Science, Reichian biology, Scientology, Catholic rituals, decadent Taoism, and psychoanalysis.

It is impolite to serve drinks that have been opened. Hosts always provide soft drinks, juices, and alcoholic beverages in their sealed bottles or cans. Furthermore, Al Amarjans typically hold their thumbs over the mouths of their bottles when not drinking. While these customs arose from the suspicion that someone might have put something poisonous or psychoactive in the drink, they are now taken as a matter of course, and it is not considered rude to act as if you suspect your host might be trying to poison you. Al Amarjans also generally serve snacks in closed packages for guests to open themselves.

Free self-expression, to the point of self-indulgence, is what life is all about to these people. Fashions, styles, opinions, and habits, therefore, vary widely from individual to individual. Except for those few who hold positions of power through their

jobs, Al Amarjans see work as a necessary evil and look elsewhere for meaning in their lives. They join gangs, groups, cults, and clubs or pursue esoteric art forms, all in the name of self-expression.

STYLE & FASHION

One common feature of Al Amarjan style is the noose, worn in place of a necktie. Some wear their nooses tight around the neck, and others wear them loose. Some nooses are functional, others purely for show. Like neckties in saner cultures, the Al Amarjan noose comes in any variety of colors, materials, and designs.

The knife is nearly a universal component of Al Amarjan dress. Beyond its obvious use for self-defense, Al Amarjans use their knives for games, for status symbols, for opening stubborn bags of potato chips, and so on.

Heavy, steel-reinforced boots are also common, for stomping on people and for keeping one's feet from being broken when they are stomped on.

All manner of body modification is popular here (self-expression, once again). Body-building, severe fasting, tanning, hair styling, piercings, scarification, and tattoos are all popular. Those who can afford it even undergo plastic surgery to enhance or alter their physical form. While plastic surgery has traditionally allowed people to conform to a societal ideal of beauty, plastic surgery on Al Amarja often conforms only to the unique self-image of the individual, and common conceptions of beauty be damned.

To further express themselves, many Al Amarjans change their names. English names are common, since President D'Aubainne maintains English as the official language, and many of these names are actually normal words, such as "Stump," "Trace," "Sly," or even "Spike."

VIOLENCE

Violence is, to the Al Amarjan, a valid form of self-expression and entertainment. Most toughs out looking for a fight prefer to select other toughs who are also eager to chafe knuckles. When fight-hungry youths enter bars, they scout out possible opponents, make a few rude comments to people who look promising, and eventually find someone else who wants to brawl. The process is much like that used by people at singles' bars looking for bed partners. Since the combatants are usually looking for a good, rough time, they do not use weapons. These fights rarely lead to long-lasting feuds, and sometimes are the beginning of fast friendships.

The more disturbed among Al Amarja's population, however, enjoy causing fear and humiliation more than the thrill of a good fight, so they target more peaceful victims. These acts of violence, however, can bring repercussions if the victim has friends or connections.

LANGUAGE

English is the official language of the island (with U.S. spellings and pronunciation standard). The common patois, however, includes elements from several different languages. An English speaker can generally pick up the gist of this argot, and after a few days on the island one usually picks up the particular slangs.

When Monique D'Aubainne liberated Al Amarja in 1940, she imposed U.S. English as the official language. Apparently there was a very old language occasionally in use among certain inhabitants of the island, but it is illegal to speak this language in public, and fifty years later few people can tell you anything about this language.

WORDS FOR YES

The street speech of Al Amarja includes several forms of the words "yes," each taken from a different lan-

guage, and each representing a slightly different connotation to the word.

“Da” — Used to connote sadness, depression, and hopelessness. “I hear you got canned.” “Da.” (Russian)

“Hai” — Used to connote efficiency and polite, formal acknowledgment among business circles. “So we have a deal?” “Hai!” (Japanese)

“Ja” — Used by an inferior to connote acknowledgment of a superior’s higher status. Similar to “Yes sir” in common U.S. usage. “Johnson, do you have my papers ready?” “Ja.” (German)

“Oui” — Used for romance, often as “oui oui.” “How about drinks, my place?” “Oui oui.” (French)

“Si” — Used to connote grudging agreement, often as “si si si.” Similar to “Oh all right” in common U.S. usage. “Get back to work, you lazy scum.” “Si si si.” (Spanish)

“Yes” — Standard “yes.”

AL AMARJAN SLANG

Al Amarja has some unique slang. For a taste of it, check out the guide that Total Taxi provides free to fares (see the Props chapter at the back of the book, p. 228).

THE EDGE

Here’s where the action is: a crowded city, small by the standards of metropolises. No one has ever taken a census; estimates of the metropolitan area’s population (including the ‘Burbs, Skylla and Traboc) range from half a million to 5 million people.

In the business and wealthy districts, the streets are broad, clean, and filled with the good-looking and powerful. Elsewhere the streets are narrow, twisted, filthy, and thronging with the those who don’t fit in well anywhere else in the world. Graffiti, often disturbing and usually enigmatic, adorns most surfaces.

The Edge is unofficially divided into several barrios, each surrounding a plaza.

Arms Barrio — Where the Peace Force is centered, also the residence of most Peace Officers’ families; heavily patrolled.

Broken Wings Barrio — Exclusive, wealthy residential section; no entry without a pass.

Flowers Barrio — Artistic and entertainment district.

Four Points Barrio — Poor and dangerous.

Golden Barrio — The business and financial district.

Great Men Barrio — Dirt poor and hopeless.

Justice Barrio — No-nonsense, working class folks.

Science Barrio — University area, dominated by youths.

Sunken Barrio — Burgerville, where the tourists congregate.

In addition to the barrios, there are two other areas of potential interest.

The Brink — Terraces heading down to the sea, home of the Garbage Men. On the cliff on the western border of the Edge.

The ‘Burbs — Not as spacious as those in the US, but at least the residences here have lawns. East (inland) from the rest of the Edge.

TRANSPORTATION

The crowded conditions of the Edge make private automobiles impractical for most people. Parking is hard to find, and traffic is often jammed. The wealthy can afford leased parking in underground lots, but most inhabitants of the Edge find alternatives. Motor scooters are popular, though easily stolen. Taxis are everywhere for those whose paths can afford them. Since Al Amarjans often stick closely to their respective neighborhoods, most don’t worry about the difficulties of automobile travel.

A type of transportation unusual to Al Amarja is the jitney. Essentially it is the missing link between the cab and bus, a private van or microbus

that can drop you off at a specific address but that generally carries up to half a dozen passengers heading in the same general direction. The jitney driver places a placard in the window describing the area to which they are heading, and those who want a ride in that direction hail it as if it were a cab. The driver then collects a fee, generally a dollar, and they take the rider to any address in that area. Slower than a cab, but much cheaper.

Several companies have tried to start bus routes, but they have only been successful on heavily used routes, and only during rush hours. (So-called democracies in other countries often insure the success of their public bus lines by making jitneys illegal.)

HOT SPOTS

While on Al Amarja, be sure to visit...

D’Aubainne International Airport Terminal — Shaped something like a ziggurat standing on its head. No one can find their way around the place without the help of guides. The international jet set come here to visit the ritzy bars and night clubs, without the hassle of actually going through customs. Something’s always happening here. Inland from the Edge.

Sad Mary’s Bar & Girl — A happening night spot on the Plaza of Flowers, with a performance stage (for sex shows, fights, and other performance arts) and an array of specialized hookers. Plaza of Flowers.

The D’Aubainne Museum of Modern Life — Part art museum, part side show; always something new to see. Not all exhibits are for the weak of heart. Great Men Barrio.

Blackfire Entertainment — A ship that stays in international waters near Al Amarja, providing firing ranges for Al Amarjans who want to use firearms. The rumors that humans serve as targets on certain exclusive ranges are no doubt

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW

baseless. Helicopters shuttle clients from the office in Flowers.

The Temple of the Divine Experience — With nightly services, the Temple provides for the spiritual needs of the Edge. Different faiths use the Temple on different nights of the week. Often the services turn into high-spirited parties. The Sommerites orchestrate the Tuesday services and dominate the Saturday night parties. Cheryl D'Aubainne runs the Temple as its High Priestess. Sunken Barrio.

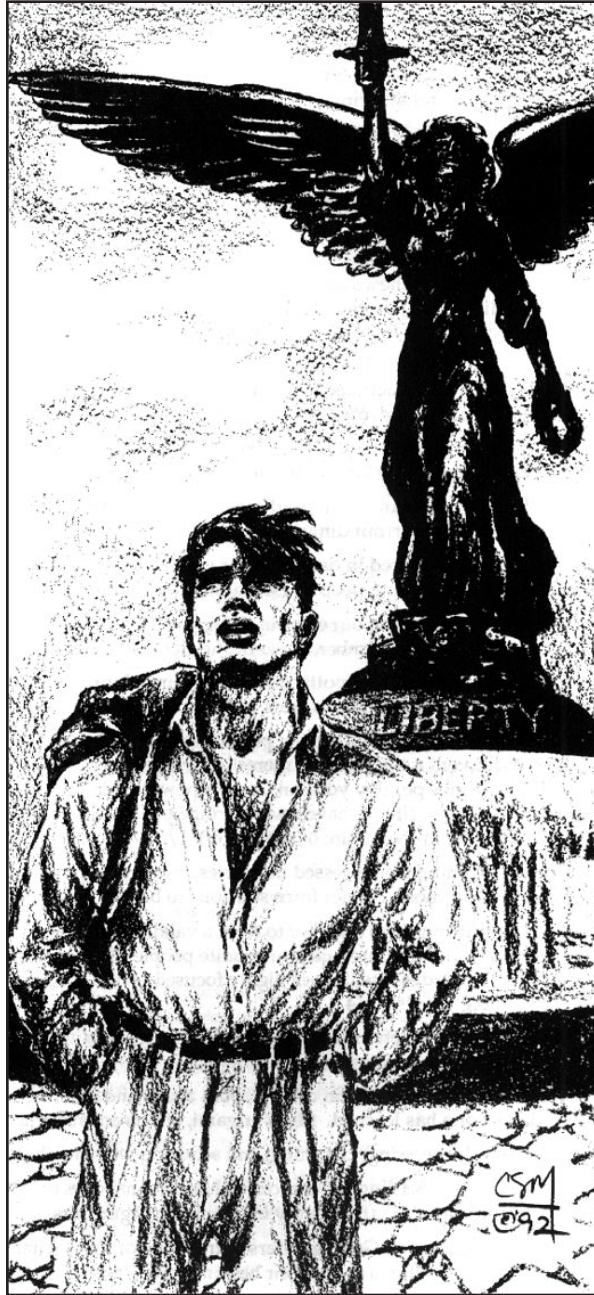
Cinema de Vivisection — A theater that shows the most avant-garde films from across the world, as well as cinema collages of various movies cut up and stuck back together into surreal montages. "Leave It to Beaver" makes frequent appearances, albeit in altered form. Some fans of the theater are as addicted to the montages as others are to drugs. Science Barrio.

D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center — Includes a betting hall with video monitors showing the progress of various surgeries, especially the more dangerous ones. A \$10 cover allows you to watch all day, but most people come here to bet on the outcomes of the operations. Justice Barrio.

PLACES TO AVOID

Arms Barrio — Unless you like being watched, arrested, and interrogated.

Illustration by Cheryl Mandus



Four Points Barrio at Night — Your organs are worth more than most of these people earn in a year, so be careful.

Justice Barrio — If you look suspicious, the vigilante bands will give you a hard time. Baseball bats are general issue in their ranks.

Lucifer's Cauldron — A bar patronized almost exclusively by Satanists, with human flesh, so

it's said, on the menu. Four Points Barrio.

Den of Thieves — A dangerous bar on the Sunken Plaza, attracting evil clientele and daring burger.

POWER GROUPS

Many Al Amarjans enhance their personal power by joining groups of one kind or another. Naturally, many groups are secret, acting behind the scenes, but several act overtly on the political and social scenes.

Business — The business people of Al Amarja, freed from restrictions of copyright and trademark laws, and able to buy their way free from just about any other law, make incredible profits on this island. They exert their influence to keep the island running profitably.

Gangs — People working together for their own protection, often running illegal or semi-legal business interests. The Aries Gang is the largest and most prosperous.

The Government — A self-serving organization with money, influence, and guns; don't get in their way.

Patrons — Wealthy people who set themselves up as centers of power, including Chris Seversen (interested in science), Lydia Goodman (Sommerite), and Sir Arthur Compton (decadence).

Satanists — Dangerous people grouped in covens, reputedly with black magic to back up their muscle. Lucifer's Glorious Lords are currently the dominant Satanist gang.

Sommerites — Fanatic followers of rock vocalist Karla Sommers, whom they consider divine; per-

haps the most popular religious orientation on the island.

DRUGS

A great variety of drugs are readily available on the streets. In addition to those drugs that are such stubborn fixtures in our culture, death-defying Al Amarjans can partake of the following substances, and more:

Blue Shock — Increases sensitivity to all stimulus; common.

Communion — Ecstatic, mystic experience; rare.

MDA Cubed — Incredibly powerful aphrodisiac.

Nightmare — Gives you one hell of a bad trip; for the jaded, some swear by it.

Relapse — Causes the drug it is mixed with to hit the system at some random time in the future; only for the daring.

Slo-Mo — Speeds neural firing, causing the world to appear to move in slow motion; used by street-fighters and sybarites, but unreliable. The laws against possession and sale of Slo-Mo are enforced.

Wings — Produces out-of-body experiences.

Zorro — Users see the world in strict black/white, good/evil divisions.

MEDIA

Al Amarja Today is the most popular newspaper, dealing mostly with events on the island and strange news from around the world. Two features are of special interest. "Opportunities on the Edge" presents job openings, special events, and unique services for the daring. "Little Scratches" is a graffiti board, mostly anonymous. *Al Amarja Today* makes no effort to verify the identities of the contributors to Little Scratches, nor the veracity of claims. Many of the messages are meaningless, except to insiders.

KRAK Radio in Traboc plays everything, from raucous industrial

noise to the haunting lyrics of Karla Sommers. It also plays "Public Service Announcements" from those who pay. Again, some of these announcements are coded signals to operatives on the island.

Al Amarja Television (AATV) pirates signals from other stations around the world and broadcasts them. Its independent programs feature prominent Al Amarjans, controversial talk shows, and coverage of local events.

AXTC Television — A recently launched rival to AATV, with technical innovations and offbeat programming. (See the adventure resource *Airwaves* for details.)

WHY AL AMARJA IS SO WEIRD

While Al Amarja attracts a broad range of people, they all agree on one thing. Al Amarja is a strange place. Why? Everyone has a different theory; here are some of them.

Reality by Convention — Reality, even down to scientific "fact," is a social creation of the group-mind of humanity. On Al Amarja, where drugs and general non-sanity have warped the minds of the inhabitants, the "rules" of reality have warped to conform to the minds present. This bizarre milieu attracts more strange people to the island, and they wind up making the place stranger yet.

Psychotic Sink — Al Amarja attracts those who don't fit the "normal" society so strongly defended in other countries. Al Amarja is like a drain, drawing the lowest, weirdest people down to it. While mad scientists, drug addicts, psychics, mutants, and other misfits exist everywhere, they feel more at home on Al Amarja, so they come here in droves.

A New World Order — Al Amarja represents the next step in human cultural evolution. Naturally, it looks weird and even scary to those stuck in the "industrial" stage, but it is the wave of the future. Get used to it.

Transparent Life — All the strange stuff taking place on Al Amarja happens everywhere else as well. The only difference is that Al Amarja does not have a power structure and media that have a vested interest in hiding the truth from the populace. This theory explains why people around the world know so little of Al Amarja; the power structures there see to it that the populace doesn't find out what's going on there.

Paranormal Influence — Entities from other dimensions or planets have chosen this island as the beachhead of their infiltration of earth. Their presence has changed the limits of reality here on the island.

No Protection — Other nations have secret government agencies that fight the supernatural and prevent its disclosure to the populace, but Her Exaltedness has decided not to have such an agency, nor to cooperate with such agencies of foreign countries. These agencies also suppress information on Al Amarja in their own countries, which is why so few people know about it.

God's Forgotten — The world is the combined thoughts of sentient beings. God watches over most of earth, stabilizing the "natural laws" as science knows them. But for some reason, God pays little attention to Al Amarja. Perhaps He finds it distasteful, or perhaps He is allowing some of His creations more freedom, as an experiment. As a result, human minds have more power over reality here than they do elsewhere, and human minds have created a slightly twisted reality. Depending on personal perspective, one can see this freedom as a blessing or a curse.

CHAPTER THREE

DEEP OVERVIEW

What's really going on? Here's the inside story, along with notes for things found on Al Amarja that usually aren't found elsewhere.

This chapter is for the Game Moderator only.

THE HISTORY OF AL AMARJA

The first inhabitants of Al Amarja were the glugs (see p. 125). Glugs, in fact, were the first humans, and tens of thousands of years ago they thrived in a world-wide civilization of peace and prosperity.

The universal peace was destroyed many thousand years ago when a cabal of evil scientists (known as the Eight Evil Sages) sought to take control of the world. First they created the races we know today, mutant strains of true (glug) humanity. The sages implanted violent and domineering urges in their creations, making them formidable soldiers, but also gave them an inherent desire to follow strong leaders, making them easy to control. The Eight Evil Sages also created the Pharaohs (see p. 147) to rule over the mutants, and the Aphids to feed the immortal Pharaohs.

The council of evil sages suffered from internal bickering and powerful assaults by heroic glugs, and they were eventually slain or driven to whereabouts unknown. Their creations, however, followed their

destructive urges and eliminated almost all the normal humans. (Stories of Atlantis and Mu are racial memories of these advanced, fallen communities.) With the fall of glug civilization, what we know as history began. Glug colonies remained only in isolated areas around the world, and Al Amarja was one of them. Since glugs do not have the warlike tendencies of the mutants (what we know today as "normal humans"), they have since found themselves conquered by one dominant mutant culture after another.

Meanwhile, the Pharaohs found the mutants too contrary and rebellious to control directly, so they began controlling the progress of history from behind the scenes.

While under Greek colonization, the glugs on Al Amarja began practicing their ancient religion in secret, a tradition continued under the Romans. While occupied by Rome, they even developed a mystery religion to allow them some freedoms, but have since returned to absolute secrecy when the Christians conquered them and showed no tolerance for other religions.

After the Catalans captured the island from the Muslims, Al Amarja was passed back and forth as various nations rose to power and fell. The latest exchange was in 1940, when Monique D'Aubainne bought the island from Mussolini. He of course used the substantial sum to fund his war efforts, while Monique D'Aubainne proclaimed herself liberator of the island. She has since seen to it that history books conform to her version of the liberation: that she and her bodyguard ousted the Fascists by force.

In the meantime, the Pharaohs had arranged the discovery and colonization of the New World, seeing to it that religious misfits, debtors, and desperate adventurers came to populate the northern continent. The Pharaohs arranged the slaughter of the natives so as to have a land without history where they would have maximum power to experiment. (The scheme to mix New and Old World cultures in South America failed miserably.)

The North Americans were divided into two groups, the United States and the Canadians. The US was then subject to intense manipulation in an attempt to advance science and social "progress" as fast as the population could stand it. The Canadians, meanwhile, served as a control group (similar background, culture, and physical environment, without the intense manipulation). If the maniacally advancing technology and upheavals in social traditions in the US brought about its downfall, the Pharaohs would be able to use the Canadians to step in and carry on the experiment.

At present, the US has served its purpose. It has produced technology capable of destroying the world, altering genetic structures, reaching the moon, and more. Just as important, it has failed to develop a social structure capable of handling this power. The Pharaohs can use the technology without any threat from the bewildered and paranoid mutants who dominate the world.

Now Al Amarja comes onto the scene. Its current role, in the Pharaohs' plan, is to be a crucible of technological and social experimenta-

tion, building on and warping what the US has produced.

THE POPULATION

The Al Amarjans represent a gene pool of bewildering diversity. In the veins of these swarthy people runs the blood of ancient Greeks, creators of tragedy, orgiastic worshippers of Bacchus, inventors of Western philosophy; the blood of Romans, conquerors of the world, gladiators, engineers, soldiers; the blood of Harald Hardrada, giant among Vikings, and his men, seasoned mercenaries who roamed the Mediterranean; the blood of Muslim warriors who swept from Arabia, across North Africa and into Spain, historians, physicians, scientists, astronomers; and the blood of Catalans, who sacked the coasts of the sea and who loomed as bogeymen in the minds of children on the shores of the Mediterranean. Within these people lie all the potentialities of their varied ancestors, scientists and slaughterers, merchants and mystics, dreamers and destroyers. Who knows what genetic urges, racial memories, and atavistic traits lurk recessive under the skins of these mysterious people? With each generation, the unfathomable dice rolls of sexual reproduction throw together combinations never before seen on earth. Who knows of what they may be capable?

BEHIND THE SCENES

Monique D'Aubainne presents herself as in charge of the nation. In her "State of the Republic" addresses, she assures her citizens that she is in control, and that she has achieved yet more for the island. Perhaps last week she attracted another foreign investor to Al Amarja. Perhaps this week the figures reveal that the standard of liv-



Illustration by Cheryl Mandus

ing has increased yet again. Perhaps next week she will announce that the leader of a fascist terrorist organization has been captured and executed. No matter what happens, she convinces the populace and visitors to the island that she holds the reins.

She knows better.

Without a doubt, Monique D'Aubainne's power is great, but she knows also that it is contested. To the extent she can manage it, she makes the island more to her liking: more wealth for her, more control, more executives and politicians coming to her for favors, more people cringing at the sound of the Peace Force's boots on the pavement (boots she dreams of wearing herself).

But others have their own agendas, and the power to see them through. Agents of various secret societies have infiltrated her bureaucracy. Though she regularly captures and disposes of these traitors, she is canny enough to know that most of those she finds are meant to be captured. They are agents who have outlived their usefulness, or those that have begun following their own goals instead of those of their superiors, or those that have been fed disinformation to throw D'Aubainne off the scent of the real threats.

She knows that, no matter what precautions she takes, a single life is always easy to snuff. To protect herself, then, she has made herself valuable. She has turned Al Amarja into a frenetic, unstable society dependent on the force of her personality and her power structure for its continued survival. The criminal underworld values her because Al Amarja is a haven for many of their illicit dealings (as long as they keep the right pockets stuffed). The business world values her because here they can pursue profit and power without the shackles of unions, minimum wage laws, heavy taxes, trademark enforcement, truth-in-advertisement laws, and safety regulations. The wealthy and elite of the world value her because she provides a surreal playground for their bloated and twisted fantasies. The scientists value her because here they can conduct their experiments without gov-

ernmental supervision or ethical restrictions. Conspiracies value her because her island gives them access to resources and information not easily available anywhere else in the world. Because of D'Aubainne's value to all these groups, they all try to control, to bend the island a bit more toward their liking, to use the formidable power structure she has created for herself to their own ends. But none want to kill her or even depose her, because without the dread rule of Monique D'Aubainne, the carefully controlled chaos of Al Amarja would collapse into a useless mass of random violence and insanity. All the decades of entropy that she has carefully kept at bay would come crashing in, and the unique human and para-human ecosystem that is Al Amarja would be reduced to its meaningless and noxious component parts.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

Every nation needs some way of generating and attracting wealth. Under the guidance of Monique D'Aubainne, Al Amarja succeeds admirably at bringing in hard currency. (Distributing this wealth equitably, however, is another question entirely.) Below are noted several of the more important sources of the island's wealth. For each is listed some tangible results of the source of wealth, so that the PCs can encounter them.

Decadent Tourists

The very wealthy come to Al Amarja for unique get-aways. After all, where else can the jaded find blue shock, MDA-Cubed, furry prostitutes, latahs, slaves, and blood sports all in one isolated, private location? Slumming in the Edge is always popular, though the wealthiest often stay at exclusive resorts on stringently guarded beaches.

PCs may encounter Japanese tourists with minicams on guided tours in the Edge, agents looking for exotic fighters or dancers for private

performances, or senators from the US partying in the Edge (senators who would rather not be recognized). For an adventure of mystery and intrigue, have the PCs hired to find an influential tourist who never returned from a night on the town.

Private Investment

Wealthy residents of the island, especially the D'Aubainnes and various patrons, have vast international investments. When they spend or donate their winnings, they bring hard cash into the island's economy.

The PCs may find the Edge caught up in a sudden party if the world market takes a sudden jump or dive, either of which could mean big profits for canny investors. Suddenly the patrons of the island have ready cash to reward their bennies, and wealth gets shared in a string of impromptu parties.

Port Activity

Skylla is a port, albeit a minor one. Though low in volume, the port trade is lucrative as it specializes in ivory, pelts of endangered animals, slunk, dolphin meat, latahs, and slaves. The sailors who come here spend their money on all the drugs, sex, and entertainment that Skylla and the Edge offer. (Certain ship captains offer low pay to their crew, but promise a stop at Skylla as a fringe benefit.)

The PCs may encounter sailors come to port and looking for a good time, or major traffickers in contraband.

Operatives

The bribes and expense accounts of the numerous secret agents on Al Amarja add up, as governments and conspiracies from around the world pour hard currency into the economy in support of their operatives. In addition, several conspiracies have special agendas to pursue, which means spending more money here to attain those objectives.

The PCs are bound to run into various operatives, though they cer-

tainly won't realize it at first. Some of these operatives will have expense accounts that they use to bribe, entertain, or hire the PCs.

Illicit Business

In addition to the obvious drug manufacturing and wholesaling business, the Al Amarjan business community benefits from President D'Aubainne's lax enforcement of international trademark and copyright laws.

The PCs can buy just about any brand of product they want, but careful observation reveals that the logos and product designs are imperfect counterfeits of the genuine articles.

METAPHYSICAL CONVENTIONS

Many metaphysical questions remain unanswered on Al Amarja. If your characters investigate these issues, you'll have to adjudicate the results.

Planes of Existence

There are three "planes" that appear in these rules. By understanding these three different planes and their relation to each other, you can better understand what the rules mean when they mention psychic and magical powers.

First, there's the physical plane, what you and I simply call the world. Simple enough, right?

Second, one can talk of a psychic plane. Actually, the psychic plane is simply the physical world as sensed or acted upon through psychic powers; it is not another "dimension." Just like a description of the world without reference to electromagnetic fields is sufficient to us because we can't sense electromagnetic fields directly, so our normal descriptions of the world exclude the psychic fields at work around us. When psychics become sensitive to these fields, it seems as if they are in another world, but they just are seeing the same world differently.

Finally, there is the astral plane, actually a different, parallel "dimension" with different rules of "physics." The astral plane is the causal plane, and what happens there determines what happens in the physical world. Magic is the manipulation of the astral plane, or the manipulation of the physical world through the astral plane.

Through training, one can learn to travel on the astral plane, connected to the body only by a mystic silver cord. Travellers to the astral plane report various landscapes, including earthlike but distorted land; hazy, dreamlike expanses; or a chaos of shapes, meanings, sensations, and emotions. Actually, the astral plane is not perceived through the normal senses and therefore cannot be imagined directly with a mind that has learned all it knows through these senses. Instead, when one returns from the astral planes, all the sensations are translated into images that the physical brain can compute or "imagine." Someone from an urban environment may remember vast streets, tall buildings, fierce rats, and demonic automobiles. Someone from the rain forest may remember snakes, strange fruits, swamps, and fierce beasts. Regardless of the cultural sub-routines used by the meat-computer brain to process the data from the astral plane, a newcomer usually comprehends very little and remembers only vague and often dreadful sensations. As one returns to the astral plane repeatedly, however, one learns to distinguish and process the new sensations there, and it makes more and more sense.

When these rules describe events on the astral plane, they assume that the viewer has a modern, Western mind-set. See Abdullah Mustafa on p. 106 for an example. Traditional Taoists, uneducated inner city youths, or wizards steeped in arcane symbolism may see very different things. Keep in mind that these images of the astral plane are physical-brain interpretations of an alien dimension.

The astral plane is inhabited by entities for whom it is their home and who generally have no link to the

physical world. They can sometimes project themselves physically into this world, taking whatever form may be appropriate. Some of these beings are benign, some malign, and some directed by incomprehensible motivations. Those things known to us as demons, evil spirits, angels, and so forth are likely astral beings who have projected physical manifestations into our world.

When a person uses the astral self, he or she draws the attention of astral beings and becomes vulnerable to their attacks, influence, and communication.

Psychic Powers

Psychic powers are actually simply physical, not magical. They are something that scientists could manipulate and simulate with only a small change in their underlying paradigm.

The ability to read minds is a very powerful application of psychic ability, but it is dangerous. The human mind works on such a subtle level and is so personal that interpreting it is difficult. As an illustration, imagine trying to put a dream into words. You can get across to others some of the more obvious components of the dream, but don't you always get the feeling that some sense of meaning or some dream experiences are impossible to convey in their true sense through words? It's the same with mind-reading, which is translating someone else's thoughts (waking dream) into words. Something always gets lost in translation. In addition, many psychics lack complete control over their mind-reading. They might pick up stray thoughts of passersby, or even thoughts of their own, and believe them to be thoughts of the intended target. Reading minds is more like interpreting the meaning of a painting than reading text of a book.

Mind-reading is also dangerous because it opens the reader's mind to information that might normally be censored out from stimulus entering the brain through the senses. Reading



Illustration by Lee Moyer

the mind of a psychopath or alien could be most disturbing indeed.

For another danger of mind-reading, see brain loopers, p. 51.

Other psychic powers are not as subtle nor as dangerous, but I'm sure you can think up some ways for them to get their users into serious trouble.

Magical Powers

The use of magic involves manipulating the astral plane, which is one step above our normal plane of existence. Unlike the direct, impersonal cause-and-effect relationships found in the physical world, the astral plane is determined by meaning, rather than force. That's why magicians have always used magical words, symbols, and rituals to work their powers.

The human soul exists on the astral as well as physical plane, but usually it is inert there. When one uses magic, the magical symbols rouse the astral self into action and allow it to act on the astral selves of other things and people. Effects on the astral plane are then reflected onto the physical, so an attack on the astral might result in physical wounds.

The Soul

It is, as far as can be told, immortal and separable from the body. Debate continues as to what aspects of a person relate to the immortal soul, and what parts are temporary accretions gained through experience in a body.

The Afterlife

There are lots of ideas about the afterlife, and luckily they're compatible if you twist them a little.

Reincarnation is a great idea because it allows for all sorts of plots. An enemy from a past life is out to get the PCs, and they have to recall their former lives to remember how to deal with the threat. A murder victim is reincarnated as an animal and tries to lead the PCs to the killer. A past life begins to re-assert itself over a PC's personality in what seems to be possession.

Heaven and Hell are either temporary stopping points between lives (thank you, Plato), or permanent fates for those who become too good or too evil to remain on the cycle of reincarnation.

Ghosts are the astral selves of the deceased who can project force onto the physical world. They have to have a pretty good reason to hang around instead of being reincarnated, generally unfinished business of some kind.

God

This question's up to you. Play with it the way you're comfortable with it, or don't even raise the issue. Ultimately, however, about that of which one cannot speak, one must remain silent.

DRUGS

There is no error so monstrous that it fails to find defenders among the ablest men.
— *Lord Acton*

Drugs are common on Al Amarja, but they are also illegal. The Peace Force, however, does not generally enforce the anti-drug laws, collecting bribes (the "friendly understanding tax") instead of jailing drug runners. This bribe money supplies much of the Peace Force's operating budget and keeps drug prices inflated. (For common drugs, however, street prices are still far below those in the US.) Mostly, the Peace Force only enforces anti-drug laws in the following cases:

- 1) A drug runner refuses to pay bribes.
- 2) They want to punish someone and can easily pin a drug charge on them.
- 3) They harass a drug marketer in order to help a friendly competitor maintain a monopoly and profitably inflated prices for their drugs.

4) They want to suppress use of a drug that is dangerous to Her Exaltedness (such as Slo-Mo, see below).

5) They want to wreak havoc.

Blue Shock

A drippy blue liquid mixed through with darker, denser globules. Ingested like cough syrup, a tablespoon of blue shock momentarily awakens every single nerve ending in the body in an electric wave of intense agony. The body is then exceptionally awake and alert for 10 to 30 minutes afterwards.

Use: Normally as a stimulant, as a sex aid in S&M circles, and as an adjunct to specialized art (see, for example, the *Chrome Dome*, p. 75). Thugs employed by the Net often use it to improve their senses, though this use also makes them more susceptible to pain.

Users get a bonus die on rolls involving the senses, including combat, but suffer a -5 penalty on hit points, representing lower tolerance to pain.

Downside: Overdoses lead to immediate or delayed spontaneous combustion. Long-term use deadens nerve endings and leads to neural disorders, brain damage, and a particularly horrible variant of Lou Gehrig's disease.

Pushers: Manufactured in several labs in Al Amarja, blue shock is sold via the criminal underworld, with the Net controlling 40% of the market.

Availability: Common, \$5 a hit.

Communion

A bitter powder usually dissolved in heavily-sugared tea and drunk. Users of all faiths report a blissful union with their deity, a completely satisfying spiritual experience, involving a vision that sweeps all five senses into a swirl of divine beauty. Users usually leave the experience with their faith affirmed, and with some message from God, generally a task or series of tasks to be fulfilled.

Use: Communion is popular among celebrants at the Temple of

the Divine Experience. Satanists also are frequent users, though their experiences tend toward the psychotic and orgiastic.

Downside: Communion is not physically addictive, but many users become compulsively lost in a life devoted merely to the acquisition of more of the scarce and expensive stuff, and of following the instructions of God they get while on it.

Pushers: Communion is derived from the pineal gland of dead glugs, harvested by a group of slug funeral directors operating secretly within the slug community. Glugs at large know nothing of this drug's origins and would doubtless kill the perpetrators if they found out about it. Fortunately for the pushers, no one outside of this secret club knows where communion comes from. Since the money gained in this way must be assiduously concealed, however, it raises the question: Why do they do it? The price of getting caught would be extremely high. Is there some sort of intelligent entity behind the vivid metaphysical hallucinations the drug inspires? Are the instructions it gives geared to some particular purpose? Is the Winged Bull deity of the glugs behind all this? Or something else?

Availability: Rare, \$25 per hit.

MDA-Cubed

This bitter pinky-white pill embossed with a pink or red heart carries with it the guarantee of the ultimate orgasm. As the effects of the drug come on, ten to fifteen minutes after ingestion, the user begins to feel a oneness with all things, an overwhelming love for the universe, a rejection of conventional sexual mores, an incredibly potent desire to blissfully copulate the nearest moving object into joyful oblivion. Users are known to have coupled with people outside their sexual orientation, with people they hate, family members, minors, house pets, reptiles, and electrical appliances.

Use: Popular at Satanist orgies and frat parties. At the D'Aubainne University, many young women get their first taste of MDA-cubed in a drink secretly spiked with the stuff.

Also popular among aging sybarites who need it to maintain their “virility.”

Downside: The downside of this drug in terms of social control is obvious, but there is a personal downside as well. It is never as good as the first time. The first use of MDA-cubed provides a perfect, ideal, mind-shattering orgasm. With each subsequent use, its potency diminishes. Users become haunted by the need to reexperience that unattainable first orgasm again. They use and use, hoping against hope, knowing better but unable to overcome the compulsion. Each time, the sex becomes more pathetic, more squalid, more

pitiful. Many MDA-cubed users find some temporary satisfaction in sexual encounters with those who are using MDA-cubed for the first time, so they actively spread the addiction, but even this pleasure diminishes quickly. For most people, the ingestion of MDA-cubed is the beginning of a downward spiral into obsession, depression, and suicide. Everyone knows this. But still the pushers do a brisk business.

Pushers: The kergillians developed MDA-cubed when they were experimenting with the workings of the human nervous system. They are the sole manufacturers and large-scale distributors on the planet, using the

funds they raise to further their invasion of earth. See E-Z Sleep, p. 88.

Availability: Uncommon, but users often have large caches of the stuff and are willing to hand out the first hit free, especially to those who intend to use it with them. Street price varies from \$2 to \$15 a hit, depending on how long ago the latest batch was distributed and how desperate the seller thinks the buyer is.

Nightmare

The excreta of tulpas is a much sought after drug amongst the connoisseurs. Like tulpas themselves, their fecal matter is an excellent vessel for psychic imprinting. In its raw form, this is exceedingly rare, as only the most degraded tulpas will voluntarily produce for this purpose. Few of them are willing to admit to being tulpas, so hunters of raw Nightmare (which they call “Dreamweb”) must track down suspected tulpas, follow them around, and, ah...go to shall we say...extraordinary lengths to retrieve it. Dreamweb is light gray and odorless but otherwise has the consistency of human dung.

The final form is an injectable serum that gives the user a nightmare that “plays” over the normal, waking sensations coming in. The nightmares tend to be extraordinarily powerful and generally last five minutes to half an hour. Note that subjective feelings of helplessness and doom accompany the more objective images and sounds produced by the drug.

Use: Used by the decadent wealthy, especially by those who have already pursued all manner of euphoria and now need something new.

Downside: Not addictive, but elements of the nightmares have been known to seep into a user’s mind and remain there with fruitful tenacity.

Pushers: The pushers, who call themselves “Sandmen,” prepare raw Nightmare by seeking out a neurotic, psychotic, or other person known to have powerfully appalling dreams. Either with the dreamer’s willing cooperation or without, the pushers put the Dreamweb on their forehead when they’re asleep and thrashing



Illustration by H.J. McKinney

about the bed in terror. The dream then becomes imprinted in the Dreamweb, which is then chemically distilled into an injectable extract. One lump of raw Dreamweb can yield up to ten doses of the extract, so up to ten copies of a nightmare can be created.

Sandmen are a dedicated, ruthless, and anti-social lot, with their own subculture, slang, and code of honor. Few are willing to do the hard work required to prosper as a Sandman, although the financial rewards are great. Sandmen control the entire distribution network from procuring the raw materials to retail sales. Regular organized crime types are typically frightened of the Sandmen, who are physically dangerous but, more importantly, give regular crooks the willies. There are those who speculate that the Sandmen can't quite be defined as human, or that they constitute a power group like the Movers or Cut-Ups, but there is little evidence that this is so.

Availability: Rare, at least \$30 a hit.

Relapse

A drug for the risk-taker, the gambler, the self-destructionist, relapse is in fact a carrier for any number of possible other more mundane drugs. It comes pre-mixed with another drug — quaalude, MDA, heroin, cocaine, THC, LSD, alcohol — in colorful, crunchy candy-coated capsules. Pop one, feel the sour aftertaste — and then nothing... until the chemical trigger inside the relapse goes off, anywhere from hours to months after ingestion. The carried drug is released en masse into the system. The user might be struck while in a board meeting, making love, operating dangerous equipment, in the middle of a fight, or holding a small baby up in the air.

Use: Particularly popular around casinos, race tracks, and the Golden Barrio. A rich man's drug — relapse appeals only to those with something to lose.

Downside: Can cause strokes, heart attacks, brain damage, murder,

mayhem. Habitual relapse abusers claim that relapse has a mind of its own and waits to go off when the consequences would be particularly disastrous. This, of course, cannot be true, can it? Relapse is not in itself addictive, though often used by those with compulsive personalities.

Pushers: Relapse is made in various labs throughout Al Amarja and sold through the usual criminal channels of more common drugs.

Availability: Uncommon, either \$5 more than the un-relapsed drug, or double the base drug's price, whichever is more.

Slo-Mo

A shiny black powder generally sold in capsules, but also occurring in a variety of other forms. Slo-Mo lubricates the neural pathways of the brain, causing them to fire more rapidly. As a result, the outside world seems to move more slowly — thus the drug's name. The user, especially with some experience and training, can actually exert some control over how fast their neurons fire. Effects last half an hour, with residual but less powerful effects lasting several hours more. (A trained user can extend the effective life of a high to well over an hour.) The half-hour of the typical high might seem like forty-five minutes or several hours, depending on how far the user is able (and willing) to push the drug.

Use: Slo-Mo is primarily used for the two fixations of the human race: sex and death. It is prized as a way of extending the ecstasy of orgasm, but it is more commonly used by urban warriors who use the edge it gives them to lethal effect in combat.

Users get anywhere from a bonus die to an extra die in combat, depending on their facility with the drug.

Downside: Overuse of neural pathways results in their degeneration ("burnout"). Brain damage is nearly universal among those who use the drug more than a few times (and even possible in first time users). A more immediate danger is called "break-away," a loss of contact with reality. As the neural pathways move more

quickly, the amount of external stimulation entering the brain remains constant. Neurons, therefore, begin firing more and more as a result of other neurons, rather than in response to outside stimuli. A user who is pushing the effects of the drug toward maximum might well lose contact with the world as outside stimuli are lost in the overwhelming amount of internal mental event. Bingo, instant catatonia. A more mundane drawback is that the muscles and peripheral nervous system are not boosted by the drug. The body seems to move in slow motion like the rest of the world, making it hard for the inexperienced to judge speed, reaction time, and ability to take action. It might seem like you can dodge a bullet, but as that bullet slowly spins toward your heart, you may find that your body just won't budge out of the way no matter how hard you concentrate. (First time users might even suffer penalty dice on the drug until they get the hang of it.)

Pushers: Originally a military drug designed by Dr. Nusbaum, Slo-Mo is now being concocted in secret laboratories, generally off the island in remote locales. The Net is responsible for all shipments to Al Amarja, but various middle-men take over from there.

Availability: Rare, \$10 or more per hit.

Important Note: Like the other drugs described here, Slo-Mo is illegal. Unlike these others, however, the Peace Force enforces the laws against Slo-Mo. Her Exaltedness realizes that Slo-Mo has martial applications that could be used against her, so she does not want Slo-Mo in any but the most loyal brains. In addition, Dr. Nusbaum is quite irate that someone would steal his formula and profit from it.

Wings

LSD is popular on Al Amarja, but without anti-drug enforcement to limit competition, pushers can only get 50¢ to \$1 per hit. The solution to this problem? Wings! It is LSD mixed with inert chemicals in capsule

form and sold as a “wonderful new drug.” Pushers say it produces out-of-body experiences in those with at least some latent psychic ability. In fact, LSD can produce out-of-body hallucinations, and with the heightened expectation that this will happen, and the conscious attempts to make it happen, out-of-body experiences are commonly reported from wings. (Some reports, no doubt, are fabrications by those who don’t want to admit they have no latent psychic ability, a case of the emperor’s new clothes.) Whether the user goes “out of body” or not, users can expect a six to ten hour trip of distorted internal and external perceptions (leading perhaps to euphoria or paranoia), starting about forty-five minutes after ingestion.

Rumor has it that the effects are particularly strong if you take LSD with Wings.

Use: Popular among celebrants at the Temple of the Divine Experience, as well as among those with a New Age bent.

Downside: Those out-of-body experiences are false, and if you use Wings a lot, you’ll eventually get bored with the psychedelic experience. It’s also possible to do stupid things while on Wings (LSD).

Pushers: Typically your friendly neighborhood vendor, supplied by a few labs that also produce regularly packaged LSD at regular LSD prices.

Availability: Common, \$8 per hit.

Zorro

A handy black-and-white capsule is the carrying mechanism for this perception-altering drug. Escape from those nagging moral complexities, with a 25 mg pop full of zoroaster! A person under the influence of zoroaster sees every moral question in black and white terms only. There is Absolute Good, and Absolute Evil. Each struggles to annihilate the other. It is the battle of the millennium. There are no moral questions. When you’re hopped up on “zorro” (as it’s also called), you are right and everyone not actively supporting you is

wrong. Note, other than this change in perspective, zoroaster does not alter reasoning capacity. In other words, it does not turn someone into a raving psychopath.

Use: Anyone involved in the plots and conspiracies brewing on Al Amarja is likely to find the mind-set produced by this drug to be terribly appealing. Those who have degraded themselves in various ways also appreciate the temporary boost in self-esteem that zorro provides.

Downside: Zorro produces a very seductive frame of mind, so it is powerfully psychologically addictive. It also makes one dangerously insensitive to the subtleties of human interplay.

Pushers: Zoroaster is manufactured and sold by the Mr. LeThuys, as part of their program to destabilize everything and exacerbate all conflicts. It is also a source of project funding. They’ll sell to anyone. They especially like to hook members of opposing sides of a conflict on it. Maximum chaos and destruction.

Availability: Common, \$2 per hit.

DEFENSIVE TECHNOLOGY

In addition to the more mundane defenses, such as portable radar, electronic eyes, infra-red sensors, motion detectors, and so on, Al Amarjans have developed several more unusual ways to protect themselves and their secrets.

BRAIN LOOPERS

Developed by the ever-competent Dr. Nusbaum, these little black boxes contain telepathic human brain matter. (Don’t ask where this brain matter comes from. You don’t want to know.) It merely copies thoughts in its area. For non-psychics, it has absolutely no effect, and Dr. Nusbaum hasn’t developed any way to “read” what the brain matter is

“thinking,” so a brain looper cannot be used as a mind-reading device. But if a telepath comes near it, here’s what happens.

Imagine Fred the Telepath comes into a room with a brain looper bolted to the wall. Fred thinks, “I wonder what’s in this room?” The brain matter in the box echoes this thought, and thinks, “I wonder what’s in this room?” Fred telepathically picks up the thought, and thinks, “Someone’s thinking, ‘I wonder what’s in this room?’ Wait a minute, I just thought.” The brain looper echoes this, and Fred thinks, “Someone’s thinking, ‘Someone’s thinking, ‘I wonder what’s in this room?’ Wait a minute, I just thought that.’” And so on.

You know what feedback is? Imagine holding a microphone up to the speaker to which it’s attached, so any sound the microphone picks up gets cycled through the speaker, through the microphone, through the speaker again, etc. The identical but out-of-step sound waves clash to set up a wicked super-vibration, typically a piercing screech. That’s what happens to Fred the telepath’s brain. If he’s a very good telepath, with high-fidelity resolution of his mental perceptions, he’ll rapidly fry his neurons and fall to the floor, with blood trickling sticky and smelly out of his ears. If he’s your garden-variety telepath, he might be able to get the hell out of there before the neural vibrations and interference patterns turn him into a vegetable. Loss of telepathic powers and a few other mental faculties is a common result of overexposure to a brain looper.

Note that physical presence is not necessary to get caught by a brain looper. Any telepathic scanning of the area from any distance will have the same effect.

Brain loopers are rare. The D’Aubainnes always have them nearby, as do the very wealthy.

Story Idea

A fringe scientist is developing a brain looper that projects the thoughts it reads, making it effective against non-

telepaths. She is secretly under Mover control, and the Movers intend to take the device for their own ends. The PC's must stop the mad scientist, and possibly make off with an unreliable prototype for their own ends.

CRYSTAL TRAPS

We all know that crystals can, among other things, enhance psychic powers. Here's another use for a crystal: the crystal trap. These traps are crystals whose molecular structures are carefully manipulated by trained psychokineticists to form infinitely regressive fractal reflections of the environment. (This reflection occurs only on the psychic plane, so these crystals are, to the non-psychic, indistinguishable from normal ones.) Each crystal trap contains a reflection in miniature of its environment, including a reflection of itself. Naturally, this reflection also has a miniature reflection of the surroundings, including a reflection of itself, *ad infinitum*.

Now when a psychic attempts to manipulate anything near a crystal trap, they send part of their consciousness into the psychic plane. On the psychic plane, however, each reflection in the crystal trap is indistinguishable from the original, and only chance determines which level of reflection the psychic contacts. The chance of hitting the original (or any other specific level) is therefore one divided by infinity.

No matter what level the contact, the psychic can then act on that reflection as if it were the real world. In fact, they will not even notice that it's not the real world. The adjacent reflections (larger and smaller) change to conform to the altered level, and these levels in turn alter their adjacent levels.

So if Sue the psychokinetic tries to stop Dr. Nusbaum's heart through psychic powers while he's wearing a crystal trap pendant, she has a one in infinity chance of getting the real guy. On one level of the crystal trap she does kill Dr. Nusbaum, and then the Dr. Nusbaums on the adjacent reflec-

tion levels die, and then the ones next to those, and so on. Eventually, the psychokinetic effect will reach the real world, but here's the clincher: It takes a tiny fraction of a second for the psychokinetic effect to travel to the next higher level. So if the psychokinetic assassin strikes at a reflection level that is no more than 315 billion levels removed from reality, the psychokinetic energy will come out of the trap and affect the real world within 100 years. The chance of getting that close is approximately 315 billion divided by infinity, or "not very good," for you non-mathematicians.

The crystal trap effectively negates all manner of psychic attacks, but users often replace theirs after a year or so, just to be safe from the odd chance that some psychic energy will come up out of there some day.

Sometimes a crystal trap comes out flawed, so that it might have only a thousand, a hundred thousand, or ten million levels before the self-reflection is lost in static. These traps are still fairly effective, but there is a calculable chance that the psychic attack will emerge some day soon. If the surroundings of the crystal are different when the energy emerges, it might have any number of random effects.

Second-hand and flawed crystal traps are sold at various places in the Edge, and most are sold as "new and nearly perfect."

WHITE THOUGHT GENERATORS

These wonders look like boxes that hum. The hum is produced by life support mechanisms that maintain living dolphin brain matter inside the box. Dolphins, as you may not know, are psychic, but their thoughts are quite alien to ours, making them incredibly difficult to "read." This dolphin brain matter is artificially stimulated so as to constantly emit psychically charged "thought energy." This "thought energy" interferes with human psychic powers, making clairvoyant spying, mind scanning, and all

other psychic activities related to information very difficult. In game terms, the "white thought generator" adds one, two, or three dice to all rolls to resist psychic spying (or reduce such attempts by one, two, or three dice, as appropriate). The number of dice depends on the strength of the generator. The generator must be "fed" nutrients daily, or the brain matter decays and dies. Liquid nutrients are generally fed into a port at the top of the device.

The name of this device arises from its similarity to "white noise generators" that mask coherent noise, although the dolphin brain's thought energies are not really white (random), just indecipherable.

In certain circles, rumor has it that Her Exaltedness is protected by a white thought generator powered by the brain of a blue whale.

PSYCHOVORES

Astral carnivores bound to a locus, such as a place or an object. (Their popular name is something of a misnomer, as they are an astral rather than a psychic phenomenon.) The binding drains them of most of their energy, leaving them perpetually "hungry" for the energy in other astral beings. Any astral beings that approach the locus are attacked, and those unable to escape or defeat the psychovores are devoured. Psychovores can attack anyone in their vicinity on the astral plane, effectively protecting their areas from astral projection and the like. Since magical attack involves manipulating forces on the astral plane, even wizards who are attacking a target from a distance can be attacked by these creatures. Psychovores vary greatly in power, just as physical carnivores do.

Psychovores are hunted and trapped by professionals who sell the bound creatures at a high price. Hunting psychovores involves traveling to dangerous parts of the astral plane and facing the things on their home territory, so most psychovore hunters raise their prices enough that they can afford early retirements.



EMPTIES

Bodies stripped of their souls by fringe science. They drain the magic power of those with whom they come in contact. The D'Aubainnes offer bounties for captured empties and then sell them to or provide them for others on the island.

SACQ

The acronym stands for “selective annihilation in close quarters” and is pronounced “sack.” SACQ is a nerve gas combined with another gas that bonds with the poison and makes it inert in about three seconds. The two gases are kept in separated compartments within a single cannister and released at one time through breaking or opening the cannister, which fits easily in the palm of the hand. Since the nerve gas kills on contact with the skin, and takes about a second to do its job, SACQ kills everyone in the immediate vicinity but then renders itself harmless almost immediately. Actually, it doesn't kill everyone, because the nerve gas is designed to be ineffective against people with very specific genetic markers on their neurons. The only SACQ known to exist spares members of the D'Aubainne

family and Dr. Nusbaum, the creator of SACQ. These highly important people carry SACQ with them everywhere, as do their bodyguards, for use in emergencies. Of course the poison will kill everyone in the vicinity, so it is not used casually, but the people it spares would rather see a dozen innocent bystanders meet certain death than risk their own necks, so the poison has not gone entirely without use. That bodyguards willingly release the SACQ even though it will surely kill them is a testament either to their extreme loyalty, or to the punishments they are likely to receive if they fail to do their duty.

SEVERSEN DISRUPTION FIELD

Invented by the incomparable Dr. Chris Seversen, these simple devices send electronic pulses through psychically attuned wires, disrupting psychic energies passing between the wires. Typically they are built into walls, but portable units can be made to look like curtains, room dividers, or bulky caps. Depending on the strength and quality of the field, and the strength and quality of the psychic energy, a

“Seversen” can stop psychic powers dead or give the psychic a penalty die on all uses of the power.

WHY AL AMARJA IS SO WEIRD

In addition to those theories posited in the previous chapter,...

Throckmorton Device — The Throckmorton Device (see Chapter 8) is much more powerful than one imagines at first contact. It has actually influenced history into the past, creating a bizarre environment for its own creation. Only through the intense concentration of strange thoughts provided by the island would Reyes be able to conceive the revolutionary processes by which the device could be built. Al Amarja's strangeness has been created and aggravated by the subtle manipulations of this nearly omnipotent machine.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE EDGE

This chapter describes the major city on Al Amarja, the Edge. Most of the action in the series will take place here. *This chapter is for the Game Moderator only.*

INHABITANTS

Many strange people live in the Edge. Following are some of the groups into which they fall. These are the kinds of people the PCs are likely to meet when wandering about the city.

AL AMARJANS

AKA: Martians, Margins

There is no “typical Al Amarjan.” As the following descriptions imply, Al Amarja is home to a bewildering array of lifestyles. But what about those people who don’t fall into any of the more outlandish groups? More or less, this is what they are like.

They are disproportionately young, with lots of people in their twenties. This imbalance in the population results from a heavy influx of young immigrants, a regular emigration of those for whom Al Amarjan life has become too dangerous, and a high death rate, especially among those who have begun to slow down with age.

Al Amarjans are passionate, energetic, daring, uninhibited, self-destructive, and independent. They hold personal loyalty to be a central virtue, and betrayal to be a heinous crime. On the other hand, loyalty to anything abstract, such as a nation or an ideology, is seen as a mild mental illness.

While most of them hold jobs of some type, few regard their jobs as truly relevant. Instead, they pursue any of a variety of grails: pleasure, power, respect, strength, beauty, etc.

See pp. 153-156 for descriptions of the general public.

ANIMALS

Various non-human sentient (but non-verbal) life forms live on Al Amarja. Dogs are common pets and guards, and many of them run feral in the more run down districts (at least those areas not patrolled by baboons). Cats are parasites on the culture, feigning affection for their masters and mimicking the cries of babies to gain instinctive sympathy from humans. More exotic pets are also common, as Al Amarja has no laws regulating the importation of rare or endangered species. Non-humans are accorded no rights whatsoever in Al Amarjan law and custom. In fact, the habit of eating slain sentient (but non-human) beings is taken for granted. Human Al Amarjans can often be seen gathered around a table where the burned remains of a slaughtered being are displayed for all to see and eat, the humans apparently accepting as “normal” this barbarous custom.

The adventure resource *It Waits...* includes several unusual examples of Al Amarjan wildlife.

Story Ideas

Be sure to throw some animals into your series, as guards, exotic pets, assassins, and results of outrageous pseudo-scientific experiments. A raccoon with a kergillian implant, for example, would make a great spy.

ARTISTS

AKA: starvers

Musicians, authors, sculptors, painters, screenplay writers, game designers, performance artists, actors — they’re all here, where they have true freedom of expression. Like artists everywhere, they are inspired by childhood trauma, self-indulgent introspection, gloominess, hard drugs, alien forces, voices from beyond the grave, degenerate robots working in caverns deep beneath the surface of the earth, psychic sensitivity, extra-dimensional beings, and God Himself. Unlike artists in other areas, they often know where their inspiration is coming from.

Story Ideas

An artist, perhaps an unwitting psychic sensitive, is producing art that reveals knowledge that she shouldn’t have, and that the player characters want. Will telling her the significance of her art keep her from creating freely, and kill the goose that laid the golden egg? Are there others that have taken a less friendly interest in her work?

BENNIES

AKA: toadies, flunkies, grovels

Bennies work for patrons (see p. 59), gathering information and performing services for them in exchange for income, good jobs, food, and so on. They are like covert agents working for their patrons. Some bennies depend directly on their patrons for their daily bread, while others have jobs given them by their patrons. A few are only casually associated with patrons, exchanging information or

services for occasional gifts rather than involving themselves in a continuing commitment, but more casual bennies will never be trusted for other than innocuous assignments, and they have no chance of moving up in the bennie hierarchy. (The patron thinks, "If I don't own you, I don't trust you.") Those bennies who are totally committed to their patrons aspire to earn more and more of their patrons' trust, and more and more of the wealth that goes with it. The few most worthy bennies eventually become trusted and well-rewarded advisors of their patrons, and may become patrons themselves, especially when the patron passes on and the patron's legacy is divided among the most prominent bennies. Naturally, competition among the bennies is rife, as each wants to seem the most valuable, but none of them want to be caught hurting or thwarting their fellows, something of which the patron would likely disapprove.

See the bennies of Sir Arthur Compton (p. 111), Lydia Goodman (p. 128), and Chris Seversen (p. 157) for examples of these persons.

Story Idea

The PCs might get involved with the schemes of bennies, who are typically "the poor man's operatives." The bennies may be investigating the PCs or some group in which the PCs also have an interest. Since bennies are more public and less lethal than most operatives, they are a good way to introduce the players to espionage without throwing them in the deep end.

BURGER

AKA: scarabs

Burger are tourists and newcomers to the island. While those who travel here are not usually the innocent type, few have had exposure to such a decadent subculture, and most are easy marks. Pick pockets, muggers, and grifters make good livings off of burger.

Story Idea

A US family on a European vacation comes to Al Amarja without realizing just what they're getting into, and flights out are booked for days. They latch on to the PCs, who are perhaps from the same country, and need to be babysat until their plane out. The PCs are paid nicely by the father to watch over the family, especially the rebellious teenager who wants to get out and see the Edge. Of course, the PCs themselves can capitalize on the burger's trust, if they are so inclined.

EMPTIES

AKA: zombies (incorrectly), freds

Rumor has it that psychic vampires from sunken Lemuria suck the minds from people, leaving them as mindless hulks to wander the streets in search of food, fighting the Garbage Men who defend their rightful turf. Though not usually threatening, they are fearsome, especially because many carry wounds that should have killed them. They do fight with mindless violence, however, when in any way threatened.

Empties drain magic from magical people near them. This process temporarily turns the empty back into a normal person, but leaves the wizard without magical power, permanently. Thanks to this ability, empties often find employment as "guards" for those who have significant enemies.

The D'Aubainne Asylum is currently offering a \$500 bounty for any empty turned over to them alive.

See The Public (p. 155) for more details.

Story Idea

An empty, still acting on echoes of motive and forethought, is trying to contact the PC's with vital information she was trying to deliver when she was fully alive. She finds the PCs but they must work hard to figure out what she is trying to get across. Meanwhile, a gang wants to capture her for a little fun and the bounty.

ENTREPRENEURS

AKA: moneymen

Only a few have the guts, the vision, the wits, and the audacity to run profitable businesses in the chaotic island of Al Amarja, and they reap large rewards. Whether they run restaurants, drug rings, brothels, or factories that produce imitations of brand name goods, these businessmen need to deal with a variety of obstacles, including government interference, criminal threats, and wacked-out employees. One thing you can know about Al Amarjan entrepreneurs is that they are highly competent at getting what they want.

Story Ideas

Any good entrepreneur needs a crew of troubleshooters: for dealing with rivals, protecting them from the criminals, and so forth. A young, ambitious entrepreneur approaches the PCs, offering them tempting rewards when they have helped him rise to success — a high risk/high reward proposition.

FRINGE SCIENTISTS

AKA: oppenheimers

Following laws of science that they may have invented just yesterday, an assortment of deranged or misunderstood geniuses are working on various projects of dubious value and dangerous nature. Often their discoveries and theories are so eccentric that only they can fully understand and utilize them. And what's a scientific development without an unfortunate side effect?

Story Ideas

The PCs become unwitting participants in a strange experiment, such as an attempt to expand the mind to conceive four physical dimensions, or to grant immortality. Still at experimental stage, the process no doubt has disappointing, perhaps hideous results, but some good could come of it as well.

GANGS

AKA: packs, social clubs

For self-protection and increased power, Al Amarjans often form gangs. Sometimes these gangs are much like the groups or clubs that children regularly form, simply ways of forming an in-crowd from which to exclude others. As such a club learns to denigrate outsiders, though, the members come to think less and less of committing crimes against those who are not in the group. Some gangs, naturally, are roving bands of criminals (all ages, any gender) that work together and fight for each other.

See the Aries Gang (pp. 109-111) and the Glorious Lords (pp. 124-125) for examples of gangs.

Story Idea

PCs take an apartment in a gang's turf, and the gang extorts protection money from them. If the PCs stay in the area long enough and treat the gang members well enough, however, the gang members will ally with the PCs in time of need. (The protection money is indeed a fee for a valuable service.) The players may well be surprised that the hoodlums they hate offer them valuable information about who has been asking after them or snooping around, and the gang can always serve as the cavalry coming to the PCs' rescue (provided the fight is in the gang's territory).

GLUGS

Survivors of the island's natives, actually representatives of the true human race. They are swarthy, taciturn, and secretive. Their identity is a carefully guarded secret, and the PCs will assume the first glugs they meet are normal humans. Glugs react allergically to stimulants and exude addictive sweat when sexually aroused.

See Glugs (pp. 125-128).

Story Idea

The PC's meet a friendly, old man, way too drunk for his own good. The usual remedy, a cup of strong coffee,

sends him into a fit. (Jumped coffee would send him to the hospital.)

GRIFFTERS

AKA: entrepreneurs, hustlers

Preying mostly on burger or the more innocent among the natives, these people live by their wits, and by others' gullibility. From simply selling drugs at ten times their street value to staging elaborate blackmail schemes for visiting dignitaries, these cunning criminals live as well as their wits allow. While eschewing violence as a means for wealth, they can defend themselves, and they often have friends among the gangs for back-up support.

Grifters travel frequently, especially after large takes.

Story Idea

A grifter overhears the PCs' conversations and makes vague and generally accurate guesses as to what they're after. First she sells them a little information that leads to a valuable "clue," (actually planted by the grifter), and then sells them much more pricey information that leads to a trap, such as a gang's hide-out. The idea is to get the PCs killed in their pursuit of the bogus information so they won't come back looking for the grifter.

KERGILLIAN HOSTS

AKA: none (secret identity)

Kergillians are a crustacean-like race from a distant star. They can implant their own brain matter in the skulls of humans. This symbiosis improves the functioning of the host's nervous system (reflexes, senses, etc.), but slowly takes over the operation of the brain. Most hosts are operatives for the kergillian group on one level or another.

See E-Z Sleep (p. 88), The First School of True Sensation (p. 93), and Kergillians (p. 132) for details.

Story Idea

The PCs meet a fellow who has recently received his kergillian implant, and he is out testing his "new" body. He might try his strength against a strong PC or pick a fight. The kergillian has more speed and endurance than is evident from the looks of his body.

LATAHS

The unfortunates have lost their free will, either to science or to magic. They now ape the actions of those around them, generally the most dynamic, charismatic, or remarkable person in a group. The true latah mimics behavior exactly, and they are kept by the wealthy as amusing slaves and performers. Other latahs are somehow conditioned to copy the actions of specific people, but not strictly motion for motion. These "improved" latahs are often kept as slaves and used for cheap, docile menial labor.

The process of how one becomes a latah is unknown, and apparently there are various methods of inducing the condition.

Story Idea

A latah mistakenly imprints on a PC and follows him around, doing whatever he does. Depending on how the PC's handle it, this condition could be anything from an annoyance to an opportunity. And what happens when the owner comes looking for her precious latah?

LOW-LIFES

AKA: street maggots, filth

The unforgiving lifestyle of Al Amarja has sucked some of its inhabitants to the lowest levels of human existence. Minor drug runners, whores, snitches, and petty thieves eke out miserable lives on the streets of the Edge. They often live together in crowded, filth-ridden hovels, places that only the degenerate and drug-ridden could tolerate.

See p. 155 for stats.

Story Ideas

To find an important clue, the PCs have to follow a low-life deep into street maggot territory. The journey is dangerous, disturbing, and disorienting, but the low-lives are not life-threatening, except in large numbers.

MANIACS

AKA: amoks

They have had enough, and they can't take it any more. Maniacs are otherwise normal people (often zeroes) who lose it altogether and go on short-lived rampages. Their bursts of random violence rarely last long because the maniacs act singly and soon succumb to organized, armed resistance from citizens just dying for an excuse to cut somebody up.

Some maniacs are simply suffering from an unfortunate combination of drugs. They should have listened to Nancy.

See p. 155 for stats.

Story Idea

If the players want a fight and none looks imminent, they could stumble across someone who has just gone amok, with stats boosted by an overdose of epinephrine. Perhaps the fight is just a random encounter, but perhaps it means something more if the PCs choose to investigate. Could the Mr. LeThuys have poisoned this fellow's food with psychotomimetic drugs?

MUTANTS

AKA: uglies

The various beneficiaries and victims of modern life, with its background radiation and impressive complement of not-quite-fully-tested chemicals, find life on Al Amarja less burdensome than those areas of the world in which deformity is noteworthy. Many of these people are actually the results of strange medical experiments, successful or otherwise. (Pre-med students at the university

get extra-credit for participating in such explorations of medicine's limits.) Bizarre appearance is the most common mutation, but who knows what mental or physical traits might accompany visible deformity?

Criminals often hire the more hideous mutants as bodyguards or loan collectors, as their grotesque appearance adds a lot of psychological power to their threats.

See *Bitter & Herb's* (p. 74) and *The Public* (p. 155) for examples and details.

Story Idea

For an emotional and somewhat intrusive story, a player-character could well undergo some fringe science process that turns him into a hideous mutant. Friends offer pity at best, rejection at worst. The character's social life takes a dive. But then he comes upon the small mutant subculture in Al Amarja, where the similarly afflicted can share the joys of love and



Illustration by Cheryl Mandus

friendship that the cruel world of the “beautiful people” denies them.

NORMIES

AKA: mundanes, normals, normans, wimps

Al Amarjan society needs professional clerks, accountants, and other “normal” people. Most Al Amarjans are too drug-ridden, mind-twisted, weird, or hyperactive to take these necessary jobs, so the positions are well-paid, attracting functionaries from many other countries. Some may be running from dark pasts or seeking decadent pleasures, but most are fiercely normal people. They tend to stick together for safety’s and sanity’s sake.

Story Idea

The PCs must infiltrate a normie bar (strict codes for dress and behavior) to contact a normie who has valuable information. Convincing her to help might also be a problem, but perhaps she is one of the few of her type that has a secret addiction or dark past that the PCs can use to pressure her.

OPERATIVES

AKA: cloaks, spies, kings’ fools

Secret agents of various governments, organizations, and secret societies operate on this island. Some know what going on “under the surface,” but most assume that they are simply involved in routine espionage. The CIA gives extraordinary bonus pay to operatives sent to Al Amarja, as compensation for the danger.

Many of these operatives carry well-concealed firearms.

Story Ideas

- In a desperate attempt to throw his pursuers off his trail, a CIA agent plants evidence on an unsuspecting PC. Here’s a good question: who are the operative’s pursuers?
- In an attempt to assassinate a male PC, an operative douses him with a potent pheromone. The

pheromone cannot be smelled by men, but some women think it smells like sweat. It sends off an “I’m here to steal your women” signal to men and an “I’m better than the guy you’re with” signal to women. The unwitting PC finds himself the center of attention, both from several women and from some inexplicably hostile men.

PATRONS

AKA: big fish

A patron is a wealthy person who employs or supports people to gain their help at whatever task may be at hand. Generally, they “hold court” at regular times, providing food and drink for their bennies (see above). The bennies congregate there, eat, converse among themselves, report to the patron on what news they may have gathered, receive assignments, and accept whatever favors the patron doles out. For many bennies, these meetings are their main source of food. Most patrons have some peculiar slant or interest to which they devote most of their attention, such as science, art, decadence, or the paranormal. Others are simply amassing more power and wealth through their network of bennies. Patrons also have operatives (see above) that work for them covertly.

See Sir Arthur Compton (p. 111), Lydia Goodman (p. 128), and Dr. Chris Seversen (p. 157) for three examples of prominent Al Amarjan patrons.

Story Idea

A patron is an easy way to give a group of burger some focus. The PCs might stumble on some information and then be told by a friend that such-and-such patron might be interested in that news. If the PCs take the news to the patron, the patron may reward them with money, favors, information, and so on. The patron then hires them for ad hoc assignments, and if the PCs prove worthy, offers them complete support in return for loyal service. Of course,

less-talented bennies may resent the competition that the PCs pose.

PSYCHICS

AKA: mindworms

Though they are officially outlawed on the island, psychics still make good livings here. Some are officially registered with the government, and these types are strictly loyal to the powers-that-be. Others ply their trades on the black market, setting themselves up as highly-paid and highly-feared criminals. (Imagine the precautions one must take when hiring telepaths to keep them from learning more than they should.) Many never let anyone know about their abilities, preferring to make good livings at gambling or business. Still others are not even aware of their powers, but seem to have “good luck.”

Story Idea

A telepath notices that the PCs share her goals (e.g., uncovering the Movers) and begins to leave them clues. This relationship allows the telepath to work against her enemies while not endangering herself directly, or so she thinks. When the PCs finally discover who the telepath is, she may have just been slain (or latahized, or zeroed, or lobotomized, or whatever) by her enemies, and she turns out to be someone they knew and had assumed to be an unimportant GMC (such as a waitress).

PUBES

AKA: brats, legals

By Al Amarjan law, any citizen, at puberty, can declare him- or herself an adult, “divorced” from the family and legally an adult in all ways. Pubes often try hard to prove that they really are adults by taking lovers, joining gangs, and hanging out in dives. This life is too hard for most, so many become low-lives in short order, while others are taken under the wings of predatory adults.

See The Public (p. 156) for details.

Story Idea

PCs track down a behind-the-scenes enemy, only to find she's a pube. Do they off a 13-year-old?

SATANISTS

AKA: Lucifer's lackeys, lucys

By and large, these people style themselves as Satanists so they have a good excuse to abuse drugs, throw orgies, draw dramatic (if unimaginative) art, shock other people, and perform the occasional sacrifice. They have no connection to any higher or lower power, no magical abilities, no clue as to what the universe is about. They're just a bunch of self-indulgent, nasty jerks who will probably kill you if you say anything like what I just wrote. Unfettered by common sense or human decency, they can be truly dangerous, to others as well as to themselves.

See *Glorious Lords* (pp. 124-125) for a description of the largest and most dangerous Satanist gang on the island.

Story Idea

Imagine the looks on your players' faces when, on the track of supernatural nastiness, they take out a coven of Satanists, only to find that they risked their lives to remove an unsightly, but by no means supernatural, tumor from the face of the earth.

SLAVES

AKA: willies

For some, life is too hard with all of its decisions and choices. These people pursue a strange kind of satisfaction by giving up their wills and becoming voluntary slaves, handing over their freedom to some powerful person. (Usually this act is formalized in a type of contract that has been found binding in Al Amarjan courts.) These slaves are then free to live out their lives without worries about what they should and should not do. They simply do what they're told. Some slaves follow orders from just about anyone, while others swear loyalty to one person only. (It all depends on

what the slave's "trip" is.) Slaves can be sold, also in binding contracts, though the slave trade is relatively light. Many visiting dignitaries rent slaves for the durations of their stays, and many wealthy hosts provide them as courtesies to their guests.

Story Ideas

A loyal slave of an enemy must surely have information that would be important for the PCs to have, but how to get it? Even torturing the slave would only allow the slave to suffer nobly and thus serve his master more dramatically, and that's all he wants to do.

SOMMERITES

AKA: Sommer-freaks

Internationally renowned rock vocalist Karla Sommers has a large following on Al Amarja, and most of her true fans here believe her to be divine. Whether she is the Messiah, the Second Coming, the Goddess, or some other manifestation of the Godhead is debated within Sommerite circles, but they all really like her music.

By and large, Sommerites are happy, friendly people who like to share their music. Blasphemers, however, are often found in the Garbage Men's refuse pile at dawn. Since theology based on rock lyrics is rather difficult to pin down, no one knows just what offense constitutes "blasphemy."

See *Sommerites* (p. 165) for more details.

Story Idea

A PC falls for an attractive Sommerite, who is a delightful and fun-loving companion. But as the relationship deepens, the Sommerite comes to expect things from the PC, such as doing "favors" for the Sommerites and adopting their belief system.

TOUGHS

AKA: muscle, thugs

In the underbelly of Al Amarjan society there is a steady demand for those who can provide a maximum of muscle and courage with a minimum of curiosity and intelligence. Those who can provide these traits wind up as bouncers, enforcers, collection agents, bodyguards, and so forth.

See *The Public* (p. 156) for more details.

Story Idea

A tough who is between positions approaches a wealthy-looking PC in search of a job. Not only can the tough provide some defense, but in his last job he learned some important secrets about some underground organization. Unfortunately, the tough doesn't imagine that his information is important, and perhaps only mentions it in passing. The PCs must milk the guy for what he's worth, and probably follow him back to where he saw or heard the relevant information, all before the operatives who took out his former employer shut him up in no uncertain terms.

WIZARDS

AKA: witches, warlocks, mages, sorcerers, etc.

Various practitioners of arcane arts follow several distinct and unusual sorts of magic. Use your imagination with this one. Some of them have learned to blend their ancient arts with modern science, producing some highly powerful, dangerous, and unpredictable results.

Some of these magi are descendants of a society of wizards that formed in Europe in the 8th century, grew to power until the 13th century, and then went underground from then on. They successfully destroyed almost all records and remnants of their order's existence, so now most people regard wizardry as an outdated superstition, but these wizards are even now building their power until they will be able to reassert themselves and dominate the world.

Story Idea

A PC finds a medieval dagger enchanted especially for the slaying of wizards. The “lucky” PC gets strange sensations at times (when wizards are near), and has protection from magical spells. Unfortunately, the wizards know more about him and his dagger than he knows about them. Can the PCs figure out why supernatural creatures and hired hit men keep coming after them in time to use the dagger on the wizards who are behind the attacks?

ZEROES

AKA: wastes, goners, ciphers

These people have suffered from the excesses of Al Amarjan life, and now they go about their lives as the walking wounded. They are drug addicted, borderline psychotic, brain-fried, or otherwise “gone.” They hold down menial jobs and usually don’t make nuisances of themselves, though one never know when a zero will turn into an amok.

See *The Public* (p. 156) for more details.

Story Idea

A PC meets an important person (family member, famous person, important person from the past, etc.) who is now a zero living in squalid poverty. Can the PC help the zero? Is the zero’s state the result of some evil treachery?

OTHER INHABITANTS

Androids, aliens posing as humans, animal souls accidentally reincarnated into human bodies (or vice versa), cyborgs, time travelers, ghosts, vampires, lycanthropes, serial killers, political agitators, John F. Kennedy in disguise, people controlled remotely by artificial intelligences, strange animals, whatever. If you can think it up, put it in.

Story Ideas

That’s up to you.

BARRIOS

The Edge is divided into several neighborhoods, or barrios, each surrounding a plaza. Al Amarjans congregate with like souls, therefore each barrio has a distinct atmosphere.

CHANCE ENCOUNTERS

For each barrio, suggested chance encounters are listed. When you want to throw in a chance encounter to give the area character or to speed up play that has slowed down, roll two dice, one for the “adjective” and one for the “noun.” For example, look at the chance encounters for the Arms Barrio. A roll of 3, 5 would mean that a “high-ranking criminal in custody” would come on the scene. Now imagine what that could mean. The PCs might see a powerful friend or enemy of theirs being taken in by the Peace Force. Or maybe the criminal is someone new, around whom a storyline could develop. Or maybe the PCs witness an escape attempt resulting in a large fight between a powerful criminal’s henchmen and the Peace Force. The PCs could join either side in hopes of reward, or they could just watch and gather information.

The numbers are arranged so that lower numbers represent more mundane or more common encounters. To represent this, you can roll two dice for each column and use the lower result. This system skews the odds in favor of the more common encounters. But if it’s time for something strange, roll two dice for each column and use the higher result (or just pick your favorites).

Sometimes the results will be unusual, such as a “well-armed businessman” or a “high-ranking relative of a peace officer.” In the heat of play, you may wish to ignore and re-roll apparent incongruities, but incongruities, after all, are what this game is all about. The “well-armed businessman” may be in the Arms Barrio trying to sell some new, sophisticated weaponry to the Peace Force. Certain circles of the underworld would pay

highly for inside information as to what this equipment might be (and how to defend against it). And a high-ranking relative, well, that could be a famous performer, a favorite at Sad Mary’s, who has hidden his relation to a Peace Officer to protect himself. If the PCs overhear him talking with an off-duty officer about what “Mom and Dad” are up to, this information could lure them into intrigues.

You can also use the tables to generate different types of GMCs interacting with each other. A paranoid Loyal Defender talking to a high-ranking businessman might present an interesting scene. A smooth-talking PC might be able to help out the businessman and make a quick friend.

Ultimately, these chance encounters are meant as aids to your creativity, not replacements for it. Use them as you wish. Incongruities might even challenge you to be more creative than you had planned to be.

PLAZA OF ARMS

Here is the center of paramilitary power in the Edge. The Peace Force Headquarters is here, as well as local headquarters of the Democratic Guard.

On the Plaza

Peace Force Headquarters — A large, modern, well-defended facility that dominates the Plaza.

The Iron Cage — The living quarters of the Loyal Defenders, a psychopathic crew of Peace Force “specialists.” It looks something like a medieval fortress.

Center for Paranormal Control — Houses psychics and sorcerers who use their powers to locate and neutralize hostile paranormals in the Edge. They are a branch of the Democratic Bureau of Investigation. A four-story, old-fashioned brick building, usually with window shades drawn. (See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 11, for more information.)

The Edge

Island of Al Amarja

Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne,
Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess
of Al Amarja, welcomes you to The Edge,
cultural center of our fine island.
Enjoy yourselves and come again.

Map Key

City Streets: ———

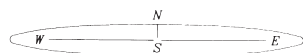
Highway: = = =

River: ~ ~ ~

Dry Riverbed: - - -

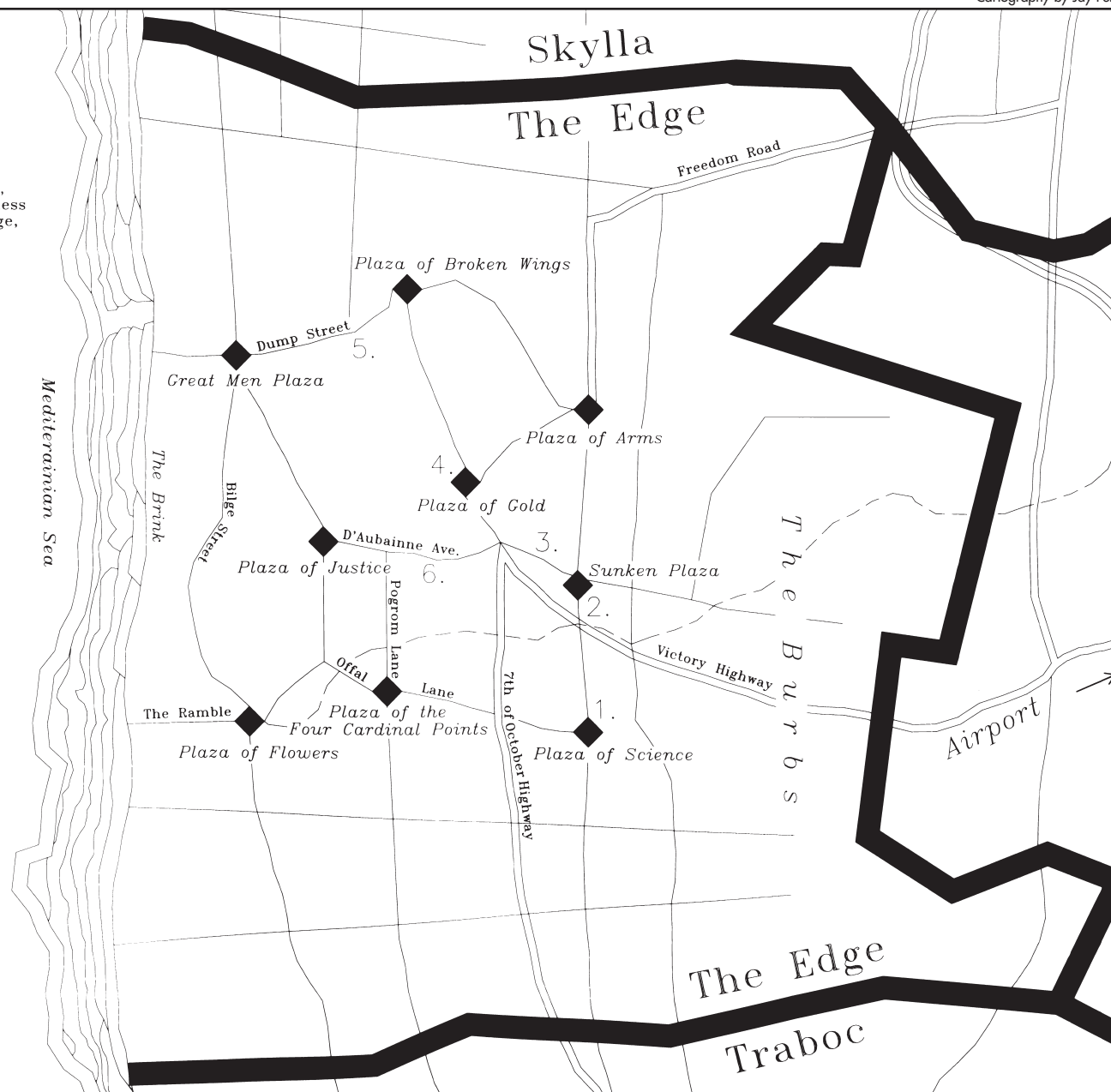
Points of Interest:

1. D'Aubainne University
2. Cesar's Hotel
3. Temple of Divine Experience
4. Swaps
5. D'Aubainne Museum of Modern Life
6. D'Aubainne Hospital & Trauma Center



0 .5 1 2 3km

Terra Incognito Mapping & Excursions



OVER THE EDGE

Detention Center — The jail, where the accused are kept until trial. Since a speedy trial is not a priority to the powers that be, it serves as a de facto prison where the accused spend their terms for crimes of which they have never been convicted.

Arms Barrio

The Peace Force members and their families live here, since it's too dangerous for them to live anywhere else in the Edge. The Peace Force patrols the area heavily at all times, and all who enter the area are subject to search. The Arms Barrio is self-sufficient, with its own theaters, grocery stores, schools, stores, etc. Relatives of the Peace Force rarely venture into other barrios of the Edge.

Al Amarja Hall of Records — A for-profit venture run by the government, where you pay money (and plenty of it) for "public" documents such as property deeds, corporate articles, registration records, etc. Sometimes secret government documents get misfiled here as well. (See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 51, for more information.)

Chance Encounters in Arms

Adjective

1. Hostile
2. Well-Armed
3. High-ranking
4. Paranoid
5. Drunken
6. Curious

Noun

1. Peace Officer
2. Businessman
3. Family Member(s) of Peace Officer
4. Official
5. Criminal in Custody
6. Loyal Defender

PLAZA OF BROKEN WINGS

This plaza takes its name from a statue that once stood over the central fountain. It depicted Icarus flying toward the sun, and its wings had been broken in civil violence before World War II. In the eighties, the Broken Wings Community Action Society raised funds to have the statue replaced by a larger, marble copy with wings intact, and this statue now presides over the plaza. The wealthy fill the plaza all day and into the evening. During daylight hours, immaculately dressed ladies, often with lap dogs in tow, shop the boutiques and gossip at the cafés, while young dilettantes relax, meet each other, and discuss elegant topics, such as art, finance, and what should be done to control the poor. In the evening, the white collar professionals who've spent the day making money in the Golden Barrio come here to drink and scheme. At all times, sharply dressed agents of Dunkelburg's Security mingle with the crowds and remove unwanted elements. One needs a pass from Dunkelburg's Security to be in the barrio, though only those below standards of dress and decorum are usually checked for ID.

Businesses on the Plaza

Small cafés and specialty shops circle the plaza, but two powerful organizations also have their offices here.

Dunkelburg's Security — A modern office building housing the vast security team that guards the Broken Wings Barrio. In addition to keeping the streets safe, they run background checks for clients, but only on non-clients. One must be a client in good standing, with the appropriate pass, to travel unmolested through the Broken Wings Barrio. (See p. 88.)

Broken Wings Community Action Society — Located on the second floor of an office building, this society of residents protects and enhances the quality of life in the barrio. They make sure only the

right people live and work here, and pressure those whose sense of taste varies from the norm.

Thuan Tram's Barber Shop — Front for a quisling operation. They really do cut hair, to maintain their cover. (See "Misplaced Childhood" in *Forgotten Lives*.)

Broken Wings Barrio

In the Edge, money is made in the Golden Barrio and spent in Broken Wings. Here live the wealthy, enjoying luxurious lifestyles and pleasant surroundings. Most of the truly rich live in private mansions dotted around the island, but even most of them maintain penthouses here for their visits to the city.

Broken Wings is unique among barrios in that they do not allow the Garbage Men into their area. Instead, they hire private firms to deposit trash west of the border where Garbage Men can remove it without disturbing the beautiful people of Broken Wings.

Some businesses and organizations are located within the barrio:

Chateau D'Or — A modest coffeehouse and sandwich shop. In its glory days of the early '60s, it was one of the more swank gourmet restaurants in the barrio.

Guiding Hand — A private charity. It helps the "virtuous" poor. Expect to see its administrators, not its clients, at the Broken Wings office. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 49-50.)

The Scarlet Palace — A notorious brothel, serving the most demanding and wealthy clientele. There has been a lot of talk in the Community Action Society about getting the Palace to close or at least move to a different barrio. (See *Wildest Dreams*, pp. 34-35.)

Sequins — This exclusive nightclub is in the Broken Wings barrio.

Chance Encounters in Broken Wings

Adjectives

1. Filthy Rich

2. Snobbish
3. Leisurely
4. Beautiful
5. Disdainful
6. Obese

Nouns

1. Shopper(s)
2. Dilettante(s)
3. Tourist(s)
4. Dunkelburg Patrol
5. Businessman
6. Grifter

PLAZA OF FLOWERS

The central area of the plaza is raised five feet above the street, accessible by broad, shallow steps that surround the platform. An abstract sculpture of twisted, rusted metal sits in the center of the raised area, and all around it street performers ply their various trades: comic monologues, singing, dancing, stripping, prophecy, improvisational theater, and side-show acts. ("Be sure to catch the guy who rams ice picks up his nose, the Human Blockhead.") During the day, the plaza is relatively quiet, but at night, people from all across Skylla, Traboc, and the Edge come here for the various delights the Flowers Barrio offers.

Businesses on the Plaza

See the key to the map for detail. Two establishments deserve special notice.

Vylaska's Party Favors — Various young women in bright-colored uniforms wander through the crowds here offering psychoactive substances ranging from the relatively tame to the bizarre. The prices are reasonable and the quality excellent. Vylaska herself, an aging Slavic woman, runs the business from a room in Bienvenidos Hotel overlooking the plaza. Madame Vylaska is a Mover operative (Cell Z), and her girls gather information for her. One of them, also a Mover, has

been known to slip targets special concoctions.

Sad Mary's Bar & Girl — A large bar with a "performance stage" for fights, sex shows, and other performances. The various high-quality acts featured here, as well as the specialized hookers, attract a diverse clientele. See p. 100.

Key to the Map of the Plaza of Flowers

Note: The reference number is the street number of the establishment. Also note that the central area is crowded with street vendors selling snacks and such, but these businesses are mobile and often temporary, so they are not listed here.

10. Sad Mary's. See above & p. 100.
20. The Good Doctors. Walk-in clinic, not suited for heavy-duty wounds. Commonly deals with overdoses and social diseases.
30. Flaming Fashion. Hair styling, make-up, minor body piercings (mostly ears), tanning, etc.
40. Aries Office. Office where Aries gang members hang out and supervise the Plaza.
50. Trumpet Cinema. Popular cinema showing only the latest and the hottest from around the world, from Hollywood to Hong Kong.
61. Hegermeier's. Clothes for men, including nooses, but no personal weaponry.
65. Scoopmeister. Ice cream, with some flavors not sold legally in other countries.
69. Indelibles. Tattoos, piercings, and scarification. Clean and classy. Despite the name, they do temporary "tattoos" with body paint.
70. A Screen of One's Own. Video store. Rumor has it that one can rent rare and esoteric videos from the owner's private stock, for \$25 plus \$100 deposit.
81. Insty-Bank. An ATM in a plexiglass shell. The Sommerites own it and play Sommers's music in it, hoping to spread "the good

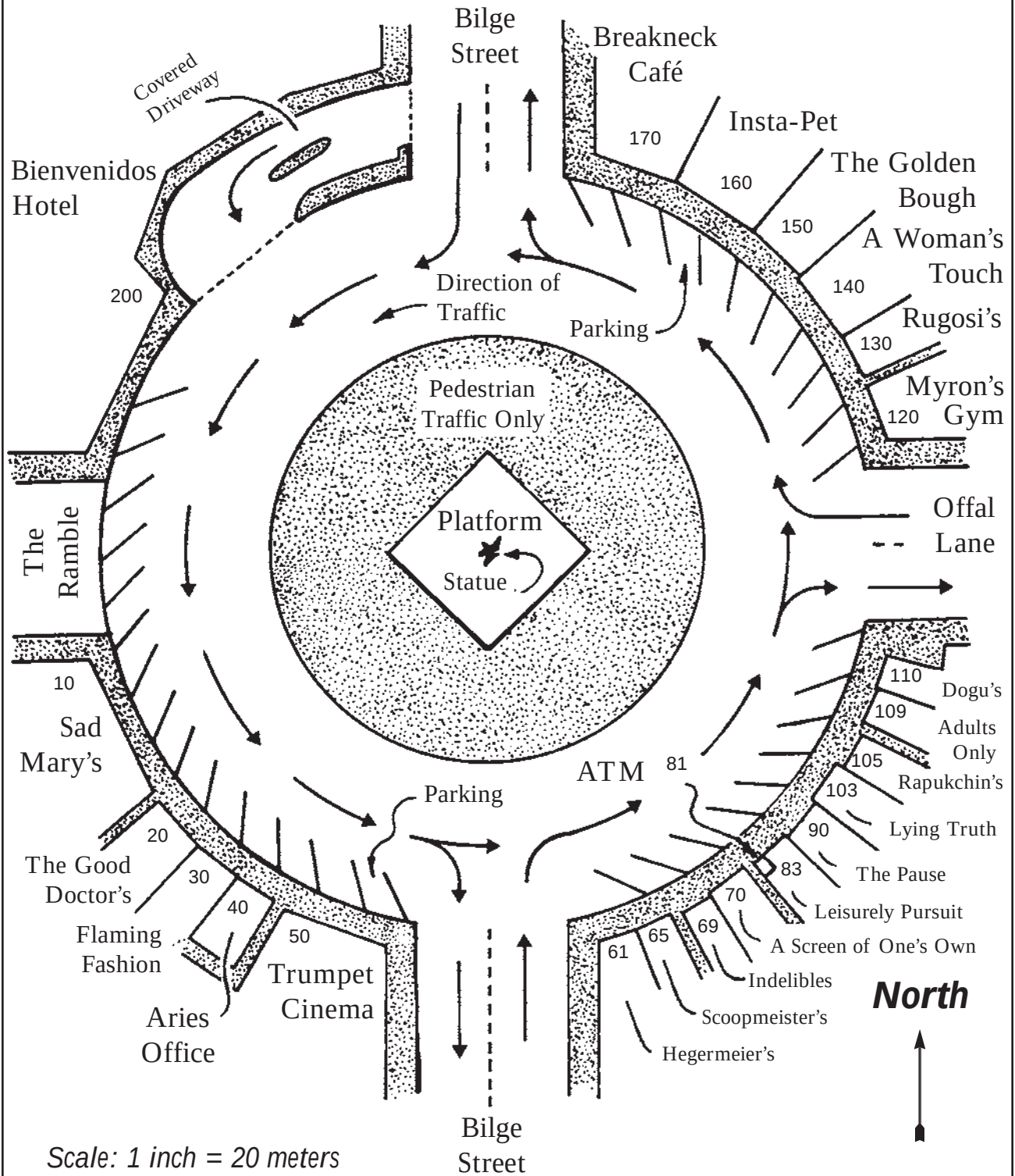
tunes" to those who use the machine. The ATM runs slowly, forcing people to expose themselves longer to Sommers's haunting songs.

83. Leisurely Pursuit. Game store, specializing in popular party games, but with an excellent selection of traditional and innovative games as well.
90. The Pause. Sidewalk cafe, very colorful. They serve colas with a trace of cocaine.
103. The Lying Truth. Art store, mostly selling prints, but with some sculpture and textile work as well. Some original (and disturbing) art can be found here.
105. Rapukchin's. Women's fashions, including a long line of imaginative accessories.
109. Adults Only. A pube store, catering to their needs. Mostly clothes, but also general goods.
110. Dogu's. Café, specializing in strong coffee and African food.
120. Myron's Gym. A public place for the body-fixated to work out and show off. The exercise equipment near the pane glass windows is always in use.
130. Rugosi's. Italian restaurant with a dress code, catering largely to burger.
140. A Woman's Touch. Massage parlor.
150. The Golden Bough. Occult books, tools, art, and services. Most, if not all, of this material is strictly bunk.
160. Insta-Pet. Animal rental, specializing in the exotic. Used pets are also for sale.
170. Breakneck Café. Indoor/outdoor cafe.
200. Bienvenidos Hotel. See p. 73. A Mover named Vylaska lives here (see above).

Flowers Barrio

This barrio serves as the entertainment district, predominantly occupied by artists, grifters, dressed-up low-lives, pubes, Sommerites, Satanists, and youths. Various gangs operate

PLAZA OF FLOWERS



here, but always under the watchful eye of the Aries Gang. The Aries Gang provides protection for the residents (at least those who pay when directed to do so) and oversees the smaller, less powerful gangs, which specialize in other activities so as not to compete with the Aries Gang. The smaller gangs pay tribute to the Aries in return for being allowed to operate in the barrio.

From the plaza to the cliffs runs a former riverbed, now dry and paved over, creating a broad avenue called "the Ramble." One way streets run along each side, and a walkway dominates the center. Kiosks and little shops crowd the Ramble. (For descriptions of several of these shops, see the adventure resource *Airwaves*.)

The red-light district in the Flowers Barrio attempts class and artistic merit, but usually fails on both counts.

In the barrio are:

Ajax Specials — the latest fashions: nooses, chaps, boots. 241 Rum Street.

Backdrop Productions — A small video production studio, with services available for hire. (See "Misplaced Childhood" in *Forgotten Lives*.) 821 Aria Lane.

Blackfire Entertainment

Enterprises — gun ranges on a ship in international waters.

Deep Blue Sea — A well hidden café with a cliquish clientele. (See "Deep Troubles" in *The Myth of Self*, pp. 61-62.) 132 Leopard Lane.

Fifth Column Records — Al Amarja's leading "indie" record label, run by Hamid al-Samman, former bassist of the punk band Mugwump. (See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 53.) 535 Aria Lane, Suite 208.

First School of True Sensation — fringe school and kergillian front; p. 93.

Grim Kiichi's Tools & Stuff — A hardware store. It's better known as the place above which the avant garde Black Death Theater Troupe lives and rehearses. 2317 Varicose Lane.

Kuan Tun's Black Belt School — teaching various martial arts; p. 100.

The Space — A converted warehouse along the Ramble, rented by various performance groups for use as a theater. (See "The Dopplegänger Plague," in *The Myth of Self*.)

Mr. Tramh Le Thuy's newsstand — see p. 137.

Chance Encounters in Flowers

Adjectives

1. Colorful
2. Carousing
3. Energetic
4. Hostile
5. Incoherent
6. Wealthy

Nouns

1. Artist
2. Tourist
3. Hooker
4. Aries Patrol
5. Sybarite
6. Sommerite

PLAZA OF THE FOUR CARDINAL POINTS

This plaza is filled with little stands selling cheap odds and ends, mostly used goods. The Garbage Men come here to sell the useable items they find in the city's trash. Any durable good you can buy elsewhere, you can buy here: used, defective, or otherwise imperfect.

The central fountain is broken and filled with stagnant water.

Businesses on the Plaza

Meager bars, pawn shops, and discount stores circle the plaza. Only

one establishment stands out as interesting.

Hole in the Wall — a shop for tattoos, piercings, and esthetic scarification. You can have any part of your body altered and adorned, with no extra charge for hepatitis.

Four Points Barrio

Zeroes and street filth predominate in the local population, living on the streets or crowded into run-down tenements. The crime rate is high, but most of the crime is petty theft and violence among the inhabitants.

In the barrio are:

Antoinette's House of Fortune — a run-down casino. 1213 Offal Lane.

Chrome Dome — shock-head hang-out, p. 75.

Dmitri's Fix-It Shop — strange repair shop; p. 87.

E-Z Sleep — run-down hotel and kergillian front; p. 88.

First Steps Creche & Day Care — Child care and education on Al Amarja are privately operated, often with help from charities and businesses. This one is subsidized by First Steps, a children's clothing chain. It cares for children from birth through age 12. (See *With a Long Spoon*, pp. 9-16.)

Gun Metal — weapons shop; p. 97.

Metalworks — manacles, handcuffs, & assorted gear. All weights & sizes. 593 Pogrom Lane.

Chance Encounters in Four Points

Adjectives

1. Impoverished
2. Lying
3. Hostile
4. Greedy
5. Hyperactive
6. Curious

Nouns

1. Street Vendor
2. Petty Thief
3. Grifter
4. Dog-Face Patrol
5. Pube
6. Mutant

PLAZA OF GOLD

The fountain and statue that once stood in the center of this plaza were removed to make more parking space, leaving the plaza a teeming expanse of expensive cars, taxis, and serious people in business suits. At night, at least after all the workaholics have finally gone home, the plaza is deserted.

Businesses on the Plaza

Office building surround the plaza. Two establishments stand out.

Swaps — The financial center of the island. See p. 104.

Al Amarjan Investments — In the top three floors of an office building is a large investment firm that makes the deals at Swaps available to ordinary people on the island. A popular investment of theirs in the Al Amarjan Liberty Fund, which pools investors' money for financing drug dealers. The returns to investors, though unreliable, have been very high. The president of Al Amarjan Investments ranks high in the Net hierarchy, p. 141.

The Golden Barrio

Wide, clean streets filled with wealthy professionals. The only businesses are those that cater to this clientele: messenger services, fast food restaurants, bars, call-girl services, motels with hourly rates, instant print shops, psychotherapists, dry cleaners, etc.

The Golden Knights, under direct control of Constance D'Aubainne, insure security in this barrio. Though they have exceptional ties to the Peace Force, they generally prefer to handle matters quickly

and quietly on their own. Those who work in the Golden Barrio respect the Knights, who represent efficient private enterprise over the bureaucratic Peace Force. The pistols that the Knights carry also earn them a fair amount of respect.

Some buildings and businesses of note:

The Aswan Building — A modern office building that rents space mostly to professionals: lawyers, shrinks, accountants, stockbrokers, etc. (See "Deep Troubles", *The Myth of Self*, pp. 65-68.) 550 Florin Ave.

Midas Hotel — Upscale lodgings, featuring modern conveniences behind a Victorian façade. (See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 9.) 1050 Point West.

Needle Research — A polling and market research firm. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 46-48.)

Strictly Business Security, Inc. — Provides security guards for businesses around the Edge. PCs could seek employment here as rent-a-cops if they have clean records.

Chance Encounters in Gold

Adjectives

1. Wealthy
2. Busy
3. Pressured
4. Scheming
5. Harried
6. Important

Nouns

1. Businessman
2. Functionary
3. Golden Knight Patrol
4. Criminal (probably in the Net)
5. Foreign Business Representative
6. VIP

PLAZA OF GREAT MEN

Around the plaza, between the outer walkways and the inner roadways, stand the broken and defiled statues of history's great men: Socrates, Julius Caesar, Adam Smith, Thomas Jefferson, etc... They have fallen into disrepair over the years as this neighborhood has changed from upper middle class to the dregs, and nobody washes the pigeon droppings off any more.

Typically, the plaza is filled with the homeless and helpless who stay here because no one bothers them here.

Buildings Around the Plaza

Most of the buildings are burned-out, abandoned, and decrepit, which does not prevent them from serving as homes for the residents of Great Men. Two businesses here, however, do offer some degree of hope to the otherwise hopeless.

Betty's Health Center — Where one can sell blood plasma for \$5 a pint, no limit on number of donations per week. For those more desperate, sale of less replaceable tissues or organs can be arranged.

Found Hope Agency — An "employment" agency that offers hard labor positions in near-slave conditions at some of the farms, orchards, and factories around the island, or off-island on board ships. For the truly desperate, legally binding slave contracts can be arranged.

Two other businesses found on the plaza are:

Gerard Duplat Import Services — Dealers in exotic, rare and endangered animal species, located on the second floor of an abandoned tenement. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 21-23.)

Regal Games & Books — A small, barely profitable shop run by Geoffrey Hienzen. The selection of goods is sparse, and the store tends to be crowded with neigh-

Illustration by H.J. McKinney



borhood low-lives and zeroes.
(See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 32-34.)

THE GREAT MEN BARRIO

This area sports many once-grand buildings that have now fallen into decay. Streets are often blocked by fallen streetlights or rubble from collapsed buildings. Despite the conditions, people still live here, even families.

In the barrio can be found:

Alien Oddities — A bizarre boutique practically devoid of customers. (See *House Call*, pp. 3-5.)

Compton's Lair — The house of Sir Arthur Compton, patron of decadence, p. 111.

D'Aubainne Museum of Modern Life — a testament to human accomplishment and strangeness, p. 85.

Deadville — Four square blocks of abandoned tenements, long ago slated for demolition. Home to zeroes, stray animals, and said to be haunted. (See *It Waits...*, pp. 11-12.)

Forbidden Words — An occult bookstore whose proprietor, Ishaq al-Masha, is a Mover. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 38-40.)

Glorious Lord headquarters — p. 124.

Nordica Barron — Dealer in art and antiques. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 7-10.)

Rooms for Men — by day or week. Security guaranteed. 797 Dump Street.

Winds of Change — a surreal casino, p. 107.

CHANCE ENCOUNTERS IN GREAT MEN

Adjectives

1. Desperate
2. Filthy
3. Decrepit
4. Angry
5. Incoherent
6. Psychotic

Nouns

1. Zero
2. Hard-Core Addict
3. Bum
4. Has-Been
5. Street Vendor
6. Satanist (probably Glorious Lord)

PLAZA OF JUSTICE

Instead of a fountain, a large wrought iron gallows dominates the center of the plaza. Used daily at 3 PM (noon and 3 PM on Sundays), the gallows is the center of this barrio's entertainment.

Businesses on the Plaza

Bars and unpretentious restaurants are in evidence here. Businesses of note include:

Touch of Death — sells nooses that have been used to hang criminals for about \$50 each, with higher prices for nooses used to execute notorious criminals. A popular place for Satanists, who believe the nooses hold special power.

Lou's Booze — a bar and liquor store at which happy hour begins an hour before each hanging. Many carry their drinks into the plaza for the show. Proprietor Lou Farrazi is a contact for a Mover operative.

The Last Supper — groceries, with a deli. Proprietor Atali Nkombe is a Sommerite.

The Archives — a bookstore, with generous selections of Blatavsky, Lovecraft, Poe, Kafka, Jim Morrison's poetry, Gurdjieff, Reich, and Clive Barker.

Neat Fit — men's clothing, run by Jesus Rodriguez.

In addition, Aleksandr Rominosky (bennie of Compton, p. 113) can often be found here observing the hangings.

The Justice Barrio

Many of the Edge's working class live here, trying to make a living without being ripped off by the wealthy from Broken Wings and Gold or attacked by the desperate poor from Great Men and Four Points. They take pains to keep their streets relatively clean (physically and socially) and their buildings in repair.

Bands of Otto's Men (p. 144), mostly fathers of families they wish to protect, roam the streets with baseball bats to enforce order. They are universally suspicious of strangers, most of whom are either the greedy wealthy, the greedy poor, or the just plain weird. Most of the petitions for increased crack-downs on crime come from this neighborhood.

Inhabitants of the Justice Barrio have a love-hate relationship with their plaza. The gratification of seeing criminals hanged pleases the community, but these spectacles often attract the "wrong element," including artists, satanists, and street filth.

The following locales are in the Justice Barrio:

- Al Amarja Today — newspaper.
- Alexandria Bennett, a physician, operates a small store-front clinic in Justice. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 12-13.)
- Bitter & Herb's — mutant bar; p. 74.
- D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center — p. 78.
- Safe n Sound — private security; p. 102.

Chance Encounters in Justice

Adjectives

1. Rowdy (probably drunk)
2. Tough
3. Helpful
4. Territorial
5. Belligerent
6. Horny

Nouns

1. Off-Work Laborers
2. Housewives
3. Teens
4. Street Vendors
5. Otto's Men Patrol
6. Glugs (re-roll for apparent identity)

PLAZA OF SCIENCE

The Plaza of Science occupies the center of the D'Aubainne University. Young people fill it day and night, congregating, debating, partying, and patronizing the small book and snack vendors that ply their trades here. The statue of Pallas Athena that once stood in the center of the plaza was pulled down in the student riots of the early '70s, and a broad platform or stage has since been built in its place. Students use this platform for plays, performances, art, and occasional political demonstrations. A common political demand currently in vogue among the students is that the government repeal its oppressive anti-drug laws.

Buildings on the Plaza

In addition to small stores and shops catering to students, one can find the following university buildings here:

- Thorvald Administration Center — an imposing, mock-Gothic structure that houses the administrative offices of the university.
- Briggs Hall — a building of steel and glass that holds the laboratories and classrooms of the science professors. It is well-guarded, and rumor has it that there are secret underground laboratories for sensitive projects.
- Zefilli Hall of Fine Arts — a building dominated by a colorful, abstract mural. It contains the art department and its studios and classrooms.

The Science Barrio

AKA: Uni-Town

Students dominate the area, taking up most of the available apartments and giving rise to businesses that cater to their tastes: pizza deliveries, bookstores, used clothing stores, theaters that show obscure or sophisticated films, etc.

The SOBs (p. 164) patrol the area informally and deal with outsiders who might interfere with the student lifestyle. (They especially enjoy harassing slick, wealthy men from Broken Wings who have come to poach university women.)

The barrio contains:

- Al Amarja Television — p. 42.
- Alabaster Auditorium — university auditorium, often used for speeches, concerts, etc.
- Alpha Sorority House — p. 109.
- Chambers Memorial Theater — Old and spooky. Used for student productions.
- Cinema de Vivisection — surreal movies; p. 41.
- Delta Frat House — p. 118.
- Roger Bacon's — A bar & grill favored by students on account of its proximity to campus and cheap fare. (See *Wildest Dreams*, p. 55.)
- Morrie's Arcade — Video games & pizza.
- Sigma Ep Sorority House — p. 164.
- Sigma Om Frat House — p. 164.
- Sleep Disorders Clinic — A private research facility. (See *Wildest Dreams*, p. 36.)
- Spee-D — delivering any package, anywhere, any time. 1309 Sluice Street.
- Tallitsch Hall — A small and obscure building, mainly filled with science laboratories. Research here is supported by private and industrial grants. You won't find any undergrads here. (See "The Hive," in *The Myth of Self*, pp. 37-38.)

Chance Encounters in Science

Adjectives

1. Poor

2. Hurried
3. Rowdy
4. Drugged-Up
5. Carefree
6. Wealthy

Nouns

1. Student
2. Sigma Om Patrol
3. Professor
4. Sigma Ep Clique
5. Alpha Chick
6. Delta Guy

SUNKEN PLAZA

This plaza near the east side of the city is actually sunken, with the surface here about two meters below the surrounding ground. The streets, therefore, turn into ramps as they enter the area.

The prominent feature here is the large fountain in the center with a bronze statue of Monique D'Aubainne standing atop it. The statue is almost four meters high and raised about three meters above street level. Monique D'Aubainne is depicted with feathery wings, holding a sword on high, with one foot planted on the back of a groveling Italian fascist (in World War II style uniform). The fascist is underscaled compared to D'Aubainne and bears a terrible grimace on his face. Inscribed on the pedestal is the word "Liberty."

Businesses on the Plaza

The most interesting businesses include:

Cesar's Hotel, a landmark to which most burger (excuse me... "tourists") are directed when they first come to the Edge. It is a three story, stone building with a terrace above the first floor entrance. See p. 75.

Street vendors. On the broad sidewalks around the plaza are vendors of various types, mostly catering to burger with tour guides, postcards, drugs, pornography, film, personal items, and so forth.

Wilma's Café, featuring fast, decent food at elevated prices.

Art's Fine Arts, offering graphic prints, velvet paintings, black-light posters, surreal T-shirts, and so on.

Liberty Liquors, with all the alcohol you'd care to buy, especially that with a high ratio of alcoholic content to flavor.

Den of Thieves, a bar designed to look tough, dirty, dark, and fierce, but with exceptional bouncers that won't allow known ruffians through the doors. Any violence perpetrated here is handled quickly. Whoever starts a fight had better hope the Peace Force arrives quickly, before the bouncers finish with them. The owner's scheme is to make the place look dangerous and thus

attract the burger that want to experience the Edge's "dark underworld." But he takes care of his patrons to keep them coming back for more "danger." At times, bar fights are staged to enhance the atmosphere.

Sunken Barrio

Physically, this neighborhood is the safest on Al Amarja; though burglars, con men, and pickpockets infest the place. The Al Amarjans want to fleece the burger that come here, but not attack them and thus drive them away. It is comfortable for newcomers, and the people are open and friendly (at least they act that way, especially if you look rich).

Expatriates live here, where contact with their home countries is most frequent. (Those expatriates, however, who are fleeing their homelands take up residence elsewhere.) Also, large numbers of normies live in this area.

A minor street gang, the Fistheads, operates along D'Aubainne Avenue on the edge of Sunken. Members are recognizable by their inked scars. (See "The Hive" in *The Myth of Self*, pp. 33-35.)

The Sunken Barrio contains:

Armorguard — bodyguard service; p. 72.

Chateau Melmoth — Social locus of the mystic s--- crowd. Features a hotel and a restaurant, the Wooden Plate. Nicolai Nemeth, proprietor. (See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 18.) 777 John Dee Lane.

Clark's Café — See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 59.

Giovanni's Cabs — central garage; p. 96.

Sarah's Teahouse — private conversations; p. 102.

Total Taxi — taxi service; p. 107.

Tourist & Visitor Service of Al Amarja — a run-down, over-worked office without much to say. 113 Wrench Lane.

Chance Encounters in Sunken

Adjectives

1. Flashy

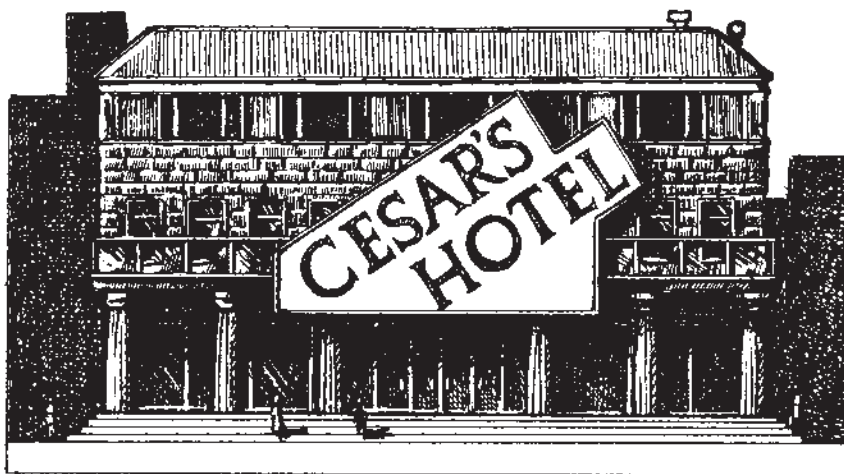


Illustration by Eric Hotz



2. Curious
3. Careless
4. Depressed
5. Angry
6. Paranoid

Nouns

1. Tourist
2. Street Vendor
3. Grifter
4. Peace Officer
5. Pube
6. Businessman

OTHER AREAS

THE BRINK

Between the Edge proper and the sea is the Brink, a series of terraces leading 30 meters down to the sea. Here live the Garbage Men (p. 123), people who collect the refuse of the Edge

and scavenge its valuables for a living. Those living on the uppermost terrace get first pick of the leavings, and then dump the rest down to the next terrace. Those inhabitants take what they want and dump the rest, and so on, until the waste lands in the sea.

THE 'BURBS

East and inland from the Edge are the 'Burbs. While not as spacious as suburbia in the US, this area does provide lawns, individual housing, and freedom from urban stress for those who can afford it. Populated primarily by normies, the 'Burbs are considered a district of the Edge.

Sylvan Pines Sanitarium, a private mental health "recuperation" facility, is found outside city limits, a little ways beyond the 'Burbs. (See *Welcome to Sylvan Pines.*) 420 Willowbrook Lane.

SKYLLA

Skylla is a separate city from the Edge, lying just north of it. It is ancient,

dark, forbidding, depressed, impoverished, grimy, septic, and ugly. It serves as the port for the island, and sailors can often be found carousing here.

Along the road to Skylla you can find Darkling Bros. Diversions & House of Grotesques, a run-down amusement park that is home to a crew of mutants and misfits. (See "Dreaming on the Verge of Strife" in *Forgotten Lives.*)

Skylla isn't served by the garbage men; the locals instead cart their trash (whatever can't be flushed down the sewer into the sea) to any of several festering dumps. (See *It Waits...*, pp. 13-16.)

TRABOC

Traboc is the city that lies just south of the Edge. It is orderly, clean, modern, and efficient, but it does not boast the nightlife available in the Edge. Troublemakers from the Edge are not welcome here.

KRAK Radio is in Traboc.

CHAPTER FIVE

AT YOUR SERVICE

In this chapter you can find many of the more interesting establishments to be found in the Edge. *This chapter is for the Game Moderator only.*

The places, businesses, and people are described in various detail. If you wish, emphasize those areas that are most specifically described at first, and then include the others as you become more confident in improvising events on the island. Those areas described in greatest detail will serve as examples for how to embellish the others.

Always keep in mind that these descriptions are only the beginning. Just because no Satanists are described at the Bienvenidos Hotel does not mean that there can't be any there, if they suit your purpose. Expand on everything as it suits your needs.

Furthermore, feel free to change this information to make a better story. If the PCs, for example, steal Madame Vylaska's records and you don't want them to get nothing for their efforts, you may decide that she does keep some relevant records on paper.

ESTABLISHMENT FORMAT

Type: What it is.

Rep: What most people think of the place or business.

Brief: A sentence paragraph describing the place.

Address: The place's address.

General description of the place or business.

GMCs

GMCs are described in the following format:

Name. If the GMC described is a "type" rather than an individual, then the type being described is given here in place of the name.

Identifying phrase. Who the person is and why he is important.

Physical description. If the GMC is "Al Amarjan," assume that he represents a mix of nearby gene pools.

Languages: They are listed in order of fluency and familiarity. The "Al Amarjan patois" is the common speech of the island, mostly English with lots of immigrant words and bad grammar.

Attack: If a GMC is not given an attack rating or traits that influence combat ability, assume he gets 2 dice in combat. If the "Attack" and "Defense" entries provide options for the number of dice (such as "2 or 3 dice"), then the GMC has a non-combat trait that can be used for either attack or defense each round, depending on need.

Defense: As "Attack."

Hit Points: If not listed, the GMC has 14 hit points.

Armor: If not listed, the GMC has none.

Traits. Each is named, rated (if applicable), and given a sign. Self-explanatory traits are not described, but most are. You may add other traits to a GMC in play, especially minor traits (like "Plays Tennis"), as you see fit.

AHMED'S KWIK KLINIK

Type: Private hospital.

Rep: Efficient service, discreet.

Brief: A clinic that does a brisk business in dealing primarily with patients who do not want to put themselves into the hands of the government (i.e., check in at D'Aubainne Hospital). Definitely not luxurious, but functional. Cash (or organs) only. Protected by Safe N Sound.

Address: 120 Pogrom Lane, Four Points.

Story Idea

Operatives effect a bureaucratic switcheroo on a PC who is hospitalized at Ahmed's. The other PCs go to visit him, only to be directed to a complete stranger with the hospitalized PC's name on his records. Meanwhile, the hospitalized PC has been given another name and has been "taken home by relatives."

ARMORGUARD

Type: Bodyguard service.

Rep: Decent protection.

Brief: Armorguard supplies bodyguards for short-term and long-term assignments. Depending on how much one is willing to pay, one can get anybody from street thugs to experienced professionals as one's bodyguard.

Location: 600 Endeavor Street, Sunken Barrio.

Phone: 713779

Armorguard offers three classes of bodyguard.

Footman

Essentially a street tough with perhaps some smarts as well. These guards will provide some muscle, but not a lot more. They are, however, cheap, just \$150 per day. Occasionally a customer may get a Footman who is very skilled but has not yet proved to be loyal and therefore cannot be promoted.

To be hired on as a Footman, one must pass a physical exam and a background check. The background check is, shall we say, not exceedingly thorough. Pay is \$50 per day, but faithful service can allow one to be promoted to the next level.

Squire

Squires have proved good at what they do and loyal to their clients. They either have extensive, verifiable experience as bodyguards with other services or have worked with Armorguard for over a year. In addition to fighting ability, they have developed other skills useful to a bodyguard, such as spotting trouble, intimidating people, and providing entertaining companionship. A squire costs about \$300 per day, depending on duties.

Hiring on as a squire requires verifiable background as a bodyguard. Most people start as Footmen and work their way up. Pay is about \$150 per day, depending on duties.

Knight

Knights are excellent bodyguards with experience, equipment, and proven dependability. They tend to be specialists, including very visible bodyguards meant to intimidate, bodyguards that blend into the crowd, and bodyguards that take the role of companion (allowing attackers to mistake the bodyguard for a bystander). Fees are about \$900 per day for a knight.

All knights have proven their ability and loyalty through years of faithful service. They earn up to \$600 per day depending on duties, though they are not assured of having constant assignments.

GMCs

Average Footman

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage
Defense: 3 dice
Hit Points: 20 (guts)
Armor: 1 point
Trait
Fighting, 3 dice.

Average Squire

Attack: 3 dice, X2 or X3 damage
Defense: 3 dice
Hit Points: 24 (tough)
Armor: 1 die
Trait
Bodyguarding, 3 dice — Includes fighting, spotting trouble, frisking people, etc.

Average Knight

Attack: 4 dice, X2 or X3 damage
Defense: 4 dice
Hit Points: 28
Armor: 1 die
Trait
Bodyguarding, 4 dice — Includes one specialty, depending on the type of bodyguard that the knight serves as (such as “intimidator,” “companion,” etc.).

Story Idea

If a player-character hires on as a Footman, he will of course be assigned to someone involved in some way with one of the plots you wish to develop. The client may be a villain about whom the bodyguard can learn damaging secrets, or he may be someone who has learned too much and whose life is now in danger. The bodyguard PC may show up at the client’s residence only to find he’s too late; the enemy has already struck.

Assigning a new PC to bodyguard another PC or an acquaintance of the other PCs is a handy way to introduce the character into the series.

BIENVENIDOS HOTEL

Type: Average hotel.

Rep: Decent place to stay, and it’s where the action is.

Brief: A fair hotel on the plaza.

Their hourly rates make for a high turnover in guests.

Address: 200 Plaza of Flowers.

Bienvenidos is a large, medium-quality hotel where something is always happening. Various groups rent out the hotel or come of its facilities for private parties and conventions, and its location on the Plaza of Flowers makes it a center of activity. It is comfortable enough for burger, but it does go to the lengths that Cesar’s does to make newcomers feel safe and secure.

Bienvenidos Prices

Single, 1 hour	\$15
Single, night	\$65
Double, night	\$80
Suite, night	\$150 - \$350
Room Service	Expensive
Phones	75¢ per local call

GMCs

Madame Vylaska

Mover Operative (Cell Z)

Madame Vylaska runs Vylaska’s Party Favors from her hotel room (# 523). Her employees sell psychoactives in the Plaza of Flowers. The drug sales do little more than pay for the workers’ commissions and business costs, but Madame Vylaska makes a tidy profit selling information that her girls gather to the Movers. Actually, she is a Mover herself. One of her girls is a Mover as well, and she has been known to slip tainted drugs to “special” buyers (usually a deadly poison mixed with Relapse, so as to delay the poison’s effect and avoid suspicion).

Her Mover contact is Hamoud al-Baqr, a Vornite, who does not realize that Madame Vylaska is a Mover herself, and a more powerful one than he.

Slavic woman, age 47, 164 cm, 69 kg, overweight, black curly hair, face overdone with make-up, wears frumpy clothes (in which are hidden various weapons).

Languages: Polish, Russian, English, some French.

Attack: 3 dice plus penalty die, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice plus penalty die

Hit Points: 24 (bulk)

Armor: 1 point (reinforcement in clothes)

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice — Trained in fighting dirty. (Has weapons at hand)

Excellent Memory, 4 dice — Commits her information to memory and composes false records, should anyone steal them. (Good with names)

Out of Shape, penalty die — Overweight and under-exercised, Vylaska takes a penalty die on actions that require agility and endurance. (Fat)

Story Idea

Bienvenidos makes a fine place for PCs to stay. Not only is it on the exciting Plaza of Flowers, but the hourly rates offered assure that interesting people are always coming and going.

BITTER & HERB'S

Type: Bar.

Rep: A dirty little bar with a distasteful clientele.

Brief: A bar where mutants hang out.

Address: 170 Drudge Lane, Justice Barrio.

A little, dirty bar run by Bitter & Herb (with the "h" pronounced). To picture Bitter & Herb's face, imagine two identical, pudgy faces side by side; now push them together so that the two inner eyes overlap. Replace that middle eye with a lump of malformed flesh, and you have the result: two eyes, two noses, two mouths (but one jaw bone). Bitter & Herb's

morose countenance oversees the dismal bar, where the down and out feel at home.

Prices are low, and you get what you pay for. Entertainment, other than a television and radio, is scarce.

GMCs

Bitter & Herb

Mutant Bartender

He is a secret Sommerite, but he dares not join the sect publicly for fear of being rejected by the beautiful people who dominate the cult. If pressed, he can call upon the aid of about two dozen mutants who respect him and will help him in a jam.

Al Amarjan Male Mutant, Age 46, 180 cm, 78 kg, well-muscled.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, a few German curses.

Traits

Good at Leading, Commanding, and Ordering, 3 dice — Bitter & Herb has the resolve and attitude of a natural leader, but his appearance has kept him from capitalizing on this talent, other than opening and running his bar. (Firm tone of voice)

Hideous — Suffers a penalty die when dealing with those who judge people by their looks (which is most of us). (Hideous)

Armada

Mutant Bouncer

The bouncer, a mutant with strange growths all over her massive frame. Some of these growths are sharp spines or ridges, others hairy, cartilaginous lumps that provide some level of protection from blows.

Al Amarjan woman, mutant, age 28, 161 cm, 59 kg, knobby and spiny.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, some Spanish

Attack: 4 dice (with bonus die against those who rely on training rather than intuition or experience), X2 damage from spines, etc.

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28 (mutant toughness)

Armor: 1 die of knobby skin

Traits

Brawling, 4 dice — She fights bare-handed, and very well. Trained fighters find her unpredictable and hard to contend with because one can never know what part of her body a slash or piercing swing will come from (bonus die against fighters who are primarily trained rather than intuitive). (Well-muscled)

Spotting Concealed Weapons & Other Things, 3 dice — She needs to keep an eye on potential troublemakers. (Watchful eye)

Grotesque — Her deformities make her a complete misfit in normal society.

Manuela Eselbrust

Poisonous Mutant

A middle-aged German mutant with a slightly askew, vaguely misproportioned body. Her bodily fluids are poisonous to some, psychoactive to others, making her favors the goal of many thrill-seekers. Rumor has it (wrongly) that she can control the effect of her secretions. She is in love with Bitter & Herb, but she dares not consummate this love for fear of poisoning him.

German woman, mutant, age 38, 160 cm, 51 kg, blond hair, misproportioned body, morose temperament.

Languages: German, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Evoking Pity, 3 dice — She learned early in life to use her ugliness to evoke pity in others. (Harmless appearance)

Ugly — She receives a penalty die in most social situations.

Story Ideas

Otto's Men begin harassing patrons of Bitter & Herb, trying to force the place out of business and get the mutants out of their barrio. Bitter & Herb knows that he would be the worse after a direct confrontation, so Manuela secretly comes to his aid. She hires the PCs to "deal with" the fellow in Otto's Men who has been

agitating to get the bar closed, but she does not want Bitter & Herb to know about all this. In fact, she might fabricate a false motive for her actions.

CESAR'S HOTEL

Type: Hotel.

Rep: Strictly for burger, reliable but not too interesting. Honest Al Amarjans (both of them) direct most burger here.

Brief: A large hotel catering to the needs of tourists and newcomers. They have a well-armed security force to protect their visitors.

Address: 40 Sunken Plaza.

A modern three-story building of stone and glass with a terrace on top of the entrance hall. The terrace overlooks the Sunken Plaza, and guests gather here at night for cocktails and piano music.

The interior is modern and comfortable, with rooms ranging from the bed-and-bathroom basics to elaborate suites. Employees wear neat uniforms of blue and black, treat their guests well, and receive high pay for not indulging in the seedier aspects of Al Amarjan life (while on duty).

Facilities include a pool on the roof, the above-mentioned terrace connected to a gentle night club on the second floor, a modest restaurant, satellite (bootleg) television from across the world, and a watchful security team. In addition to their small security team, the hotel can call on Safe N Sound for back-up, and the Peace Force is even willing to respond quickly to their calls, since D'Aubainne wants to protect tourists (who equal cash flow, in her eyes).

Prices are high, representing the high cost of maintaining security and the relative scarcity of secure lodgings for burger.

Cesar's Prices

Single	\$70
Double	\$85
Suite	\$120 - 300
Room Service	Expensive

Phones

50¢ per local call

GMCS

The Bokundi Sisters

Owners and Managers

Donna and Juliana Bokundi own and run Cesar's with firm hands. Their comely African features are animated by ceaseless energy and concentration. They are constantly on the move, but rarely miss an opportunity to stop and chat with guests. "Now be sure to let me or Donna know if there's anything we can do to make your stay more comfortable." Unfortunately, both are hooked on Slo-Mo, though each has kept this a secret from all, including from the other. Their contact, who supplies both, has used this information to blackmail them into revealing secrets about guests to the Net, but they will never do anything that could easily be traced back to Cesar's. (Interesting to note, each uses Slo-Mo to be able to keep up with the other's ceaseless activity and attention to detail. Their intake has begun to increase, and neural deterioration can only be a few months to years away.)

Donna: African woman, age 41, 158 cm, 48 kg, very dark skin, hair braided into corn rows, wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Juliana: African woman, age 38, 159 cm, 49 kg, very dark skin, short "afro," wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Traits

Spot Dirt & Clutter, 3 dice.
(Eyes dart to and fro)

Administration, 4 dice.
(Confident demeanor)

Judge Character, 3 dice.
(Penetrating gaze)

Give them a bonus die on these traits when on a light Slo-Mo kick, which is almost always.

Mugly Flats

Security Guard

One of the security team. Like the rest, he is equipped with a walkie-talkie, flashlight, baton (with attach-

able spike), emetic, handcuffs, tranquilizer (in hypodermic), and taser. Unlike the rest, he is a kergillian host. Currently he's a sleeper agent, just doing his thing and enjoying it as his implant slowly digests his brain, munch, munch. If necessary, the kergillians will use him to gather information on guests. He is also vaguely a Sommerite, and a cat-lover. Now that he has a kergillian implant, he compulsively fiddles with things. (The implant loves those dextrous digits.)

Al Amarjan man, age 26, 181 cm, 69 kg. Tall, thin, waxen-faced, and alert. Wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Attack: 3 dice + bonus die, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice + bonus die

Hit Points: 21 (grit)

Traits

Fighting with Above Weaponry, 3 dice. (Tells fight stories)

Command Voice, 3 dice —
Intimidates the rowdy and controls possible problem-situations. (Firm tone of voice)

Partying, 3 dice. (Tells party stories)

Kergillian Implant — Bonus die on reflexes and senses. Also causes him to fidget with small objects.

Doesn't Like Thinking for Himself — Penalty die on rolls requiring him to take the initiative or go against orders. (Frequently standing around waiting to be told what to do)

Story Idea

Cesar's attracts burger, including, no doubt, some of the PCs. It serves as a relatively safe place for PCs to stay and to meet each other.

CHROME DOME

Type: Bar.

Rep: Beloved by shockheads, ignored by others.

Brief: A place for people to use blue shock and delight in micromonic music (see below).

Illustration by Grey Thornberry



Address: 678 Ogre Drive, Four Points Barrio

Outside, Chrome Dome looks like just another burnt out, condemned building. Immediately inside, is a short, soundproof hallway where one can check coats and a “ticket window” where blue shock is for sale. (At \$7.50 a hit, it’s 50% above street price, but it’s guaranteed pure.) The shock is sold here, in this soundproof hallway, so that the screams of those who take it will not disturb the “concert-goers” in the main hall.

Once all who wish have taken their doses of shock, a bouncer opens double doors on the left, which lead to a bare hallway with identical double doors on the end. Proper protocol is never to open the far doors while the near doors are also open, so as to prevent stray noise from slipping into the main chamber.

Once past the second set of doors, visitors see a huge hall of motionless people sitting alone or in small groups around tables. The

white ceramic interior gleams more antiseptically than any hospital ward. Furnishings are minimalistic in the extreme. Sitting in chrome chairs, bug-eyed in rapt attention, is a hushed roomful of blue shock abusers, their heightened attention completely focused on the band playing on the small, raised platform at the far end of the big room. This is a micromonic band, playing extraordinarily complex music on acoustic instruments. Typical instrumentation for micromonic bands is as follows: two gamelans, a glass armonica (a rare keyboard-like instrument invented by Benjamin Franklin), a jaw-harp, a recorder, and a glockenspiel. Some innovative groups use slightly different forces. The musicians, who must also be on blue shock to be able to play in this style, play the instruments extremely softly. People not on the drug can barely hear a micromonic performance. Listeners who are “blued” report a hypnotic, endlessly fascinating musical experience that continues to

expand in complexity like an inquiry into fractal geometry.

The featureless decor of the place is specifically designed to present a neutral sensory experience, so as not to distract from the music. A crowd of busboys armed with de-scented glass cleaner constantly cleans the bar’s surfaces, eliminating any smudges or stains that could draw the augmented attention of blued customers. Similarly, the food is the blandest cuisine possible — pancakes and waffles. Sorry, no bacon, eggs, or syrup available.

Chrome Dome usually clears right out when a patron spontaneously combusts. This is a remarkably awful event to witness even when not sense-enhanced. In a room full of shock-heads, all of whom may someday go the same way...well, let’s just call it a phenomenally ugly scene and leave it at that. The unusual cleaning demands that the Chrome Dome places on its staff has made its busboys the best-paid in the Edge.

The shockhead rumor mill is continually abuzz with speculation that particularly mind-expanding micromonic improvisations actually trigger combustion attacks. This has not been proven by medical science.

GMCs

Gottlob Rothenberger

Manager of Chrome Dome.

The establishment doesn't pay for itself; it's real value to its owners, the Raimondi crime family (p. 103), is as a distribution point for blue shock. What could make more sense than to get a whole bunch of shockheads together in one place, reducing retail overhead, and provide a form of entertainment that hooks them even further into the drug?

Gottlob originally was an independent operator, but when the Raimondis asked for a piece of the action, he made the mistake of thinking it was an offer he could refuse. A former shockhead himself, he set the place up because he loved micromonics. During their hostile takeover, the Raimondis arranged for Gottlob to have involuntary surgery: now his neural network has been altered so that blue shock has no effect on him. He now spends his days sadly watching his favorite musicians performing music he is now incapable of appreciating. He would be willing to help harm the Raimondi family if he thought he could get away with it.

German man, age 45, 166 cm, 57 kg, short and skinny, with protruding eyeballs and a sparse, wispy beard.

Languages: German, English, some Al Amarjan patois.

Carlo Collodi

Blue shock pusher.

Not a user himself (the Raimondis would kill him) and very contemptuous of those who drool to buy his product. His loyalty to The Family is entirely based on his love of money (which he spends like water) and his knowledge that they're better equipped to bump him off than any potential rivals are.

Italian man, age 27, 170 cm, 68 kg. Blond, smirking, sharp dresser.

Barbara Tellefsen

Micromonic Musician

Recorder player for The Edge's hottest micromonic band, Burnt Attention. She wants to kick blue shock but is doubly afraid — first, that Rothenberger would send the Mob after her, and secondly that she's too enraptured by the mysteries of micromonics to ever go back to performing straight music.

Scandinavian woman, age 23, 172 cm, 66 kg, brown/blond hair, squarish features, big-boned.

Story Ideas

A micromonic musician, also a Vornite Mover, is implanting subliminal suggestions in his music and influencing the shockheads. Thanks to the high sensitivity of the listeners, the messages may be very specific, such as "Kill so-and-so (a PC)."

D'AUBAINE ASYLUM

Type: Mental hospital.

Rep: Worse than prison; at least in prison you get parole.

Brief: The asylum houses hundreds of mentally ill, all under the supervision of uncaring doctors and nurses. Many of these people would get better if someone just paid attention to them.

Location: Republic Road, southeast of the Edge.

This mental institution is run by the Bureau of Health and Welfare. Its public role is to house and care for the mentally ill, at least those who cannot find private help, but Her Exaltedness has also found ways to turn this institution to her advantage.

The facilities are old, worn, and unsettling. The treatment procedures, however, are sometimes among the most modern, or even beyond what conventional science offers. On the other hand, the administrators deny treatment to some of the residents,

providing a scientifically valuable "control group."

Her Exaltedness uses the asylum as a specialized prison for some of her enemies. By slipping enemies psychotomimetic drugs, her agents can make them seem suitable for commitment, and once they are in the hospital, D'Aubainne's interrogators can pull secrets from their brains at their leisure.

The asylum also serves as a collection point for empties (p. 155). Anyone who brings an empty here for "treatment" receives a bounty of \$500. These empties are then fixed up, dressed nicely, and distributed to friends and allies of Her Exaltedness. (Their ability to drain magical power makes them invaluable as guards.)

GMC

Akorra Encombi

Pharaoh Quisling, Patient

Encombi uses her powerful intuition to help the Pharaohs solve problems and puzzles that their logic alone cannot crack. Her superiors bring her coded messages, which she reads haphazardly to summon connections and solutions out of her subconscious. Sometimes she is wrong, or just unable to determine anything, but often she can make leaps of logic and understanding that most people could never manage.

Encombi is by no means insane. She simply reported mild hallucinations in order to be committed, and she puts on a show of psychosis whenever her case comes up for review. As far as the staff of the hospital is concerned, she "constantly engages in compulsive writing behavior." They do not pay enough attention to her to realize that she is perfectly sane. She chose to live in the asylum so that she would be out of the Edge and relatively safe from operatives of other conspiracies.

African woman, age 40, 161 cm, 60 kg, light brown skin, short hair.

Languages: French, English.

Psychic (Subconscious) Pool: 5 shots

Traits

Intuition, 4 dice — Allows her to guess connections and imagine effective courses of action based on incomplete data. Tied to her “subconscious pool.” (Makes strange jumps in speech)

Story Idea

Someone with vital information that the PCs want is in the asylum as a patient. He is on restricted visitation, so the PCs must either gain positions on the staff or enter as patients to make contact with him. Those admitted as patients may find themselves subject to highly experimental means of treatment.

D'AUBAINNE HOSPITAL AND TRAUMA CENTER

Type: Hospital.

Rep: The highest tech, the highest prices. If you got the money, go there. But be careful, because Dr. Nusbaum runs the place, and he's in tight with the D'Aubainnes. Say no more.

Brief: An ultramodern hospital with all the fanciest gadgets money can barely afford. Its design is sleek steel and glass, daunting and impressive. It gives the sense of money and power, which makes sense because Dr. Nusbaum has both. Dr. Nusbaum is the Director of the Hospital. Since he is the personal physician of the D'Aubainnes, he gets just about whatever he wants for this “pet project” of his.

Address: 271 D'Aubainne Avenue, Justice Barrio.

Areas**Betting Hall**

A \$10 dollar cover allows one into the betting hall, a large, smoke-filled room with video monitors lining two walls. Scattered about the room are

small tables and rows of chairs where gamblers sit, drink, smoke, talk, and play cards. The video monitors show what's happening in various operating rooms, and the windows on the far side of the room are where gamblers place their bets on the outcomes of the operations. One wall is a concession area where one can buy drinks, snacks, and legal drugs (only). Most bets are strictly “dies” vs. “lives,” but more specialized wagers are available by request. Generally, to qualify for a “live,” the patient must survive a week, so winnings are paid a week after the operation, or when he dies, whichever comes first. Patients receive 1% of the gross wagers, deducted from their bills. Many families without life insurance will bet against a hospitalized family member, so that if the patient dies, they can use the winnings for burial and medical costs.

Administrative Wing

Dr. Nusbaum has his offices and personal quarters here. One must go through a series of locked, guarded doors to reach this wing, and entrance is by invitation only. This wing is decked out throughout with mahogany, teak, marble, silver, and original pieces of modern art. Found in this wing is a helipad for Dr. Nusbaum's private use, several fully equipped offices for him to coordinate his activities, a conference room for meeting guests, and Dr. Nusbaum's personal quarters (though he also has a residence outside the city).

The defensive measures in the administrative wing include psychovores, crystal traps, brain loopers, motion detectors, electric eyes, video monitors, and heavily armed guards (who carry SACQ).

Experimental Laboratories

Dr. Nusbaum personally selects the best, brightest, and least scrupulous of the medical school's graduates to become assistants in his bold experiments into human physiology and medicine. Under oaths of secrecy (and dire threats), they work here, helping him expand his knowledge

and perfect his bizarre techniques and devices.

Neo-Care

Neo-Care is Dr. Nusbaum's way of ensnaring willing victims in his dangerous medical experiments. He provides low-cost health insurance on the provision that he alone determines treatments, and that he is not bound by the Hippocratic Oath when doing so. He uses some of his most effective and most dangerous methods, learning from his failures as well as his successes. Clients are required to make frequent reports on their progress to help Dr. Nusbaum gather data.

This plan is an easy way for you to have fun with the PCs. Those on the plan may find that treatments include:

- an anti-pain drug that deadens pain sensors permanently
- a genetically engineered microbe designed to eat invading bacteria; it may mistake the patient's tissues as edible
- cybernetic prostheses (imperfect and potentially dangerous — not nearly as good as that found in cyberpunk literature)
- a radiation treatment designed to boost the body's resistance to disease, but that actually makes the character significantly stronger or tougher (but may have deleterious side effects)
- anything else you can think of

The program costs about \$50 per month with a \$100 deductible. Those in dangerous careers pay about 25% more than normal (which is much more generous than they can find elsewhere).

GMCs**Dr. Fernando Rodriguez**

(see *Earthlings*, p. 122)

Dr. Fürchtegott Nusbaum

Fringe Medical Genius

Dr. Nusbaum is the medical genius behind many of the accom-

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plishments that benefit the D'Aubainnes, including Monique D'Aubainne's long and healthy life and SACQ. He maintains a frenetic schedule that he keeps by intuition rather than plan. Meeting Dr. Nusbaum is strictly a matter of chance, unless, of course, one has a very good reason to speak to the man.

Dr. Nusbaum fulfills a bewildering array of responsibilities: servicing the medical needs of the D'Aubainnes, performing exceptionally delicate

surgery, conducting bizarre (and ethically questionable) medical experiments, guest lecturing at the D'Aubainne University Medical School, and directing the overall activities of the D'Aubainne Hospital. People wonder just how he can do it all.

Dr. Nusbaum has a secret that allows him to be so extremely productive: there are two of him. This is a very well kept secret; in fact, no one, not even Dr. Nusbaum realizes this fact. The two of him have never met,

nor appeared next to each other, nor become aware of the other. How did this come about? Well, Dr. Nusbaum has pioneered some daring experiments in his day. Maybe one of them worked without his realizing it, or maybe one had a side effect that he didn't expect. In any event, one Dr. Nusbaum can accomplish what it would take three other people to do, so with his double, he's been able to produce about six times as much as a normal person could.



Illustration by C. Brent Ferguson

For personal safety, Dr. Nusbaum wears a bullet-proof vest and a crystal trap. He also always carries a radio alarm and a healthy dose of SACQ. His quarters in the hospital are protected by brain loopers, white thought generators, and psychovores. (He is, after all, an important man.)

German man, age 57, 167 cm, 72 kg, short, slightly flabby, with only wisps of white hair left on his mottled pate. He usually wears a white lab coat with instruments of various design protruding haphazardly from the pockets.

Languages: German, English, Latin, and a lot more.

Traits

Fringe Medical Genius, 5 dice — Dr. Nusbaum is extremely capable at a variety of medical sciences, but since he prefers to work past the limits of his own abilities, most of his work has unpredictable side-effects. (Usually wears a lab coat)

Story Idea

In an attempt to find a hospitalized friend or ally (GMC or PC), the PCs wander through the bureaucratic and architectural maze of the hospital, encountering fiendish physicians, dangerous patients, bizarre experiments, cold-hearted head nurses, and perhaps even Dr. Nusbaum himself.

D'AUBAINNE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Type: Airport.

Rep: Always a good time, if you can afford it, but it gives some people the willies.

Brief: The airport is a bizarre structure designed by Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne, the son of Her Exaltedness. In addition to providing air communication with other countries, the airport is a hotspot of entertainment.

Location: Airport Road, east of the Edge

The Terminal, as locals refer to the D'Aubainne International Airport

building, is an imposing, impossible structure that creates an indelibly surreal first impression on all who visit Al Amarja.

Towering above a spider network of runways, The Terminal looks like an enormous funnel, the color of gleaming and polished bone. It mushrooms out from ground level in a series of nine ever-larger circular floors, all smooth and windowless.

The Terminal has been described by an editor of *Architectural Digest* as "a monstrosity, a fever dream of modernism gone criminally insane." The author of this critique is on record as having never stepped inside the building, expecting its collapse at any moment. Despite its apparent structural impossibility, The Terminal has remained in use since its official opening in 1981.

The Terminal's architect, Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne, has remained inscrutable about how he solved the project's seemingly insurmountable engineering problems. In fact, D'Aubainne remains inscrutable about most things. D'Aubainne is a notorious recluse, and rumor has it that he had never been seen outside The Terminal since its opening. He does occasionally leave, mostly for special family events or crises. It is true that he is never seen by the public outside the Terminal.

The greatest secret is that the Terminal building doesn't exist above the ground level — the rest is a hollow structure, simply a facade. The real terminal is underground, nine circular levels heading downwards in increasing size.

The illusion is cleverly maintained by gimmicked elevators (using electronic signals to confuse perception), an absence of visual cues, and the confusing geometry of the place (see below). Many denizens of the Terminal have figured this out, but the sort of person who spends enough time in the Terminal to clue into this is unlikely to go blabbing it about to just anyone. Either they'll be sufficiently connected to the power structure to instinctively keep D'Aubainne's secrets, or they'll be sufficiently lowly to keep quiet out of

vague fear. It's a secret, then, if not Al Amarja's best kept one.

The Terminal was called by *Aviation Week* "the most confusing airport building in the world, bar none." It seems to consist of never-ending bone-colored hallways, forever curving past office doors, elevators, shops, restaurants, luggage pickups, ticket booths, and waiting areas.

Many travelers unfamiliar with the Terminal have likened the experience to one of those dreams where you wander unendingly through a confusing building complex, always seeming to get more and more lost and further and further from one's goal. Indeed, the labyrinthine nature of the Terminal has spawned an entire profession — several companies and many independent freelancers offer guide services to lead customers through it. Most travel guidebooks emphatically recommend that new visitors to Al Amarja use guides to navigate through the Terminal.

This confusion results from more than just the intricate layout of the building. With the help of friendly coral-like extradimensional entities, Jean-Christophe has constructed the interior of the Terminal using non-Euclidean geometry. Its contents exceed its actual square footage by a factor of thirteen. It is impossible to map the Terminal's interior. Moreover, the ease with which one successfully and quickly gets from point A to point B within the Terminal depends on one's psychic state — specifically to one's spiritual attunement to Al Amarja. Possible ways to determine success at navigating the Terminal include:

- *GM fiat*. What advances the story?
- *D'Aubainne family desires*. To what degree does the character's need to get from A to B further the ends of Her Exaltedness and her rule?
- *Utter randomness*. Roll the Hand of Fate. If the roll, in your omniscient judgment, is not sufficient, the character ends up somewhere other than point B. They are now lost and must find

their way to a landmark to reorient themselves. To get to the landmark, roll again...

- *You name it.*

There have been endless speculations throughout the years as to why the D'Aubainne family styled their nation's only airport as a mammoth monument to the irrational. These include:

- Jean-Christophe's devotion to aesthetics over reality — he's been referred to as the world's first Dada architect.
- Jean-Christophe is secretly an initiate of [insert name of rumor-monger's most feared occult group] and the Terminal is a mystic power battery for his cult. (Actually, the Terminal does have a distinct and slightly creepy mystic resonance to it for people sensitive to such things. If one is using sorcery within its confines and is consciously attempting to tap into the mystic power of the place, one will find one's spell boosted in effect — perhaps getting more than the spellcaster bargained for. This mystic battery effect intensifies the lower into the complex one goes.)
- The Terminal is a giant power trip on the part of the D'Aubainne family, designed to reduce travelers to a state of psychological helplessness and despair.
- The Terminal is an enormous practical joke on the part of the D'Aubainne family.

All of the above rumors could be correct. Or none of them. If you were to ask Jean-Christophe, and he were to answer honestly, he would admit that he does not fully understand the Terminal himself. He is following an inner urge. "Perhaps I will understand the thing I have made before I die. Perhaps acquiring the final knowledge will mean my death."

Al Amarja Customs & Immigration

The first and most vivid encounter newcomers will have within the

Terminal is with Al Amarja's Customs & Immigration bureaucracy. These are the folks who decide either to allow arrivals to exit the Terminal area and enter Al Amarja proper, to send them immediately back home on a return flight, or to imprison them in the Terminal for months, years, or forever, endlessly shuttling them from office to office as they struggle fruitlessly to get out of the Kafka Zone.

Al Amarjan customs procedures are notoriously eccentric. All visitors must meet with an immigration case officer for a personal interview, no matter how brief their intended stay on the island. Sometimes the interviews are straightforward and routine; there are also stories of quite bizarre encounters with Al Amarjan immigration officials. Few who've had bad experiences are prepared to discuss them in detail.

Basically, Her Exaltedness reserves the right to mindf—, harass, or manipulate anyone coming to the island in order to further her own obscure agenda. Or just for fun. Some visitors are selected for specific types of unusual treatment. Others are chosen at random to be treated weirdly, so that the ones Her Exaltedness has an interest in won't be tipped off by the special attention.

Applicants for admission to Al Amarja can be subjected to head games, psychological warfare, incarceration, doses of experimental drugs, torture, unrequested elective surgery, or even execution. The more extreme of these measures are uncommon. Everyone who comes to Al Amarja is at least put a little off-balance. Given the dark reputation of Al Amarja C & I, even a quick, courteous procedure can be a paranoia-inducer.

Travelers who have visited the island before and been approved previously for admission are usually waved through with a few formalities. (But not always. Heh heh heh...)

Like any large bureaucratic organ, the accountability system in C & I sometimes breaks down. Officers have considerable discretion in dealing with cases Her Exaltedness has no direct interest in. Sometimes officers are assets of the various secret organi-

zations or conspiracies that riddle Al Amarjan society, and may be advancing plans other than those of Her Exaltedness. If this were to come to the attention of the Democratic Bureau of Investigation, this would be harshly dealt with, but there are some awfully clever conspirators in Al Amarja.

Terminal Life

Officially, D'Aubainne International Airport Public Relations denies that there are any living spaces in the Terminal. This contradicts the common knowledge that Jean-Christophe lives in it. Actually, there are hundreds of apartments, some quite luxurious, in the Terminal. They are given out as boons purely at Jean-Christophe's discretion. Furthermore, all the amenities are available here — shops of all descriptions, restaurants, snack bars, public washrooms, nightclubs, hotels, movie theaters, medical and dental clinics, the works.

Visually, the interior is gleaming and sterile. The complex is lit with fluorescence. White and chrome dominate. Fixtures are aggressively modern-looking — Bauhaus updated. Some objects — phones, light switches, bathroom fixtures — sacrifice comfortable and convenient use for purity of form.

Jean-Christophe, for all his inattention to personal hygiene, is obsessive about the cleanliness of his complex. Even the smallest mess is immediately spotted and a cleaning team scrambled to neutralize it. Terminal cleaners are ruthlessly efficient and well-known for roughly elbowing coffee-spillers out of the way.

Although always polished to perfection, not everything in the Terminal is always in working order. Jean-Christophe insists on personally supervising even the smallest change or repair job, and sometimes takes weeks of meditation before deciding just what to do with a dented soap dispenser or whether to replace a particular light bulb with the same model or a slightly different one. Elevators may be out of order, corridors blocked

for renovation, and plumbing possibly damaged. Due to the difficulty of effecting timely repairs, Terminal staff tend to be very harsh with people who damage anything. They also tend to affix blame for damage they are responsible for on hapless passersby.

The Terminal pumps in music to all public areas, but in a slightly surreal manner. The P.A. system emits electronic impulses that stimulate the memory centers of patron's brains, so that they think they're hearing music. Moreover, the specific music they seem to be hearing reflects each individual's mood — heavy metal if in a violent rage, Mozart if sprightly and upbeat, Brian Eno if bored, Schumann if depressed. However, when one attempts to concentrate on or identify the subliminal music, it slips elusively away to be replaced by silence. The effect adds to the curious disorientation of the Terminal.

Another all-important atmosphere bit for *Over the Edge* GMs is the fabled White Courtesy Telephone. During airport visits, PCs should find their adventures periodically punctuated by P.A. announcements asking particular people to come to the White Courtesy Telephone. Though sometimes these will be names the PCs don't recognize, at other times they will be of notorious individuals, movie stars, even dead people or fictional characters. The ease of getting to the White Courtesy Telephone to intercept someone called to it should be directly proportional to the twisted fun this would inject into the game session at hand: "Dr. Hannibal Lecter, please pick up the white courtesy telephone. Dr. Hannibal Lecter..." PCs may also be called to the White Courtesy Telephone to receive disturbing or obscure messages from unknown sources.

Lay-Out

First Floor

Actually the top floor, apparently the bottom. This floor is the bottleneck through which everything must pass into and out of the Terminal. (Hope there's never a fire.) It is composed

exclusively of elevators around the outside and a massive air duct in the center. The area outside the Terminal is massively crowded. Passengers take shuttles to and from the planes so that the planes do not have to come near the Terminal and further block traffic.

Second and Third Floors

Baggage claims, ticket booths, snack bars.

Fourth Floor

C & I offices. Those who are just passing through rarely go any "higher" than this level.

Fifth Floor

C & I headquarters, infirmary, headquarters of guide services.

Sixth Floor

Restaurants, a hotel, movie theater, nightclubs, Security Headquarters.

Seventh Floor

Public Relations Headquarters, administration offices, more restaurants and nightclubs (including Memphis — see "Aaron Parker," below), another cinema, specialty shops, medical and dental facilities, convenience stores, and many apartments.

Eighth Floor

Storage, incarceration and interrogation cells, apartments (segregated from the incarceration area), and a secret elevator to ninth floor.

Ninth Floor

Strictly the territory of Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne and the extra-dimensional, coral-like creatures with which he is in contact. Accessed only through a secret elevator keyed to Jean-Christophe's voiceprint.

Coming to the Terminal

You can run the characters' arrival on Al Amarja in great detail or in general terms. These are the stages that the

characters are likely to pass through before getting to the Edge or whatever other destination they may have.

First the characters see the island as they fly in over the Mediterranean. It is about 80 km east-west by 40 km north-south, with a volcanic peak in the center. Most of it is lightly wooded with occasional settlements, but the western end is covered with urban sprawl reminiscent of a malignant growth. The airport is inland from this urban area.

At this point, other passengers, those who have been to the island, may voice their concerns about the C & I. Get the players worrying right away.

One way to describe the Terminal to your players is to get out a sheet of paper and draw a rough ziggurat with the "top," or small end, pointing to them. They will think that it looks like a pyramid and that you are drawing it as it looks from your perspective. Then draw a horizontal line to represent the ground, and they suddenly realize that you were drawing it from their perspective, and that it is indeed an impossibly bizarre structure. Just a bit of mental prestidigitation for your players' amusement.

The plane lands a good distance away from the Terminal itself, and the passengers board a bus that takes them to the base of the Terminal. On the far side of the base are throngs of people, taxis, microbuses, tourists with bulging suitcases, porters, and private cars waiting in long lines to approach the Terminal. On the near end are cordoned pathways down which the passengers walk, under the unsmiling gaze of men in dark blue riot gear, holding sub-machine guns.

Once inside the Terminal, the characters are whisked up to the fourth floor, where they are assigned a C & I caseworker. If you wish, the fun can begin in earnest now, or they can get waved through. After being admitted, the case worker stamps the character's passport. In the meantime, their luggage may well have been searched. If you like, someone may have planted contraband in their luggage to frame them, or stolen

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something of interest, or what have you.

Once admitted to the island, the PCs may enjoy the luxury of the “upper levels” or simply retrieve their luggage on the “lower” floors and leave. The “lower” the level, the more crowded and hectic the area. Even if they decide to leave in short order, they may have an encounter with a cleaning squad or the White Courtesy Phone. Outside the Terminal it is easy to take a jitney, Total Taxi, or Giovanni’s Cab (or other cab services of your design) to the Edge, or perhaps to another destination.

GMCS

Gordon Dobson

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 20–21.

Adelina Escobar

C & I Case Worker.

A small, sweet-tempered Filipino lady who seems constantly confused

and pleasantly incapable of doing her job, which is getting entry clearance for arrivals. Actually highly skilled at her actual job, which is endlessly frustrating and irritating arrivals until they lose it. The manner in which they do so determines suitability for entrance.

Filipino woman, age 26, 155 cm, 48 kg. Small and gentle, sharply dressed in the tan C & I uniform.

Languages: Tagalog, Spanish, several languages of various Philippine islands, English.

Trait

Frustrating People, 4 dice.
(Appears incompetent)

Dwayne Naghibolhosseini

C & I Case Worker

Favorite gambit: often starts interviews with the first time arrivals to Al Amarja by screaming “Oh, it’s you again, you f—ing monkey faggot!” and throwing a chair across the room. From here, he gets aggressive.

Tanzanian man, age 38. Tall, beer gut, shaggy hair, sloppy polyester suit bedecked with food stains. Effects the air of a burnt out, potentially violent case.

Languages: Swahili, English, spoken Arabic.

Attacks: 3 dice, X1 or X2 damage, depending on weapon at hand.

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (bulk)

Traits

Intimidating, 3 dice. (Scary-looking)

Brawling, 3 dice. (Numerous scars on knuckles and face)

Linda Sourinen

C & I Case Worker

She typically psyches out subjects by sitting across from them in absolute silence, a loud clock ticking on her desk. The silence continues. Typically, subjects break down and begin babbling in uncontrollably revealing stream-of-consciousness fashion.



Illustration by Kevin O'Neill

European woman, age 35, 167 cm, 69 kg. Dumpy, high forehead, short brown hair.

Languages: German, Italian, English, some Portuguese

Trait

The Silent Treatment, 4 dice — As described above. (Impassive expression)

Dinesh Rajpal

C & I Case Worker

Gets the info he wants through friendly guile. So nice he should make subjects paranoid. Actually, he is just nice.

Sikh gentleman, age 23. Bright, nattily-dressed.

Trait

Polite Interrogation, 4 dice. (Smiles pleasantly)

Julio Beitleiro

Airport Security Chief

Polite and articulate but no qualms about the tough stuff if necessary. Dark secret: Julio's part of an underground group that derives sexual gratification from hanging oneself. At a recent party, Julio held the rope when things went too far and a young man was killed. The Peace Force is very anxious to resolve the case — the victim is the nephew of a French cabinet minister. A conspiracy convenient to the GM's plans had an agent in the place that night and is black-mailing him, demanding favors.

Al Amarjan man, age 34, 184 cm, 84 kg. Big guy, good-looking, pumped up. Even has muscle definition in his face.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, gutter-Spanish.

Attack: 4 dice, variety of weapons.

Defense: 4 dice.

Hit Points: 29 (brawn)

Armor: 1 point (reinforced uniform)

Traits

Fighting, 4 dice — Strong, confident, trained, and without mercy. (Unfazed by scary-looking people)

Perceptive, 3 dice — Good at keeping an eye on things. (Eyes always focused on something, never daydreams on the job)

Deborah Grierson

Airport Security Commissioner

Julio's superior. She reports directly to Jean-Christophe. Brooks no nonsense. Has no secrets of her own, except that she knows everyone else's. She's assembled one of the most complete and accurate secret databases on the island, with the info network to support it. She's frugal with her secrets, trading info only for more valuable other info. Could be in serious trouble with all sorts of dangerous individuals and organizations if they knew what she had on them.

Scots woman, age 62, 162 cm, 47 kg. Refined, small-boned.

Traits

Careful, 4 dice. (Speaks very little)

Lino Briazzi

Owner of Ariadne's Terminal Guides

"Ariadne's Terminal Guides" is a major guide service within the complex. Briazzi is fast-talking, cheerfully profane, drives a hard bargain. Dark secret: He is actually a synthetic pseudo-human built by the extra-dimensional coral creatures — hence his company's great skill at navigating the maze. He's their observer in the Terminal, which they see as a possible beachhead for colonization of this dimension. The coral entities are friendly and caring and haven't considered the fact that inhabitants of this dimension might object to their plans. In order to render this dimension comfortable, they are planning to "untwist" two spatial dimensions from their sub-atomic tangle, giving this universe a fifth and sixth dimension. This event, naturally, would alter every law of physics and cause untold confusion throughout the universe. But their plans, which Jean-Christophe is unaware of, are in the very early stages.

Fava Lakhdar

Freelance Guide

Ten years ago, Fava's father died of a heart attack during his customs interview as they returned from a trip abroad. Her mother had already passed away, some years before. Twelve years old and stranded, she wandered the terminal alone. Unlike most people, however, she did not get lost: She has a natural psychic talent that permits her to perceive and navigate the bizarre space of the Terminal.

This talent suits her perfectly to the job of Terminal guide. She is an independent guide; she has rejected Lino Briazzi's offers of employment with Ariadne's, preferring to do things her own way (but she is on friendly terms with him and other guides). To make sure she has steady income she works part-time at one of the Terminal's information kiosks.

Fava is aware that there are powerfully strange goings-on in the Terminal and Al Amarja. She also knows to keep quiet. As a guide, she has also encountered a fair bit of privileged information. She is occasionally hired to follow specific individuals around the Terminal, recording their movements and contacts. Fava does not know anything about the conspiracies behind her employment in these matters, nor does she care. It's just more money in her pocket.

Al Amarjan woman, age 22, 162 cm, 52 kg, brown eyes, tanned skin and long, reddish-brown wavy hair. She wears modest suits and an Airport Security ID badge that identifies her as an employee of the Terminal.

Languages: Al Amarjan Patois, English, Italian, Arabic (spoken only), French.

Hit Points: 12 (slight)

Traits

Direction Sense — Through psychic perception, Fava has an almost inerrant sense of direction. It's as though her mind constructs and records a topographical model of everywhere she goes, in three dimensions — or more, as she is even able to navigate the Terminal's constantly changing alien geography. (Her mind

must be able to model the changes as they happen, like plotting a fractal.) She has never gotten lost. This is a constant ability; it does not require psychic pool shots. (Can walk and read a book at the same time, without bumping into things)

Aaron Parker

Owner of Memphis

Memphis is one of the Terminal's hottest nightclubs. Parker likes luxury and is always surrounded by luscious babes and fawning employees. Secret: He is actually a legendary dead American rock'n'roll star, lying (comparatively) low until he accumulates enough worship energy to ascend to Godhood. Has heavy contacts in Al Amarja's "mystic s—t" community; will occasionally hire outsiders to perform missions of obscure metaphysical benefit.

White male, indeterminate age. Pudgy, black hair, sideburns.

Hit Points: 35 (divine stamina)

Psychic (Divine) Pool: 15 shots

Traits

Aura of Awe, 5 dice — One virtue of his near Godhood is his ability to elicit feelings of awe and adoration from others. Those who fall under his sway will do what they can to protect and aid him, even if it means betraying friends or allies. Tied to Divine Pool. (Seems impressive for no good reason)

Blessing — His blessing can cure warts, straighten curved spines, banish a bad stammer, and effect other relatively minor miracles. It is currently unreliable (up to the GM). This power will increase as he nears Godhood.

Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne

Recluse and Architect

With the physique of a scarecrow and the darting, rippling movement patterns of a squirrel, the tall, gaunt D'Aubainne is unmistakable to Terminal patrons. His usual garb consists of a long hide coat, goggle-like glasses, black jeans, high motorcycle boots, and a scarf. Although the Terminal's temperature control system

has never been known to deviate from comfy room temperature, D'Aubainne is always bundled up. His approach can sometimes be sensed by the nose far in advance of his appearance — perennially pre-occupied, he often neglects to bathe for weeks at a time. His concentration is fully devoted to various small improvements and changes his masterpiece seems continually to require. Perpetually guarded, the secrets of the Terminal remain his.

French man, age 57. See above for description.

Traits

Non-Euclidean — With the help of the coral-creatures, Jean-Christophe has transcended the length-width-breadth-time restrictions in which the rest of us are imprisoned. He can navigate through his Terminal flawlessly, but in the outside world he often has trouble taking the shortest distance between two points. Furthermore, he is attuned to the Terminal and can instinctively sense danger, trouble, and other phenomena. Luckily for his enemies, he is usually too obsessed over minor repairs to police his Terminal.

Resources — As a D'Aubainne, he gets what he wants. If he has serious enemies, he can have Mother's Loyal Defenders take them out. If he wants to impress someone, he can get an advance on his allowance and buy whatever it takes. He is, however, the least among the mightiest, and his sisters are happy to have him buried in his Terminal rather than competing for power on the surface.

Story Ideas

Story ideas? Hell, you could play your whole series without ever letting the PCs out of the Terminal. But there are a few points that perhaps should be emphasized.

- If PCs get in trouble with the C & I, they may be able to buy their way out of hot water by promising to do a little information-gathering for them. Specifically, there are some other newcomers to the island that look

suspicious. This lead-in could give a new PC a good reason to look for the other PCs and hang around with them.

- Aaron Parker is sponsoring a Marilyn Monroe look-alike contest. The contestant who wins will find herself kidnapped and taken to the site of a bizarre ritual, over which Parker presides. He then calls up the spirit of Monroe and allows it to possess the look-alike. After all, only one as cool as she would serve as his bride when he ascends to the first rank of Godhood. The PCs may be hired by Parker to help in the scheme, or perhaps hired to prevent it by a fierce rival of Parker's, someone who goes by the name of "the Lizard King."

D'AUBAINNE MUSEUM OF MODERN LIFE

Type: Public museum.

Rep: Always something different.

Brief: Part art museum. part sideshow; always something new to see. Not all exhibits are for the weak of heart.

Address: 1500 Dump Street, Great Men Barrio.

The Museum has many exhibits, some permanent and some temporary. They may include the following:

History of Fascism

History of Democracy, with

D'Aubainne depicted as the culmination of democratic thought and government

Diversity of Form, a freak show

Endangered Species, a display including a stuffed California condor, white rhinoceros, Komodo dragon, etc.

Magic: Humanity's Perennial

Superstition, a display of "magical" devices and symbols throughout history and throughout the world. One device sends a signal to the Center for Paranormal Control (p. 61) when a magically capable person looks at it. Video cameras identify the

person, who may then be taken in for questioning.

Story Idea

The museum has an exhibit that relates to an interest of a PC. At the museum, that PC may meet a GMC who is also interested in the same topic: a potential ally, rival, or enemy.

D'AUBAINNE UNIVERSITY

Type: University.

Rep: Too liberal, too conservative, too student-oriented, too devoted to research over teaching, too exclusive, too inclusive, too elitist. The university has enough varied students and faculty to allow just about any negative opinion to be held, depending on the person holding the opinion.

Brief: The university serves two purposes. As the public is well aware, it serves as a center of learning, both in terms of new research and education. Her Exaltedness, however, also sees to it that the university furthers her goals, including screening students for potential agents and specialists in her service, developing dossiers on potential enemies in the student body, and keeping the progress of science under her easy observation.

Address: Plaza of Science

The Student Body

Students distinguish themselves from Al Amarjans in general by their self-indulgence, naïveté, and belief that they are smarter than everyone else.

Two fraternities and two sororities dominate the student body. The fraternities are Sigma Omicron Beta (jocks, p. 164) and Delta Epsilon Theta (nihilists, p. 118), and their respective sister sororities are Sigma Epsilon Xi (fluff chicks, p. 164) and Alpha Rho Tau (art chicks, p. 109).

The Faculty

All types of professors can be found here, but you can rely on the wisdom of "Those who cannot do, teach" to judge the average competence of the faculty. Of course, certain professors are plants from various conspiracies who have received a position in order to gain easier access to supplies and information (or to impressionable minds). Some of them may have been offered teaching positions by the administration strictly so that the government could keep a closer eye on them.

In recent years a rumor has arisen that some members of the faculty

The Administration

The administration keeps close tabs on the faculty and students of the university, often resorting to operatives stationed among the janitorial staff to obtain secret information. Each faculty member and student has a file in the administrative center detailing their political beliefs, romantic history, and contacts with undesirables. Officially the administration encourages a free and uncensored play of ideas among the faculty and student body, which allows them to see what these people really believe and to identify troublemakers.

Naturally, the administration reports to Monique D'Aubainne.

The Human Genome Project

This project is an attempt to map human DNA, identifying which sequences relate to which physical and mental traits. Included in this project are three members of the Philosopher's Stone: Gregory Northrup, Timothy DeConcini, and Dr. Thomas Rambeau. See p. 151.

GMCs

Jack Coogan

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 15-16.

Federico Georno

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 29-30.

Prof. Giorgos Antonia Hamati

Professor of Political Science

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 30-32.

Hun Ku-Gong

Part-Time History Lecturer

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 34-36.

Dr. Paulo Montserrat

See *Earthlings*, p. 123.

Lance Nuer

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 58-59.

Angela Reyes

Future Inventor of the Throckmorton Device

She is currently studying quantum physics and psychology at the D'Aubainne University. Her current investigations center around the relation between quantum level physics and observer input. Though she has sometimes received criticism for her work's outrageous nature, most of that flak has come from stodgy professors who cannot understand what she's doing.

She knows nothing of the Throckmorton Device and has no idea that, even now, it is shaping her life.

Al Amarjan woman, age 24, 159 cm, 45 kg, thin; long, brown hair; small face.

Languages: English and a bit of German.

Traits

Guided by the Throckmorton Device — The device's effects guide her in making the discoveries she needs to make in order to invent the device in the first place. It also protects her from harm, usually by influencing neurotransmitters (and thus thoughts) in those around her. Very rarely, and only in dire need, is the device capable of affecting large-scale events, such as deflecting a knife so that it hits her arm instead of her heart. This influence all but proves



that she will indeed create the Throckmorton Device because if she were not going to invent it, it couldn't protect her. It is therefore impossible for her to be killed or to suffer permanent brain damage. (Gets lucky breaks)

Fringe Psychology & Physics, 1 die — She is good, but could not do what she does with the Device's subtle aid. (Pre-occupied with weird theories)

Charlotte Ritelli

Assistant Instructor of Psychology
See *Wildest Dreams*, pp. 31-33.

Dr. Marian Ross

Neurosurgeon
See "The Hive" (in *The Myth of Self*), p. 29.

Dr. Gil Wheeler

Fringe Entomologist
See "The Hive" (in *The Myth of Self*), pp. 28-29.

Story Idea

The PCs may find it useful to consult the library and professors at the University when they run across mysteries that may be solved with specialized knowledge. Rest assured that their inquiries will not remain unnoticed.

DMITRI'S FIX-IT SHOP

Type: Repair shop.

Rep: Dmitri is a crazy old Greek who ekes out a living repairing things with unschooled technique.

Brief: Dmitri Vatsavos does indeed make his living repairing whatever is brought before him, but he has a secret love: invention. His basement laboratory is full of bizarre and unlikely devices in various states of design and assembly. Unschooled in the ways of science, electricity, mechanics, and business, he does everything by instinct. That his preposterous inventions work at

all (or his repairs, for that matter) testifies to some perhaps psychic aptitude, but he thinks nothing of his strange talent for fixing and inventing things.

Address: 171 North-Northeast Court, Four Points Barrio

Through the dusty pane glass window one can see a room full of various mechanical and electric items: televisions, blenders, toasters, radios, vacuum cleaners, garbage disposals, etc. Some of this "junk" is for sale, items that Dmitri has bought and repaired for resale. The rest are pieces waiting for his attention, or already fixed and waiting for their owners.

The insignia of the Dog-Face Troupe is displayed on his window, warning that those who mess with him might find their faces bitten off by maniacal baboons.

GMCs

Dmitri Vatsavos

Fringe inventor

Friendly and garrulous to the point of being tedious. He hates Satanists with a passion and has the guts to refuse to serve them.

Greek man, age 65, 165 cm, 55 kg, a wizened man with olive skin and sparse, white hair. Dust cakes the deep wrinkles on his neck.

Languages: Greek, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 1 die, X1 damage

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 9

Traits

Unconventional Invention & Repair, 3 dice — Weird, unpredictable, often producing unreliable devices. (Never explains how he intends to fix something)

Old and Frail — He gets one fewer die than normal on rolls requiring physical exertion.

Molly, Queen-Mother of

Baboons

See the Dog-Face Troupe (p. 118).

Dr. Morpheus

A frequent visitor of Dmitri's. See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 44-46.

Story Idea

The PCs bring some device to Dmitri to fix. He not only fixes it but gives it some unreliable but useful power. For instance, a broken cellular phone might be repaired so that it not only works, but can project harmful sonic beams. Now figuring out how to elicit and direct these beams, there's the trick.

DUNKELBURG'S SECURITY

Type: Private Security.

Rep: Reliable, unswerving, merciless.

Brief: Dunkelburg's Security guards the entire Broken Wings Barrio, issuing passes for inhabitants and qualified visitors, checking people for those passes, and dealing quickly and quietly with anyone who threatens to disturb the rest and relaxation of the very wealthy.

Address: 120 Plaza of Broken Wings

This security business gets only the highest marks for performance, style, politeness, and efficiency. They trade information readily with the Peace Force. Naturally, several organizations have operatives within the ranks, including the Movers.

GMCs

Average Dunkelburg Guard

They wear black suits, sunglasses, black hats, and a variety of weapons concealed under their jackets. Gear includes armor for their suits, a tonfu, handcuffs, a radio-link in the hat, and throwing knives. Crossbows and tasers are carried in cars or during dangerous situations. They patrol on foot or in highly polished sedans.

Most are big Al Amarjan or southern European men, very well-groomed.

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois, and some other European (not African) language.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (physical training)

Armor: 1 die

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice. (Well-armed)

Spotting Trouble, 4 dice —

Includes spotting concealed weapons, telling when someone is lying, noticing unusual behavior, etc. (Disdain for those who try to get something over on them)

Story Ideas

The PCs need to get into Broken Wings, but at least one of them has been black-balled and they cannot get

the passes. The PCs may try to dress as sharply as possible and hope they don't get stopped for an ID check, or they may try to cut a deal with an executive at Dunkelburg's. If they are lucky (?), the executive is an operative who will get them passes in exchange for "favors."

E-Z SLEEP

Type: Hotel.

Rep: A cheap hotel with negligent service.

Brief: E-Z Sleep is the center of kergillian activity on Al Amarja. They run a hotel here to keep kergillian visitors and guests from attracting attention with their arrivals and departures, but they make sure the service is so poor that few who are not there on "business" will stay long. It also serves as the only MDA-Cubed factory on the island.

Location: 2519 Pogrom Lane, Four Points

A three-story structure with of decaying brick. The red dagger decal of Safe N Sound is displayed prominently, showing would-be burglars that E-Z Sleep has top-notch security protection. The Dog-Face symbol is also present, proving that the folks at E-Z Sleep pay their protection money.

The first floor and second floor are normal, albeit well weathered. Strange stains, universally gray with years of dust, decorate the threadbare runners in the corridors. The rooms are narrow, and dingy windows, often painted shut, look out onto the blank walls of neighboring buildings. Room service generally takes about an hour.

The third floor and the basement are home to some interesting kergillian activities.

E-Z Sleep Prices

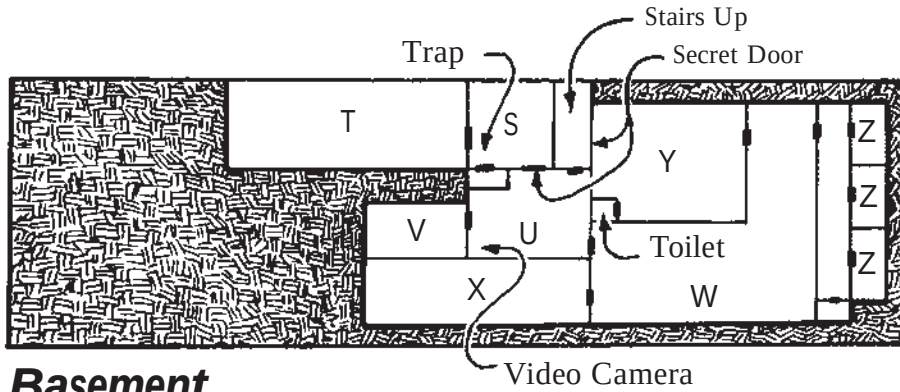
Single: \$39/night. No weekly rates.

Double: \$59/night. No weekly rates.

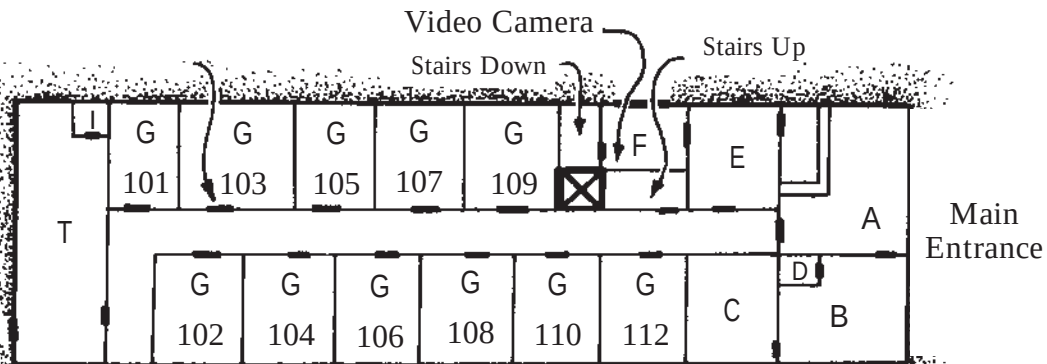
No hourly rates.

Phone: 25¢ per local call, pay in advance.

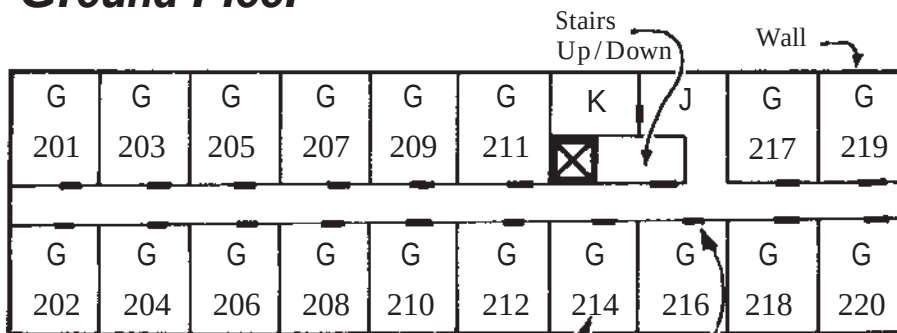
Laundry: \$3/load.



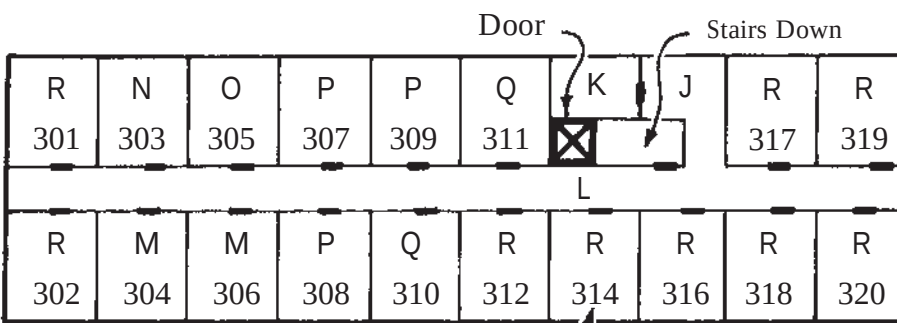
Scale:
1 centimeter
= 3.5 meters



Ground Floor



Second Floor



Third Floor

North
▲

P
E
E
S
Z
E

Room Service: poor food at double normal prices.

Key to E-Z Sleep Map

Exterior

E-Z Sleep faces east, looking out over Pogrom Lane. On the south is parking for guests. The parking would be insufficient if the hotel were at capacity, or if more of the guests drove cars. On the north side is a service alley, and to the rear (west) is the service entrance for the cleaning and maintenance staff.

On the roof is an antenna for transmitting messages to and receiving them from the Red Orca (see p. 134).

First Floor

A. Lobby. Through the grimy glass doors is a well-worn lobby. The stuffing in the furniture is sprouting forth from holes in the upholstery, and the scent of stale smoke fills the place, coming primarily from ash trays that should have been emptied last month. Adding to the decor, a low-life or zoner may be sitting here, doing nothing much in particular. A battered wooden door on the left leads to the hotel's diner.

At the far end of the lobby is the aging front desk. Matthew Airraid, ignoring newcomers and paging through a skin mag, usually mans the front desk. He responds to guests only after being called two or three times, at which point he can give guests rooms on the first or second floor.

B. Diner. The diner, to the left of the lobby as one enters, is dirty, and the chairs' legs are uneven, causing them to rock. Service here is poor, except for "regulars." Zoners and low-lives sometimes come here for jumped or deep espresso; they don't feel out of place in such a run-down cafe. The kergillians appreciate the presence of the down and out because zoners are too incompetent to notice anything strange, and the low-lives make regular customers and guests uneasy.

This would be a good spot for a spontaneous, irrelevant encounter with a spaced-out GMC. Perhaps this encounter will lead to more important events in the future.

Romance novels, pornographic books, cheap science fiction paperbacks, and small press 'zines are displayed for sale on a rotating metal rack.

C. Kitchen. Not for the faint of heart.

D. Restroom. Ditto.

E. Business. Behind the front desk is a locked door leading to the business rooms of the hotel, and within these rooms is a door that leads to the basement. These rooms and doors are guarded by video cameras and alarms that feed to Safe N Sound headquarters, the third floor, and the Red Orca.

F. Service Entrance. As far as the normal functions of the hotel are concerned, this service entrance is poorly placed, but it does allow the kergillians to get Betelguesans, prisoners, and extraterrestrial technology to and from the basement easily. It also allows taking MDA-Cubed in bulk out of the hotel.

G. Guest Rooms. Not mind-bogglingly disgusting, but not comfortable, either. At any given time, there is roughly a 40% chance that any given room is checked out (a roll of 8 or better on 2 dice). Whether anyone is actually in the room is primarily a function of the time of day. Noteworthy guests may include: a Mover under deep cover as a desperate low-life who has checked in to E-Z Sleep to get a better understanding of the operation; a paranoid who, under the influence of too many of the wrong drugs, butchers anyone who enters the room, including the cleaning staff (oh my!); a kergillian host posing as a guest in order to keep on eye on things; a world-famous movie star who has escaped from her oppressive husband and is hiding out in E-Z Sleep, hoping it's the last place anyone would look (her bodyguard is present); or anyone else who advances your evil schemes.

H. Maintenance. Where sheets and towels are cleaned, mops and tools are stored, furniture repaired, etc. The cleaning staff is not controlled by kergillians; they are mostly low-lives who are provided with MDA-Cubed and a vacant hotel room once a week, provided that they keep their mouths shut about what they might see in the hotel. The third floor residents pile their dirty clothes and linens in the hall so that the staff does not see what is in the rooms. Some of them have guessed, but they have little reason to spill the beans.

I. Restroom.

Second Floor

G. Guest Rooms. As first floor.
J. Vending Machines and Ice.
K. Storage.

Third Floor

L. Hallway. This hallway resembles those of the lower floors, but it is guarded. Depending on which host is available, the guard may appear to be a drunk lying in his own vomit, a leering psychopathic Satanist, or some other persona designed to make people uncomfortable. Regardless of the guard's appearance, he makes a ruckus when someone he doesn't recognize comes to the floor, thus alerting the hosts in the rooms. The guard is intended to make those who are wandering through or on the wrong floor feel uncomfortable and to get them to leave without force.

M. These two rooms are laboratories where MDA-Cubed is made. Each laboratory includes a kergillian-tech machine resembling a small oven with bluish coils in place of a heating element. This machine "cooks" the MDA-Cubed with a process unfamiliar to human science. Other chemical processes, however, can be performed with earth-tech, so these laboratories also have flasks, heating pans, and other laboratory paraphernalia. When a new batch of raw MDA-Cubed is finished, it is taken across the hall for processing and packaging.

One host works in each lab (see GMCs, below, for stats).



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

N. In this room, the MDA-Cubed is pressed into forms, and the distinctive red heart is hand-painted on. The MDA-Cubed is then packaged in bags of ten or one hundred pills. A single host may be here, or in the packaging room (O). See “Kergillian Gofer” under GMCs, below, for stats.

O. Storage. MDA-Cubed that has been packaged is stored here until sale. It generally contains between 200 and 1000 units at any given time.

P. Living Quarters. These rooms house the hosts who run the

MDA-Cubed laboratory. A quick look at one of these rooms shows that it is a permanent residence, as the inhabitants have hung their own pictures on the walls, brought in their own televisions and stereos, and given these rooms a “lived in” look.

Q. Guardrooms. These guards are completely-dominated hosts who are assigned to protect the MDA-Cubed factory from such forces as the Net. At any time there are four to six guards in these rooms. These guards also accompany operatives when delivering MDA-Cubed, or make the deliveries themselves.

A small video display relays images from the cameras below. A hidden switch allows a guard to send a silent alarm to Safe N Sound. Agents from that service will arrive within one minute (twenty rounds) after the alarm is flipped.

R. Unoccupied Rooms. The amount of dust on the beds makes it clear that these rooms have not been used in a long time.

Basement

S. Innocuous Storage. At the top of the stairs is a keypad on the wall. Unless one presses the right code within three seconds after opening the door, an alarm goes off in the guardroom on the third floor and the communications center (rooms Q & Y). Disarming the alarm requires the proper equipment, fast reflexes, and a roll that beats the GM’s roll on 3 dice. Note that this alarm does not lead to Safe N Sound, as the kergillians do not want them learning about this area.

The room below is full of broken fans awaiting repair, a spare laundry cart, and other uninteresting devices. The trapped door reads “Absolutely No Admittance.” Behind it is a stun ray that hits anyone who opens the door. Roll 4 dice for the ray’s strength against someone standing in front of the door, and fewer dice the farther the ray has to travel. If it beats a PCs toughness roll, he is knocked unconscious.

The secret door opens electronically when one finds the hidden switch near the floor. (Beat the GM’s roll of 3 dice to find it, though a thorough search will find it eventually.)

Only the secret door on the south wall can be found from this room. The secret door on the east (under the stairs, not marked on the map) can only be found and opened from Room Y.

T. Plumbing. Hot water heaters, plumbing, fuse box, tools; just what one might expect in the basement of a hotel.

U. Hallway. Nothing unusual, except the video camera in one corner near the ceiling.

V. Weird Storage. Raw ingredients for MDA-Cubed. These chemicals are stored in rounded crates made of a hard, glass-like plastic. Metal plates on the boxes have kergillian writing on them.

W. Betelguesan Room. Humidifiers fill the air with mist, which glows red from the lights that illuminate the room. Anyone coming through this room must face the Betelguesans, who attack intruders without quarter. (For a complete description, see p. 135.) The humid air and reddish light replicate the natural environment for the Betelguesans, and should serve to give PCs the creeps. There are probably two to four Betelguesans here (see GMCs for stats).

A fight with these strange creatures in a dark, mist-filled basement should scare the PCs, if not kill them outright.

X. Betelguesan Quarters. The Betelguesans live here. In the floor are wide, shallow pools of brine, serving as beds for the Betelguesans. For the Betelguesans' amusement there are a large instrument like a sturdy harp, an over-sized game resembling checkers or chess, and easels and painting equipment. (These Betelguesans are quite artistic.)

Y. Communications Center. This room holds the information on the kergillian front on Al Amarja, including information on the School of True Sensation and the identities of some (but not all) kergillian hosts on the island. It boasts a computer, telephones, video monitors linked to the cameras in E-Z Sleep, and a video link to Red Orca. It may hold one to seven kergillian operatives at any time.

There is a toilet in the corner.

Z. Cells. These cells could contain anyone who suits your purposes: a friend of the PCs (which might be their motive for investigating E-Z Sleep), beautiful young women for macho PCs to rescue, involuntary kergillian hosts who will be used as plants once the kergillian has complete control of their brains, captured operatives from other conspiracies, and so on.

Breaking and Entering

E-Z Sleep is not set up as a cakewalk for neophyte to breeze through. Inexperienced PCs who try to break in without sufficient reconnaissance may find themselves slaughtered.

In defending themselves, the kergillians first try to keep people out altogether. Their headquarters are well-disguised and fairly well protected. But once someone has seen some of their operation, they then try to trap the intruders in the hotel. Some operatives here believe that their leaders at the Red Orca have explosives in the hotel they can detonate if things look bad.

Clues

- Workers delivering more food than should be necessary for the hotel, or strange food, such as raw beef carcasses. This is food for the Betelguesan guards.
- E-Z Sleep has an antenna on the roof, but no televisions for the guests.
- The keys for rooms hang behind the front desk. On the third floor, the same rooms are always "checked out," and the same ones are always "vacant." And no one the PCs know ever gets a room on the third floor.

GMCs

Matthew Airraid

Slimy Desk Clerk

A thin fellow whose complexion falls somewhere between tan European and light African, one of the many inhabitants of Al Amarja whose bloodline is too diverse to determine. His strange surname is a product of Monique D'Aubainne's imposition of English on the island decades ago; his father, who spoke no English, changed his name to "Airraid" at the suggestion of a "helpful" government registrar.

While his most common expression on Airraid's face is boredom, the sensitive may be able to detect quiet desperation within. He is an addict of

MDA-Cubed, supplied by his employers. The kergillians employ him because he is too mentally limited to worry about what they are up to, and desperate enough for MDA-Cubed that his loyalty is ensured. In fact, they once injected him with an MDA-Cubed blocker, making him insensitive to the effects of the drug. The resulting impotence scared all thought of betrayal out of Airraid's mind.

He has a hatchet under the front desk with which he can defend himself.

Al Amarjan man, age 36, 170 cm, 67 kg. Black hair, light brown skin, greasy face, often leers, wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage (hatchet)

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14

Traits

Persistent Seducer, 3 dice —

Ungifted with good looks or charm, he uses unashamed persistence to woo his lovers, along with promises of MDA-Cubed. (Stares at women)

Dull — He rarely pays any attention to what is going on around him, or within him, for that matter. Penalty die on perception actions. (Often absorbed in skin mags)

Kamorro N'Duban

Kergillian Supervisor

A Moroccan completely dominated by her kergillian, one of the first to receive an implant. She supervises the Al Amarjan invasion, under the direction of Haraki Sumanoto, who stays on the Red Orca. N'Duban supplies Al Amarja with MDA-Cubed, supervises operatives who are exploring and infiltrating the various groups on the island, and investigates potential threats to the invasion.

She operates out of E-Z Sleep.

Moroccan woman, age 22, 163 cm, 60 kg.

Languages: Arabic, English.

Attack: 3 dice + bonus, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice + bonus
Hit Points: 24 (tough, resists pain)

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice (plus bonus). (In good shape)

Manipulation, 4 dice (plus bonus)
— Includes everything from deception on a face-to-face level to keeping a group of varied operatives in line. (Seems trustworthy)

Kergillian Implant — Bonus die on many actions. The implant is psychologically addicted to caffeine. (Very perceptive)

Kergillian Lab Workers and Gofers

Attack: 2 dice + bonus, X2 damage (knife)

Defense: 2 dice + bonus

Hit Points: 15 (can bypass most pain)

Kergillian Guards

Attack: 3 dice + bonus, X3 damage (machete)

Defense: 3 dice + bonus

Hit Points: 26 (can bypass most pain)

Armor: 1 point (leathers)

Betelguesans

Attack: 5 dice, X3 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 45

Armor: 2 dice

Kergillian Operatives

Attack: 3 dice + bonus, X2 or X3 damage.

Defense: 3 dice + bonus

Hit Points: 25

Story Ideas

A burglar tries to sell goods to the PCs, items he recently stole from E-Z Sleep. Something highly unusual is among the collection of items, and the burglar is reticent about the identity of the place he burgled. Soon the burglar winds up dead, and someone

is looking for the PCs to find out what they know.

FIRST SCHOOL OF TRUE SENSATION

Type: Fringe school

Reputation: Some swear by it; others think it's a scam.

Brief: The school offers to heighten the senses of its students. It is actually a front for the kergillians in search of recruits.

Address: 2712 Welt Lane, Flowers Barrio

While pretending to teach students to improve their senses, the instructors keep their eyes peeled for those who might want to receive a kergillian implant. Those who apply for admission, pay the fees, and put up with weeks of frustrating and pointless lessons, all for the promise of increased sensation, are those who are most likely to want to gain a kergillian implant. The instructors, therefore, look over the students and direct other kergillian operatives to contact those who seem most likely to accept the offer.

The school does not make enough money to pay the instructors well, but the kergillians fund their activities on the side.

Gaining Admission

Those who wish to become students fill out applications and pay the \$15 application fee. The application asks about health, motivation, ability to pay, drug habits, whether one has gone through the course before, etc. Those who have debilitating conditions that make them unsuitable as kergillian hosts are sent rejection letters, but nearly everyone who applies and is willing to pay \$1,500 for the four week course is admitted.

Once admitted, the student has one-hour courses Monday through Friday, at 10 AM, 2 PM, or 6 PM. The full course lasts four weeks, and it includes rigorous practices to be undertaken at home, including abstinence from most drugs (especially

blue shock). By the end of four weeks, the only students who have noticed any improvement are those who have fooled themselves into believing their senses are sharper. The kergillians also often have "plants" in the sessions who pose as students. These students, naturally, show heightened senses at the end of the course, and thus maintain the school's reputation. They also help evaluate potential hosts, often befriending some of the other students.

The course consists of meditating on nonsense syllables, concentration exercises, focusing on various sensations, fasting, saunas, and exercise. They include "field trips" to bars or other public areas where students try to maintain their concentration in the midst of noise and activity.

By the end of the course, the instructors and the plants, if any, know who to finger as a potential host, and the kergillians contact these (un)fortunate few.

Key to the First School of True Sensation

Ground Floor

A. Entry Hall. Ms. Allemi sits at the desk handling phone calls, directing potential students, and so forth. She listens to Karla Sommers on a Walkman.

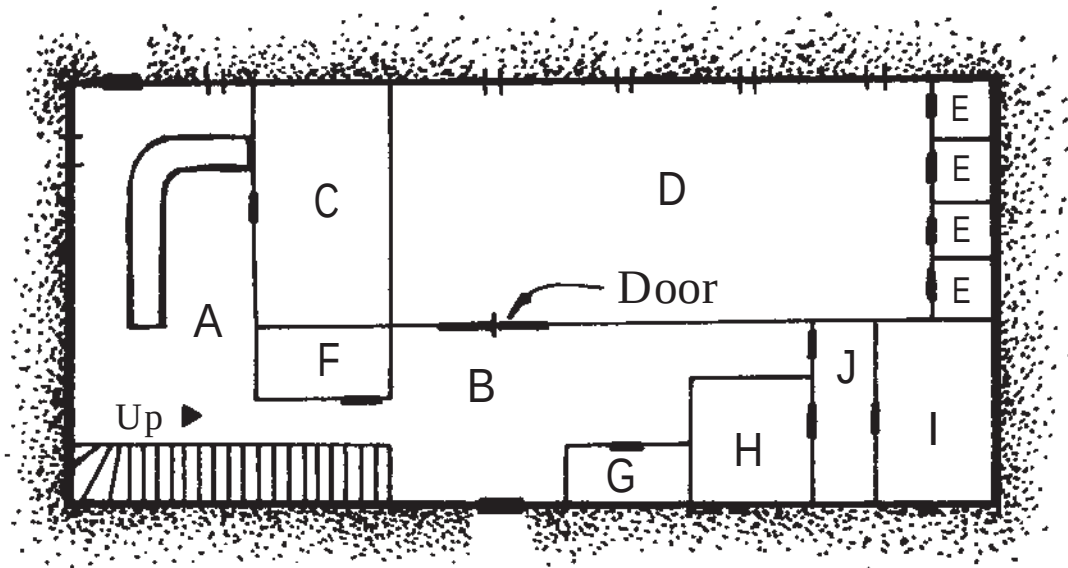
B. Waiting Area. Classy, understated furniture and outdated magazines are here for the comfort of those who are waiting for class, waiting to see an instructor, or whatever.

An emergency exit (locked to the outside) in on the west wall.

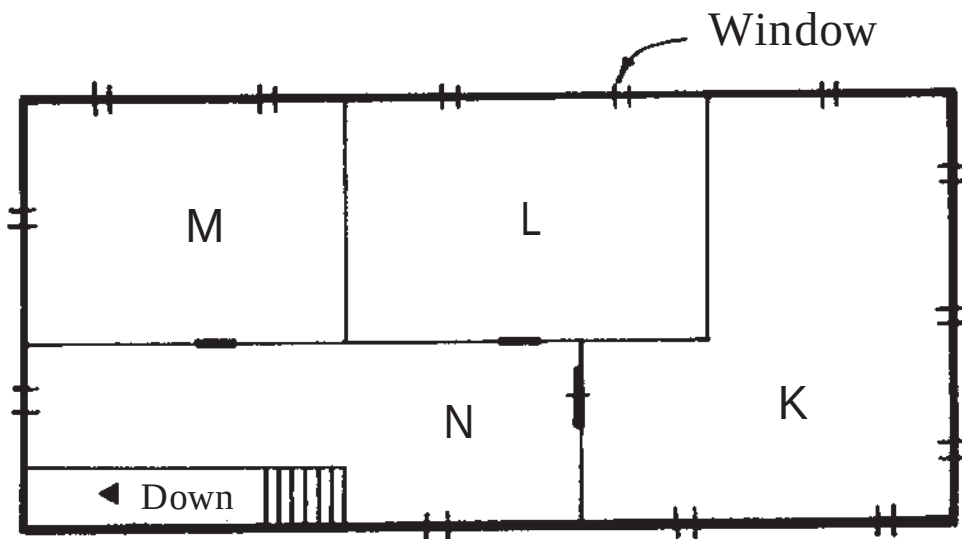
C. Here Allemi keeps old (and innocuous) files, has her lunch break, and so on.

D. Training Hall. Cushions cover the floor and abstract art pieces plaster the walls. A storage cabinet contains equipment for sensation training: a stereo system, incense, strobe lights, spices, and cloths of various textures.

FIRST SCHOOL OF TRUE SENSATION



Ground Floor



Second Floor

North
▲

Scale: 1 centimeter = 2.5 meters

Pane glass windows look out onto Pogrom Lane, but the blinds are drawn for certain “secret” parts of the training program.

E. Isolation Booths. Simply closets for isolation, part of the training program.

F. Storage closet. Cleaning equipment.

G. Restroom.

H. Sauna.

I. Showers.

J. Dressing Room.

Upper Floor

K. Advanced Training Hall. By invitation for especially promising students.

L. Instructors’ Office. Locked, with silent motion-detector alarm alerting Safe N Sound and Red Orca. Once there is any appreciable motion in the room, the alarm will go off in 30 seconds unless someone turns the proper key in this little device. The device itself is a small box on a desk that is easy to overlook amid the clutter. Picking the lock on the device within 30 seconds prevents the alarm from being set off. Safe N Sound agents will respond within one to two minutes after the alarm goes off (twenty to forty rounds).

This simple office serves the needs of the schools instructors (including Ben Feather-on-Wind), both for keeping records and socializing. It includes a table on which rests a coffee pot and some snacks, a small refrigerator, and several desks.

File cabinets contain files on students and former students, but nothing incriminating.

M. Shagasemi’s Office. Locked, with silent motion-detector alarm like that in the instructors’ office.

Normal office, with a fax machine for sending and receiving kergillian language transcripts. Also a lot of ashes in the waste paper basket, since Shagasemi burns those notes he doesn’t take with him to his residence. File cabinets reveal financial data, examination of which shows that the School pays its instructors very little.

In a locked drawer in Shagasemi’s desk is a vial of a powerful sedative, slipped into a drink for those people whom Shagasemi wants to disappear.

N. Hallway. Prints adorn the walls.

GMCS

Farahda Allemi

Secretary

Selected for the job for her lack of imagination and inquisitiveness. PCs are most likely to interact with her, as she answers the phones, hands out applications, etc. She has no interest in the sensation training, devoting her imagination totally to musings about Karla Sommers’s music; she is a Sommerite. For self-defense, she carries mace.

Libyan woman, age 22, 160 cm, 66 kg, pudgy, wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Languages: Arabic, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Clerical Duties, 4 dice. (Pencil behind the ear)

Good at Partying 4 dice. (Frequently interrupted by personal calls from admirers)

Ben Feather-on-Wind

Instructor

Though he has abandoned his ties to the Cherokee nation, he often wears the stereotypical garb of the Sioux (what everyone sees on Westerns and thinks of as “Indian”) just for show. His name is also an invention. His garb always includes a well-sharpened bowie knife.

Cherokee man, age 31, 180 cm, 77 kg. Stocky, with intense, dark eyes and a long, black braid, wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Languages: US English, Al Amarjan patois, a few Native American words (picked up from Westerns).

Attack: 2 or 3 dice + bonus, X2 damage (knife)

Defense: 2 or 3 dice + bonus

Hit Points: 15 (can bypass most pain)

Traits

Good Reflexes, 3 dice. (Snatches things when they are about to fall)

Good Judge of Character, 3 dice. (Asks people about themselves)

Kergillian Implant — Bonus die on above traits and others related to resisting pain, reflexes, or perception. He is completely dominated. (Weird urges)

Weird Urges — Due to his extensive kergillian implant, he often gets strange urges, such as to eat coffee grounds or to burst into manic physical activity. To any non-kergillians present, he explains that the exercises necessary to maintain his improved senses are sometimes misunderstood by the uninitiated. (Strange behavior)

Havani Shagasemi

Founder & Leader of the School

The highest ranking kergillian host living on Al Amarja, he is primarily responsible for identifying potential recruits (a sensitive business).

He wears a stun ring, a large gold and ruby ring on his right hand. It is powered remotely by a belt he wears under his clothes, and stuns on contact with human skin. (Roll 4 dice for its strength.)

Iranian man, age 56, 168 cm, 60 kg. His once-dark hair is now almost entirely gray. He dresses in dark, conservative suits that hug his body tightly, even in the heat of summer, and wears the red dagger badge of Safe N Sound.

Languages: Persian (Farsi), English

Attacks: 4 dice + bonus, X1 or X2 damage

Defense: 4 dice + bonus

Hit Points: 30 (dense and tough)

Traits

Brawling, 4 dice — He brawls much better than his frame would suggest, thanks to years of life on the wrong side of the law before he came to Al Amarja. (Wiry physique)

Kergillian Implant — Bonus on coordination, perception, resisting pain, etc. (Those who can normally read people's faces find his somehow disturbing.)

Weird-Outs — Periodically, the remnants of Mr. Shagasemi's human brain vie for control with the kergillian, causing him great confusion and paranoia. (Spaces out occasionally)

Story Ideas

PCs who are attracted to the prospect of keener sense may apply unwittingly. Perhaps they even get "invited" to have a kergillian implant, an offer that few refuse and live to tell about it.

Infiltrating the School may be difficult, as the instructors are very watchful, almost paranoid. Gaining admittance as students is easy enough, but learning more is difficult. If they feel threatened, Shagasemi will greet suspected infiltrators privately and individually and attempt to knock them out when they shake hands. If the PCs set off the alarms in the offices, Red Orca dispatches kergillian operatives from nearby to arrive to note the identities of the PCs. These operatives will allow Safe N Sound to do their job, or get the PCs later if Safe N Sound fails to capture them, but they will not attack intruders for fear of drawing more attention to the school.

GIOVANNI'S CABS

Type: Taxi service.

Rep: Affordable, and you get what you pay for. At least they're friendly.

Brief: For those who can't afford Total Taxi, or think that there's something fishy about those guys, there's Giovanni's cabs.

Address: 562 Fishery Lane, Sunken Barrio

Dirty, a bit smelly, given to making strange noises, have seen better days — these terms describe both the cabs and cabbies at Giovanni's. But if it's just a decent ride you want, you'll

stay within budget by taking Giovanni's.

How does Giovanni Mancini do it? Somehow he finds dependable, honest, hard-working, friendly people in the Edge and gets them to work for him. He even gets them, without exception, to adhere to company policy on a special matter: no tips accepted. The policy-determined response to an offer of a tip is, "No thanks, Mac. A fair price for a fair ride is all we ask."

While the cabbies that work at Giovanni's may be good employees, they are not the kind of people you would invite to a ritzy party with your boss in attendance. They are prone to belching, smoking cigars that look and smell something like dog droppings, scratching themselves in unseemly places, expectorating with enthusiasm, forgetting to shave, forgetting to bathe, audibly admiring the physical characteristics of attractive fares, and arguing passionately about sports — and the male drivers are even worse. Nevertheless, they do all of the above (save argue) with a smile.

Characters may, from time to time, find themselves trying to tempt a cabbie with bribes or promises of favors. If so, they will find the cabbies singularly stubborn in their refusal to compromise their fares or involve themselves in anything so dangerous that people are willing to pay for information. Keep in mind that the cabbies enjoy sharing their opinions of people they see in the street, places they pass, neighborhoods they pass through, bars that come into view, and well-proportioned members of the opposite (usually) gender. If a fare casually mentions, say, Dr. Nusbaum or the Glorious Lords, the cabbie is likely to respond at length, without invitation, on the virtues and vices of the person or people under discussion. Offering a cabbie money, however, is the only known way to shut them up. Their most common way to refuse a bribe is, "Now looky here, Mac. One thing I do know is that you're doing something dangerous here, and I don't want to mess myself up in it. I mean, what if next guy I pick up, he starts

asking about you, and he pulls this big knife, now then I'm gonna let him know what you know, and you wouldn't like that, and neither would I. But if I can say to the guy that I just took you some place and we didn't have no kind of conversation 'cept maybe about them dames back there on Offal and Splay, why then I'm safe and so are you. And isn't that just better for all of us? So go ahead and keep that money and I'll keep what you pay me for the ride."

Cabbies, however, will resist threats of violence with only normal resolve.

So what's Mancini's secret? How does he get these employees? If you ask him, he'll say he doesn't even know. Is he a psychic who molds others to his will? Does he lace their coffee with psychoactive drugs? Does he just know how to pick 'em? Nobody knows.

GMCs

Giovanni Mancini

Proprietor

A big, beefy Italian with all the traits his cabbies are famed for. He is friendly, but usually too busy to show it.

Italian male, age 51, 173 cm, 73 kg.

Languages: Italian, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Trait

Giovanni's Secret — Whether it's a psychic power, a natural talent, or some scheme, he has some way of making his employees unusual in their work attitudes. 3 dice? 4 dice? More? Who knows?

Sally Undokku

Cabbie

A cabbie that the PCs might run into. She is pudgy, wears a fair portion of her last several meals on her shirt, and has been known to eject fares from her cab if they disagree with her personal interpretation of Freudian psychology.

Kenyan woman, age 25, 164 cm, 66 kg.

Languages: Swahili, English, Kikuyu, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

City Knowledge, 3 dice — She is familiar not only with the streets and alleyways of the Edge, but also with the people that live there. She will not, however, offer information about people that she believes to be dangerous. (Talks about landmarks she passes)

Past the interior doors are three rooms where weapons are displayed, all of it in locked showcases that run along the walls or jut out into the room. Thick wire walls rise up from the edge of these showcases to the ceiling, protecting the clerks from would-be assailants. The clerks have access to all the showcases, and will obligingly pull out any weapons that customers may wish to see, and can pass them out to prospective purchasers through “lazy Susans.”

The first room of Gun Metal is the largest. Here are displayed the more casual and common weaponry favored by Al Amarjans. Knives of every sort and length lie in neat rows, and blunt instruments are also in profusion for those who appreciate the firm vibration they transmit through the bones of the hand when they contact the human skull.

To the right is a smaller room where various types of armor are displayed. You can buy most of these off the shelf, though custom pieces

Story Idea

When the Throckmorton Device assumes increasing power on Al Amarja, Giovanni and his employees may be some of the first to fall, or they may be a last bastion of common sense. Characters who take Giovanni’s cabs may find the cabbies gradually changing in demeanor into clean-cut fascist wannabes, or find them increasingly under attack by those the device dominates.

GUN METAL

Type: Weapons Shop.

Rep: A great place to browse or buy.

Brief: Gun Metal provides all range of legal weaponry and armor for Al Amarjans. Note that bullet-proof armor is illegal and is therefore not sold here.

Address: 596 Pogrom Lane, Four Points

Behind vast panes of glass reinforced with wire net, passersby on Pogrom Lane can see an intriguing display of knives, saps, cudgels, “walking sticks,” hatchets, swords, sais, throwing stars, brass knuckles, nun-chuks, elbow spikes, steel-tipped boots, and varieties of personal armor. Blazing in neon over the doors are the words “GUN METAL.”

Through the double-doors is a small entryway with a booth to one side and locked doors that lead into the store proper. If you ring the handy doorbell, a clerk will come, look you over, and open the inner doors electronically (provided you don’t look like serious trouble).



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

are available for a significant increase in price.

To the left of the main room are the more exotic weapons: katanas, crossbows, cattle prods, tasers, and battle axes. A sleek chainsaw hangs on the wall for anyone so unfamiliar with such a tool as to believe that it would be a dependable weapon in combat. (Remember that the pull created when the chain connects with anything resistant can jerk the saw terribly, possibly even spraining or breaking the wielder's wrist.)

Behind the display cases are doors into the back shops of Gun Metal. Here stand shelves of excess weapons, as well as a metal- and woodshop where custom orders are built. These back rooms are heavily trapped with some very nasty devices. An ex-burglar named Hobble, who now vends cigarettes and other minor drugs in Flowers, can tell you about a certain electrified bear trap that he found out about one night several years ago.

Anyone attempting to rob Gun Metal through threat rather than stealth may well find that the clerks have been trained in the use of the crossbow, which they can fire through the wire grating that protects them from other weapons.

Weapons at Gun Metal

These are some weapons from which customers may select, and how the salespeople at Gun Metal might describe them. Note that prices vary according to the specific model purchased, and also the bargaining ability of the purchaser. Prices also rise dramatically if you're running into Gun Metal, scared and panting, with goons after you. They'll sell you something fast, but they'll jack up your price.

Fighting Knives

"Nothing like a good knife. Easy to carry, easy to conceal. Other weapons might cause as much hurt or more, but keep in mind you can't stick a nun-chuk up against someone's back and get them to cooperate, or slit a sleeping man's throat with a cudgel, or

cut rope with a sai. Don't get caught without a good, sharp, versatile knife."

Prices: \$6 to \$60.

Brass Knuckles

"Gives you a nice edge in a brawl, and can't get knocked out of your hand."

Prices: \$5 to \$15.

Damage factor is 1.5, unless you don't like fractions, in which case they just add +3 to unarmed damage.

Sword Cane

"Not only does this sword give you superior reach to most of the folks you'll have to defend yourself against, but the cane itself works well enough if you don't have time to get the sword out. Just remember that your sword isn't as strong as a regular one, and since it doesn't have a curved blade, it won't cut as sharp, but you can get quite a bit of speed with this little beauty. And you can take it anywhere; no one will ever know."

Prices: \$50 to \$100.

The salesperson is lying; there are places where a sword cane will be recognized and barred, such as Sequins.

Throwing Stars

"Very classy, very impressive, very easy to learn — a favorite. Remember, just use your wrist. Also, don't get a mistaken impression. These things do not pack a lot of power. They're good for a surprise weapon to buy you a few seconds to get your butt out of there, but they're not going to slow anyone down for long unless you get a really lucky shot."

Prices: \$8 to \$25 each.

Damage factor X.5, if that.

Nun-Chuks

"Look, I'm not going to sell these to you unless you know what you're doing. Very fast and versatile if you know what you're doing. A sure way to embarrass yourself or worse if you don't. Maybe you'd like a padded, practice set? If you're trained, I have this very nice set with segments that

are octagonal in cross-section so you can put an edge in front of all that speed."

Prices: \$20 to \$70.

X2 damage.

Battle-Axe

"This is no half-way weapon. If you get seen with this thing, you're going to get a rep in no time. Maybe you want that, maybe you don't, maybe you think no one's going to be around afterwards to spread the word. I'll sell you one on this condition: you don't get cocky. Some guys, they get a big chopper like this, and they figure no one can take 'em, and then someone shows up who can pluck it from out their hands before they have time to blink. Watch yourself."

Prices: \$150 to \$200.

X3 damage.

Katana

"Yessiree, this here's an authentic Japanese katana. Sharp as a razor, or even better because you draw this curved blade along your target, changing the effective angle of the cut and decreasing its effective width. Got that? Doesn't matter if you understand it or not, it's a killer. Of course, you'll be paying for it. And with the price you'll be paying for it, I hope you got some good home security, if you know what I mean."

Prices: \$750 to \$3,000. X3 damage for a typical fighter, X4 if well-trained in its use.

Stinger Junior

"For a cattle prod this small, it packs quite a wallop. Now it does cause localized burns, but it doesn't do a lot of permanent damage. You can use it to zap the knife from someone's hands, or to encourage visitors to come across with information, but it's not a fantastic melee weapon. One advantage is that it's quite concealable. Has a battery that's good for twenty zaps."

Prices: \$75, plus \$100 per battery.

X2 damage, stun only (lost hit points return quickly)

Stinger Mark V

“A strong, versatile cattle prod, favored by the old South African regime, who, as you know, had notoriously unruly cattle to contend with. It will stand up to the uncertainties of a brawl and give your cattle something to think about. Its battery is good for at least six zaps, probably more.”

Prices: \$150, plus \$150 per battery.

X3 damage, stun only.

Bull-Beater

“In case you don’t want to mess around, maybe this economy-size cattle prod would suit your tastes. This here’s the shock mechanism, two handed, and these two cables connect it to this battery, which straps on your back. No, don’t even think about concealing it. And with that battery, you can keep going forever, maybe forty, fifty zaps. Of course, it shouldn’t take you more than one or two, now should it? Now this is a dangerous weapon. Don’t use it on bulls under age 17 or over 50, don’t use it on epileptic bulls or pregnant bulls, don’t use it on bulls with heart conditions, *especially* not on bulls with heart conditions. Also, this thing is going to cause some serious burns. Even so, it’s going to drop a bull to the ground long before you have chance to do any serious damage. I mean, a cattle prod, it’s got to be about your most humane weapon you could find. By the way, due to the chance of heart failure, I wouldn’t use this number to interrogate any of your bulls.”

Prices: \$1,000, plus \$1,000 per battery.

X6 damage, stun only.

Taser

“If you like the feeling of pulling a trigger, maybe this will do it for you. It causes temporary paralysis and *incredible* pain without much permanent damage. These two little cords shoot out to 5 meters, and when they connect, you can zap the fellow but

good. If you like, you can just sit there and not zap the guy, and knowing that you can send the electricity through him at any time might serve to quiet him down.”

Prices: \$200, plus \$100 per battery, plus positive ID to be fed into the Peace Force’s taser registry. The license comes in the mail (in about three days), and getting caught with a taser without this license means a stiff fine and Peace Force scrutiny.

X5 damage, stun only.

Elbow Spikes

“See this? It goes around your elbow here, lashed on with special, stretchable material so it doesn’t cut off blood supply or restrict movement. And this spike, well, you know what that’s for. An elbow in the gut goes a long way if you’re wearing one of these guys. They also have shock value. Lots of guys will freak when they see these, get scared, and make a mistake. And the fight goes to the guy who doesn’t make the first mistake, right?”

Prices: \$35 for a pair.

X2 damage (but only in the right position). The salesperson is exaggerating. Most Al Amarjans have seen enough weird things not to be too fazed by elbow spikes.

Crossbow

Made from aluminum and composites, firing a razor-sharp aluminum shaft. Takes about 10 seconds to reload, but is extremely quiet. Too bulky to conceal under clothing (except maybe a poncho). Can fire a grappling hook with light rope attached to about 20 m, with poor accuracy.

Prices: \$300, plus positive ID to be fed into the Peace Force’s crossbow registry. The license comes in the mail (in about three days), and getting caught with a crossbow without this license means a stiff fine and Peace Force scrutiny.

X2 damage. \$100 for the grappling hook and line.

Armor at Gun Metal

Utility Outfit

Stops 1 point of damage. \$100.

“The utility outfit is designed for general use in the city’s underworld. The jacket, shirt, and jeans are thick denim reinforced in key places with stiff plastic. It also has a variety of pockets for holding gear. You could get the same protection from thick leather clothes, but this suit provides pockets, knee and elbow padding, and dark coloring that aids in various dangerous activities.”

Steel-Reinforced Jacket

Stops 1 die of damage. \$450.

“Heavy, but not bad-looking. Takes a lot of punishment, but doesn’t protect the legs or head. It also has ample pockets, exterior and interior.”

Duro-Trench

Stops 2 dice of damage. \$1000.

“A well-armored trench coat with deep pockets and lapels that can be raised to protect the neck and some of the head. Very durable, but you wouldn’t want to fall in the water wearing one.”

Wearer suffers a penalty die on most physical actions.)

Steel-Tipped Boots

\$75.

“Last thing you want hurt is your feet, because if all else fails you want to be able to run. Well, these industrial beauties will protect your feet from a twenty kilo box dropped from waist-height, even if you’re standing on concrete. The toes are actually steel-tipped, making a swift kick oh so tasty. I’ve seen guys beat someone up and then break their toes kicking the poor sucker. If they’d been wearing these boots, that’d never have happened.”

Story Idea

The process of graduating from burghood almost always involves a trip to Gun Metal.

KUAN TUN'S BLACK BELT ACADEMY

Type: Martial Arts School.

Rep: Sometimes excellent, sometimes negligent.

Brief: A large school where various martial arts are taught. Beginners welcome, experts must make special arrangements for one-on-one classes.

Location: 111 Lost Lane, Flowers Barrio

This wide, two-story structure boasts large windows along the walls so that passersby can see and admire the martial artists training within.

Training

The Beginner's and Intermediate Classes can give someone a score of 3 in unarmed fighting. If the character has experience fighting and just needs some professional pointers, the Beginner's Class will provide the improvement within 3 or 4 class periods. (The character must spend 5 dice from the experience pool.) If the character does not have fighting experience, then gaining that score of 3 will take about 100 classes and at least three months. The Beginner's and Intermediate Classes are each an hour long and cost \$15 each. One can profitably take up to 5 classes a week, if one's schedule permits.

The Advanced Classes can raise one's score from 3 to 4. Doing so requires at least 150 classes (generally 3 per week, up to 5 per week) and 10 dice from the experience pool. Advanced classes cost \$30 each.

Raising a score beyond 4 is only possible if Kuan Tun hooks a character up with certain masters he knows. Application will include a personal interview to determine the student's suitability.



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

Story Idea

A friendly Al Amarjan that a PC meets in class tells the PC about her new job, which should bring in a lot of money, but about which she is not free to speak. Actually, she does say too much, including the name and description of the one hiring her. When she disappears, the PC may wish to look for her; or those who did her in may hunt down the PC, having learned that she told him too much.

SAD MARY'S BAR & GIRL

Type: Bar.

Rep: An exciting place where something is always happening.

Brief: Sad Mary's offers fights, strip shows, performance art, and specialized hookers. It attracts a great variety of customers.

Address: 10 Plaza of Flowers

Sad Mary's is a popular hang-out and meeting place for inhabitants of the Edge. It features a "performance stage" on which the management hosts fights, exotic dances, and performance art. For more private amusement, management makes a variety of prostitutes available to patrons.

On the Plaza of Flowers, Sad Mary's enjoys an easily accessible location. The stone building has two stories and looks out onto the plaza. Over the double-door entrance is a niche with a statue of Mary, pregnant, weeping into her hands. Only the words "Bar & Girl" appears on the face of the building. "Sad Mary's" was a popular, spontaneous addition to the establishment's name.

The Bar & Girl offers a complete and imaginative menu for its patrons. Various drugs can be added to most dishes and drinks. Prices are slightly

higher than those found in standard restaurants.

Part of the upper story holds twenty small rooms, each with a specific hooker. Those that are in demand have numbers for clients to take hanging outside their doors. Those in less demand spend some time downstairs drumming up business.

Every night features some performance or other on the “performance stage,” which is eight meters square raised a meter above floor level. A chain link fence rises out of the floor for fights, surrounding the stage. The stage itself is incredibly uneven and adorned with hanging chains, iron poles, free-standing platforms, and other complications. Bare-fisted fights are common, with a knock-out the only way to win. Strippers occupy the pit for about two-thirds of its active time. Fighters and strippers, in addition to being paid by the management, collect whatever money the audience throws onto the stage.

The manager frequently experiments with performance art pieces, such as the fellow who recited the Koran while pounding his head against a cement block until he fell unconscious. Some pieces are wildly accepted, but sex and violence remain the staples of the stage. Among the more bizarre acts currently running are: Francesca and Her Leather Friends, Volt-Eater, The Masked Maniac, Antonio and the Power Drill of Love, and Cooking with Hans & Ivan (for the hard-core fans only).

Members of the Aries Gang (see p. 110) serve as security. They are professional enough to allow Sad Mary’s to serve as a neutral ground for various gangs, but when members of a rival gang act up, the delight shines from the faces of the bouncers as they “deal with the situation.”

At the back of the main room are guarded doors that lead to the showers, dressing rooms, and common rooms of the performers. Those that can get past the guards find that the real action happens here, in a confusing jumble of rooms and corridors heavy with smoke, strange smells,

uninhibited performers, and noises that most would rather not identify.

Fighting at Sad Mary’s

As the turnover rate is high, one can get a job as a fighter at Sad Mary’s rather easily. Just demonstrate some fighting aptitude and a willingness to get beat up for cash.

Pay is \$100 per fight, and the winner gets to collect all the cash thrown onto the platform by the audience — usually about \$100 to \$300.

As a fighter becomes better known and better liked, of course, he can demand significantly higher wages.

The other fighters at Sad Mary’s are typically 3-dice fighters, but you can make them as weird and bizarre as you like. Many of them are simply unwilling to fight to the bitter end, falling when they are obviously defeated rather than waiting to be incapacitated. After all, the sooner they can recover, the sooner they can get back in the ring and earn more money. Hanging on too long just asks for serious damage that takes longer to heal.

Fights are without gloves, but combatants are allowed practice helmets and groin guards. The simple rules include: no weapons allowed, no hitting an opponent who’s down (at least one knee on the ground), and the fight goes until someone can’t get up.

Dancing at Sad Mary’s

The turnover for dancers is also high, so one can easily find a position in that capacity as well. Men must be young and muscular, women young and well-proportioned. Knowledge of dance helps, but is not necessary. Since prostitution and pornography are unrestricted in Al Amarja, these dancers don’t make anything like what their US counterparts do — perhaps \$50 for a four-hour night.

Exotic beauties can command much higher pay.

Nude dancing is extremely stressful. Even though the money isn’t bad, few people can keep up with it for long.

GMCs

Ferdi Alli

Operative of Lydia Goodman

Works here as a waiter (see p. 129).

Denise Felder

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 27-28.

Frank Germaine

Owner & Manager

He can often be seen circulating among the patrons recruiting dancers, fighters, and other performers from among the crowd. He has thorough connections with the Net, and hopes to sell his share of the place and go into crime full time one day.

Al Amarjan man, age 50, 169 cm, 80 kg. Balding and pudgy, with a full black moustache.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, some French

Traits

Conning, Lying, & Spotting the Same in Others, 4 dice. (Asks pointed questions)

Sensing a Dangerous Situation, 3 dice. (Relaxed, because he knows he can tell when trouble is about to start)

Entrepreneurship, 3 dice — He is a decent manager, but not the best. His keen ability to discriminate lies from truth, however, has made his business flourish. (Wears gold rings)

Portia

Agara Prostitute

An strange hooker who appeals to jaded tastes with her tail nub and coat of soft, sparse fur. She is an Agara, a member of a small clan of idolators that were cursed in the 13th century for their abominable practices. They all became gigantic rats and began living in caves beneath the surface of Al Amarja, under the guidance of their spiritual leader. Over the years, their leader (who was granted immortality until such time as his followers have redeemed themselves) has painstakingly taught them virtue, and the children of virtuous Agaras were more

human-like than their parents. Through the generations, many Agaras have become very human-like, and some even pass for human in the Edge, where they learn of the changing world in order to prepare their clan for its eventual return. Portia's parents were not virtuous enough to have a child who could pass for a normal human, but they were pretty close. She left the caves, however, and has given up the moral progress made by her ancestors. If she bears children, they will be hideous, gigantic rat-things. (See the adventure resource *New Faces* for more details about the Agaras.)

She is addicted to heroin and uses other drugs regularly.

Dr. Nusbaum knows of her and would like to study her in depth some day, when he gets the time.

Agara rat-woman, age 22, 158 cm, 58 kg. Has large ears, fur, and a tail nub. Usually scantily dressed.

Languages: Arabic (archaic), Al Amarjan patois (accented)

Traits

Good Night Vision, bonus die. (Furry)

Prostitution, 3 dice. (Scantily dressed)

Veedot One

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 55-56.

Guillermo Venzor

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 56-57

Story Ideas

- PCs can get jobs as fighters at Sad Mary's. In addition to the mundane danger of having one's brains smashed repeatedly against the inside of one's skull, a fighter faces gamblers who may get angry if the PC wins (or loses) a fight. And then there are the rival fighters who may stoop to incapacitating a threatening newcomer.
- A love interest develops with Portia, and the PC tries to save her from her sordid life. If thus rescued, she may forget herself

and agree to bear the PC's children (definitely a mistake).

SAFE N SOUND

Type: Security Service.

Rep: Dependable.

Brief: A private security force, highly effective in finding and punishing those who bother their clients. The corpses of Safe N Sound's targets are found in prominent public places, with the trademark red dagger through the heart.

Address: 12 Hangman's Alley, Justice.

Safe N Sound occupies the top story of a two-story office building and employs forty operatives. They provide top-notch security, mostly through the explicit threat toward those who mess with their clients.

They provide decals to place in plain view at the institutions they protect, and individual clients have badges they can wear to warn off muggers, thieves, and hit men.

Kergillian Infiltration

The "field manager" (like a sergeant) who supervises the field agents is a kergillian operative. He sees to it that the kergillian businesses (E-Z Sleep and the School of True Sensation) get the attention they deserve.

Some Clients

Ahmed's Kwik Klinik, Cesar's Hotel, E-Z Sleep, First School of True Sensation, Sarah's Teahouse.

GMCs

Mikhail Tarisnakov

Safe N Sound Field Agent

A large, serious man. Use his stats for other field agents.

Equipment: Rugged body suit, walkie-talkie, flashlight, and any of an assortment of weapons, including tasers, crossbows, billy clubs, fighting daggers, brass knuckles, etc.

Slavic male, age 25, 181 cm, 78 kg, black hair & moustache, scar

under left eye, tattoo of an ankh on the back of his left hand.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Armor: 1 point

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice — He is trained in a variety of fighting styles with several weapons. (Has weapons at hand)

Investigation, 3 dice — Finding clues, questioning witnesses, lurking unobtrusively, etc.

Loyal to Safe N Sound, 3 dice — Through careful selection and brutal initiations, the administration of Safe N Sound makes sure that the field agents are loyal to the company. (Never speaks badly of the company)

Story Idea

Enemies of the PCs plant evidence on them linking them to a burglary or murder of a Safe N Sound client. Field agents investigate the PCs, and might capture, rough up, and interrogate them. If the PCs figure out what's going on, Safe N Sound would be more than happy to help in getting justice done.

SARAH'S TEAHOUSE

Type: "Café."

Rep: For a guaranteed private conversation, go to Sarah's.

Brief: The "teahouse" offers dozens of private rooms for conversation. Since their reputation and income depends on their clients' trust, they go to every effort to protect their clients' privacy.

Address: 240 Rum Street, Sunken Barrio.

A three story building with a narrow front facing Rum Street and a garage to the left. The red dagger of Safe N Sound is displayed on the entrances.

The first floor holds the reception desk and kitchen.

The second and third floors each contain a long corridor with doors on either side. Each door leads to a small

room with a booth in it. The rooms have no windows, and the door to the corridor can be locked from the inside. A small black button built into the table near the wall will summon a waitress.

The building is protected by electronic equipment that emits random electromagnetic signals, thus fouling electronic bugging devices. In addition, each room is soundproof. Each room includes a carefully hidden crystal trap, and psychovores are hidden inside the walls around the building.

For more mundane purposes, Sarah's Teahouse hires Safe N Sound for protection. At least one agent is hanging around to stop those who seem to be involved in violence.

The Hooligans (see *Airwaves*, pp. 11-13), a gang of terrorists for hire, always arrange their work through meetings at Sarah's.

Patronizing Sarah's Teahouse

Clients can make reservations or simply walk in. There are four entrances, to make coming and going just a bit more private. In addition, a garage to one side allows people to enter and leave by car (probably Total Taxi) without ever being seen outside the building.

Once inside, a waitress gives the client a menu and tells them their room number, if they don't know it already. At \$25 for a cup of tea, the prices are a bit steep, and when the waitress returns in a few minutes, she will demand a minimum order of \$50 per room. Money, food, and drink can be passed through a slot in the door if the clients don't want to be seen together.

Story Idea

Sarah's serves as a neutral, private meeting ground, and the PCs may find it very useful for delicate conversations.

SEQUINS

Type: Fancy Nightclub.

Rep: The best that money can buy.

Brief: A fancy night club and restaurant for the well-to-do, run by the Raimondi mob.

Address: 410 Platinum Avenue, Broken Wings

A very swanky club appointed in high art deco style. Great food, wonderful service, but be prepared to pay through the nose. Private gambling room in the back — one must get approval from the casino master to enter, and no amount of money flashed under his nose will persuade him if one is not of the right sort. Music is standards of the thirties, forties, and fifties, always with a stunning and sad female vocalist. The club is a favorite hangout of the old guard of the Mob, so it is wise to behave oneself here. One can make contact with the Mob, provided one is respectful and follows the protocols. Unless the supplicant is of great stature, it is unlikely that they will get to deal personally with any of the real powers in The Family. If this doesn't make the clientele heavy enough, Monique D'Aubainne herself occasionally comes here when in the mood for a night on the town.

The Raimondis, through their connections, have acquired a white thought generator to protect Sequins. When Monique D'Aubainne shows up, of course, her people bring considerably more fringe protection.

GMCs

Raoul Enescu

Maitre d'

The soul of taste and discretion. As adept at pampering the rich and powerful as he is at making the plebes feel like utterly unwelcome scum who should immediately leave. He's the best one to approach (subtly, subtly!) if one wants to get word to the Raimondis. Very image-conscious, which makes sense given his dark secret: he's a tulpa.

"Romanian man, age 46, 170 cm, 64 kg. Neatly trimmed black hair, clean shaven, impeccable."

Languages: Romanian, Italian, English. (Never speaks the local patois.)

Traits

The Ultimate Maitre d', 4 dice — Fulfilling all functions of making the wealthy comfortable, including making undesirables decidedly uncomfortable. (Reserved and classy)

Tulpa — While his identity is very well set, and he supports it through careful choice of clothes and actions, he could see his artificial self fall away under the wrong circumstances. (Image-conscious)

John Krishna Mohammad

The City Manager of the Edge is one of the many luminaries you might find relaxing at Sequins. (See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 40-42.)

Shania Raimondi

Mob Administrator

Currently calls the shots in Al Amarja's biggest crime family while its titular head, her father Giuseppe, draws more and more into the background. Charming and casual, Shania brings a sensible corporate-style management approach to mob affairs. She knows she only operates with tacit approval of the D'Aubainne family, knows the boundaries and does not overstep them. Vigorously enforces the "no guns" policy.

Northern Italian woman, 178 cm, 68 kg, statuesque, blond, confident.

Languages: Italian, English, Al Amarjan patois, French.

Traits

Administrator, 4 dice — Giving orders, solving disputes, seeing underlying problems, and keeping an organization running comes naturally to her.

Charmer, 3 dice — Beautiful, self-confident, and capable of using her charms to manipulate others. (Graceful)

Karate Fighter, 3 dice — Not an expert, but she can defend herself. (Trim)

Giuseppe Raimondi*Mob Boss*

Still the Boss — technically, that is. Dark secret: He has AIDS, acquired from a blood transfusion from an unlicensed physician. (Giuseppe had been shot and didn't want it to come to the attention of the authorities. Rest assured that both the doc and the guy who shot him are now feeding the fish at the bottom of the harbor.) Giuseppe is desperate to find a cure — and if there's a cure anywhere on Earth, it's here on Al Amarja, crossroads of the otherworldly and extradimensional. But don't think his desperation has made him stupid or less dangerous.

Italian man, age 68, 165 cm, 56 kg. A short, shrunken man with yellowing white hair. Favors dark suits that are about forty years out of style.

Languages: Italian, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Traits

Mob Administration, 3 dice —

While most of his power comes from tradition, he is competent at handling matters when he has to. (Business-like air)

Weak — Penalty die on most physical actions. (Shrunken form)

Eduardo Cassaverdi*Lower-Echelon Mobster*

Eduardo would be a likely go-between for PCs and the Raimondi family. He follows orders, isn't too ambitious, and knows what side his bread is buttered on. Once a hardened addict, he's trying to cut down on the blue shock.

Italian man, age 29, 173 cm, 67 kg. Flashy clothes, pencil thin moustache, flirtatious, funny.

Languages: Italian, Al Amarjan patois, English.

Story Idea

The PCs, in their search for a certain fringe scientist, find themselves being tailed and watched. It turns out that a few mobsters are after the same oppenheimer, believing that she might have a cure for AIDS.

SWAPS

Type: Business nerve center.

Rep: This is where the bucks are.

Brief: Swaps is a large building containing the major economic establishments on the island.

Address: 1 Plaza of Gold

Phone: 230000

A huge office building where anything can be bought, sold, or traded. It contains the First National Bank of the Edge, a central currency exchange, a market for commodities and interests in Al Amarjan businesses, a stock market, and office space for the various entrepreneurs that make their living moving assets from one place to another. Constance D'Aubainne runs Swaps, giving her a virtual monopoly over the financial matters on the island. See p. 116.

Story Ideas

In their misadventures, the PCs find some very valuable, noteworthy items, such as original pieces of modern art by famous painters, or ancient jewelry of a distinctive style. Rather than just "cashing it in," the PCs may need to wait for the right buyer, meet with prospective purchasers, and so on. Swaps is naturally the place to do this, but the PCs may gain unwanted attention. A huge haul of valuables may turn out to be just more trouble. Of course, the PCs can simply sell everything to a middle man for 50% of its probable value, if they don't want to hassle with finding a buyer on their own.

THE TEMPLE OF THE DIVINE EXPERIENCE

Type: House of Worship.

Rep: A good place to go to save your soul, get a perspective, chill out, or just have a good time.

Brief: Cheryl D'Aubainne runs the Temple as a holy place for all beliefs (except Satanists). She is sincere, but not all the celebrants at the Temple are.

Address: 6400 D'Aubainne Avenue, Sunken Barrio

A large edifice combining elements of a cathedral or music hall. Broad steps lead up from street level to the first floor. Above those doors is a balcony for the second floor. Above that are spires. Symbols from various religions decorate the top: cross, star of David, crescent, yin-yang, 8-spoked wheel, Masons' compass, quarter-note, dollar sign, ankh, and several others.

To accommodate the many faiths of Al Amarjans, the Temple allows celebrants of various faiths and persuasions to use the facilities on alternating days.

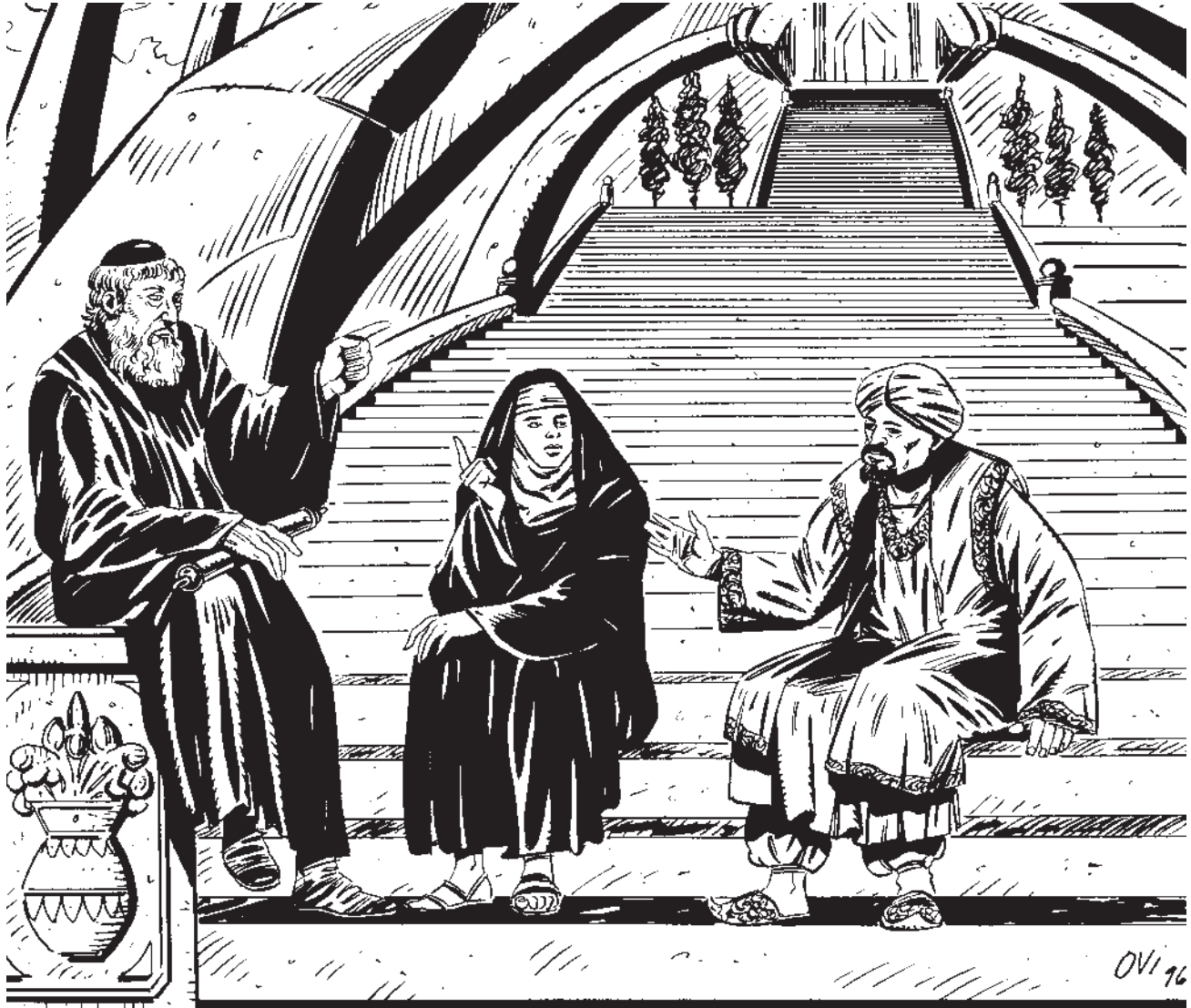
Sunday — Mid-Eastern**Compromise**

These services are for Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Zoroastrians, drawing on their common background and beliefs. Lots of general creeds and prayers said in unison from memory, lots of familiar hymns, lots of basic sermons, lots of rites and sacraments. Adherents of Mid-Eastern-based religions come here to have one stable, familiar experience in the ever-changing world of Al Amarja. On an island with such great diversity of personal belief, Jews, Christians, and Muslims have found that they do indeed share a lot in common. The purists from each faith, of course, never attend these services. On the other hand, new converts often come to these services without realizing that they represent three faiths whose followers in other parts of the world often hate and regularly kill each other.

Monday — New Age

Group hugs, pop psychology, space music, and fuzzy New Age philosophy are popular here. Lots of overweight, socially inept, weak-spirited, self-deluded people come to these feel-good services. The leaders either refuse to recognize this trend or point out that it proves their community is more accepting than are the traditional religions. Psychedelics are sometimes used, but are usually shunned by purists.

Illustration by Ovi Hondru



Tuesday — Sommerites

Lots of good music, if you like Karla Sommers. Sometimes believers play covers of the music, sometimes they recite the lyrics as poetry, and sometimes they give sermons on interpreting the lyrics for daily life. A good time with plenty of alcohol and other drugs. Dancing is common, though Karla Sommers' music isn't much to dance to. Lydia Goodman (p. 128) takes a table in the upper balcony to meet with benies and others looking for her support.

Wednesday — In Your Face

More a style than a belief system, these people come here to shout, act spontaneously, "speak in tongues" (i.e.

babble nonsense), and give a post-modern bent to religion. At such a meeting one might hear, "Shut up, you moron! You wouldn't know salvation if it grabbed you by the balls." "Hah, that's a laugh, coming from someone who's still trying to rack up brownie points with the Big Grade School Teacher in the Sky." Very intense to participants; disturbing and confusing to outsiders.

Thursday — Eastern Conglomeration

Heavy on the rituals, light on the philosophy of Oriental religions in general. Beautiful and elegant, but focusing on the surface rites rather than the

refined kernel, as found in Zen. Hare Krishna devotees are in abundance.

Friday — Secular Mystics

Would-be agnostics and atheists who have had religious experiences and are exploring them the way rational people explore any other phenomenon. These people have no patience for the feel-good-ness of the New Agers, the rituals of the Eastern religions, or the dependence on Holy Writ of the Mid-Eastern religions. Nevertheless, they have developed hypotheses and terminology similar to these groups, and the uninitiated sometimes can't tell the difference. Controlled use of LSD, peyote, psilocybin, and nitrous oxide is common.

Saturday — Party!

People of all faiths (except Satanists) are welcome to come and partake in the glorious gifts of the generous Godhead, most notably sex, drugs, and rock and roll. By far the most popular service held during the week.

GMCs**Cheryl D'Aubainne**

See p. 116.

Abdullah Mustafa

Psychovore Hunter

Every Friday without fail, Mustafa comes to the secular mysticism services. Sometimes he uses hallucinogens, but they have very little outward effects on him. More often he comes simply for the sake of community and to be around the focused wills of seekers of truth. In his long life, he has traveled far from his homeland and has had a wide variety of experiences as a sailor, mercenary, drug runner, con man, factory worker, husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Sixteen years ago, at the death of his wife, he came to Al Amarja where he has been exploring the mystic abilities of the human spirit. Having already found wealth, sex, drugs, fame, violence, prestige, achievement, and family to be only of passing satisfaction, he applied himself to inner exploration with unusually powerful single-mindedness. His inner efforts have born fruit, as he is now able to travel the astral plane and perform certain other psychic feats. To maintain himself, he hunts psychovores on the astral plane, bringing in one every three to six months. The fees he charges for these occasional adventures are sufficient to provide for his minor personal needs. He has also used his astral abilities to penetrate astral defenses as a mercenary. After all, someone who can hunt and capture psychovores is also capable of bypassing or defeating them when they guard certain locales. He has taken great precautions to ensure his secrecy, always working through intermediaries. He knows that he is valuable, and thus either in demand by the powers that be or a threat to them,

depending on their attitude toward him. Mostly he wants to be left alone.

Iranian man, age 72, 168 cm, 60 kg, exudes a sense of peace and power.

Languages: Persian (Farsi), Gilaki, French, Al Amarjan patois, English.

Attack: Special (see below)

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 35 (pure vitality)

Armor: See Psychic Armor below

Psychic (Astral) Pool: 7 shots

Traits

Astral Projection, 5 dice — He can send his astral form into the astral plane with ease, and he is quite at home there. He knows the landscape, including where psychovores are to be found, how to track them, and how to capture them. In his astral form, he is a strapping young man in smooth, sleek armor, with a net and sword. Tied to psychic pool. (Eyes sometimes seem very “deep”)

Psychic Armor, 3 dice — He can resist physical damage. When he takes damage from any physical source, roll 3 dice. If the dice are double the damage done, he takes no damage at all. If the damage is twice his roll, he takes full damage. Otherwise, he takes half damage. On the astral plane, this power manifests itself as his sleek, metallic armor. Tied to psychic pool. (Often unconcerned with surroundings)

Soul-Slash, 5 dice — If he touches someone, even momentarily, he can separate their astral body from the physical. On the physical plane, the victim seems to fall unconscious. On the astral plane, the person is dazed and disoriented. Each hour the character can make a roll (two dice, unless he has some special ability), and a roll of 8+ means the astral body finds its way back to the physical realm, and the character wakes up. A roll of 15+ means the character orients himself on the astral plane and can travel at will (though it will be a very strange and threatening place for newcomers). To resist the attack, a character must match Mustafa's roll of 5 dice with a roll of their own (again, two dice unless they have magic or astral powers). To a character unfamiliar with the astral plane, it will seem like Mustafa knocked them out somehow, and that they had a strange dream while unconscious. If two or

more characters are knocked into the astral plane at the same time, they may see each other there, though they are disoriented enough that they may remember very little. On the astral plane, this power is seen as Mustafa's sword, where it can damage astral beings. Tied to psychic pool. (Hands are muscular, from wielding his “sword”)

Astral Net, 4 dice — This power only works on astral beings or energies. It traps them and holds them. On the physical plane, Mustafa can use the power to capture someone travelling astrally or to hold in an astral enchantment. On the astral plane, it takes the form of his net, and it is much more effective. Tied to psychic pool. (Watches apparently magical things or people very carefully)

Frail — Mustafa is an old man, slow and weak. One fewer die than normal on physical actions. (Old and thin)

Story Idea

Karla Sommers gives a concert at the Temple. The place is jammed with Sommerites and regular fans. During a break in the performance, she repudiates the Sommerites for idolizing a human being and tells them to think for themselves. During her next songs, the crowd gets more and more restless, and then breaks into a bloody riot that spills into the street. Weeks after Sommers leaves, a splinter group of Sommerites develops, using Sommers's lyrics to support the central tenet that one should think for oneself.

Alternately, Karla Sommers gives the concert and really listens to her own lyrics for the first time. She achieves enlightenment and becomes fully divine. Led by their living deity, Sommerites spread the word and work miracles across the world, starting with English-speaking lands. Some Jews take her as the Messiah, some Christians as the Second Coming. (Of course, we've seen before what happens to living deities when they threaten the powers that be, so you know where this will lead.)

TOTAL TAXI

Type: Taxi Service.

Rep: Pricey, but worth it.

Brief: A taxi service that provides its clients with a variety of services

Address: 1876 Bend Street, Sunken.

Cruising down the streets of the Edge are large, black sedans with tinted windows. Only the small light on the roof lets one know that this is a taxi, a Total Taxi.

Those who call this service hear a sexy voice say, "Hello. Total Taxi, for your total taxi needs. How may we serve you?" And they are not kidding. Drivers, bedecked in tuxedos, can provide maps, drugs, advice, information, and weapons to their fares. Privileged information is pricey, but reliable. After all, the drivers see a lot in their travels.

Fares are high — at least \$25 just to get in, and \$50 to get across town. The drivers also expect decent tips. Prices for other goods are standard or slightly above normal.

Special Services

These are some of the special services that Total Taxi provides.

Dangerous Fares — \$200 surcharge for dangerous fares, such as people under hot pursuit.

Chinese Fire Drill — The taxi drives into a Total Taxi garage, the fares exit and enter another car, and that car plus three others leave the garage. Foils pursuers. Costs \$250.

High Speed Service — The driver radios in the destination (in code), and other Total Taxis block traffic to give the fare's taxi a clear run. There is *still* a chance for a serious accident. Costs \$350.

Emergency Medical Service — A van with paramedics arrives and takes the injured wherever they want to go. At least as fast as an ambulance, and more private. Total Taxi workers, however, will not enter a dangerous situation, such as a fight in progress. Costs \$1,000 per casualty, plus equipment costs.

Total Taxis also provide Burger with a handy guide to the local slang (see the Props chapter at the back of this book).

Rules of Conduct

Drivers will do none of the following:

- Supply firearms to citizens, or help them get firearms.
- Sell information gathered from fares. (Your ride is confidential.)
- Chase down another Total Taxi. If you want to catch someone in a Total Taxi, don't try it in another Total Taxi.

Story Idea

Total Taxi is an excellent plot device, so use it. These taxis can help the PCs out in a variety of ways: getting them where they need to go (fast, if necessary), telling them what they need to know about the city, and providing information that moves the plot along. Enemies may also use Total Taxis when following, spying on, or attacking the PCs, so the players may learn to pay attention when you say, "A Total Taxi slides silently down the street, slowly passing you."

WINDS OF CHANGE

Type: Casino.

Rep: Not for everyone, but if you're jaded, give it a try.

Brief: You can bet anything at Winds of Change: your youth, health, will, beauty, intelligence, or soul. The cover is staggering, but for some people, it's the only game in town.

Address: Unknown. Sets up temporarily in various places throughout Great Men barrio.

Phone: None

No one knows where the Winds of Change will appear next: a vacant lot, Sir Arthur Compton's house, a Satanist hang-out, the Plaza of Great Men, or the burned out shell of a building. Still, many who are looking for the thrills of risk and chance seek it out doggedly, because here you can bet what you really can't afford to lose.

The central figure of the "casino" is Chikutorpl, or "Chick" for short. She is a mysterious figure who gathers bettors around her when she shows up in public. No one knows what she does when not in public, but no one can doubt what she is capable of when she is around. She makes bets stick, no matter what the stakes.

When people bet at Winds of Change, they tell Chick the game and the stakes. She usually agrees, but might suggest a change if the bet seems grossly unfair. Any game, any stakes. The bettors then play, and the effects of the stakes are exacted, no matter what they are.

Chick typically has a lot of people clamoring for her attention, and she prefers to arrange bets for newcomers or those with an interesting game, intriguing stakes, or a good story.

Possible bets include:

- *Life:* The loser dies, the winner gets another "life." When he dies, he will recover from whatever killed him, but only once.
- *Youth for Cash:* Old, wealthy men bet their cash against a year or two from a young, ambitious, and poor person.
- *Looks for Talent:* Two potential starlets, one with acting talent and the other a knock-out, bet their respective virtues. The loser is still a nobody, but the winner has a shot at stardom.

Games can be anything from flipping a coin to chess to arm-wrestling.

Many people, naturally, have tried to cheat at these games, but they find themselves slowly slipping from consciousness when they try to do so. Falling unconscious means you forfeit the game.

Chick hires locals for security, often Satanists, due to the locale. They set up the "casino," control entrance, and charge whatever they want as a cover. Chick demands food, wine, music, and other entertainments during a night's work, plus maybe some new jewelry or clothes, but the guards keep the funds raised, so they are very interested in keeping her safe and meeting her whims.

Chick has been known to shut a casino down for what seem to be trivial reasons, or no reason at all, but everyone has to put up with it for fear that she won't be back.

GMC

Chikutorpl, "Chick"

Weird Casino Mistress

Chikutorpl is an extra-dimensional negotiator, created to be the perfect arbitrator in interplanetary and inter-dimensional disputes. When honest and effective negotiations started to threaten the position of a certain minority group, however, that group secretly banished her to the hinterlands of the populated dimensions.

Currently, Chick (and a few close copies of her, from parallel dimensions) are wandering around the local dimensions, working in the Edge and its sister cities in parallel worlds. This is why no one sees her when she is out of the public eye: she is in a parallel dimension. (She never sleeps; she is always putting on a casino in one dimension or another.)

Of course, there is always the chance that two Chicks will show up in the same dimension some day, which could be interesting.

Woman of indeterminate age and race, 173 cm, 70 kg. Brown skin, slanted blue eyes, long, straight nose; wears a tan gown and lots of jewelry.

Languages: Can speak any language without accent, but cannot read (because the beings of her dimension have evolved past the written word).

Traits

In addition to the ability to prevent cheating and to enforce bets, Chick may have whatever other abilities you think are appropriate to an interdimensional construct designed for negotiation and arbitration.

Story Idea

Explorers from Chick's dimension find her on Al Amarja and try to take her back, but she has decided she likes the personal excitement of her casinos more than the ponderous debates and negotiations between races and confederations. The extra-dimensional explorers need someone local (the PCs) to act as guides as they attempt to capture her, and they can pay fantastically, albeit in strange devices or materials rather than local currency.

The PCs may lead the explorers through the Edge, and then the chase jumps to alternate "Edges," where the PCs may even meet "themselves," or learn valuable information that has not yet surfaced in their home world. The chase should be quite confusing, with, say, half a dozen Chicks being chased by three to six groups of interdimensional explorers (and three to six groups of the PCs), hopping through ten to forty alternate Edges. If you can pull it off, don't let the players know that their employers have taken them to alternate dimensions until the terrain makes it obvious that this is so.

After the explorers have what they want or give up, they might unthinkingly leave the PCs in the current dimension and neglect to take them back to the original dimension. The new Al Amarja could be changed to suit your needs. And what if this new dimension has alternate versions of the PCs in it?



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

CHAPTER SIX

FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

This chapter describes many of the most important forces on Al Amarja: gangs, conspiracies, student organizations, and many more. Some of them are known to all; some are so secret that no non-members even realize they exist. Many of these groups have been expanded or fleshed out in published adventures and sourcebooks since the original publication of *Over the Edge*; we have included references to help remind you when this is the case.

Do not be limited by this chapter; as large as it is, it remains only a fraction of the “scene” on Al Amarja. There’s plenty of room on the island for more groups of your own creation, and there’s nothing to stop you from replacing groups mentioned here if that serves your needs as GM. Add, delete, modify and make Al Amarja a unique playground for your own imagination.

The format used to describe groups here is essentially similar to that used for establishments in the previous chapter.

At the end of this chapter, the *Forces Interaction Chart* helps provide ideas on how the various groups regard each other.

ALPHA RHO TAU

“Oh please! Your patriarchal, philistine vibes are blocking my creative energy.”

— *an Alpha girl*

Type: Sorority

Rep: Girls from Mars

Brief: Art majors, philosophy majors, and other slightly strange types.

Allies: Delta Epsilon Theta (brother fraternity)

Enemies: Sigma Epsilon Xi

This sorority brings together young women of an artistic bent. They favor long hair, earth tones, New Age spirituality, environmentalism, and education that leaves them devoid of saleable skills.

In addition to the current students, many former students swell the ranks of the sorority, doing what they can to help out their younger sisters.

I THINK
WE'RE
PROPERTY.

— CHARLES
FORT

Story Idea

As the characters are in the Science Barrio, an Alpha woman becomes fascinated by the looks of one of the PC's. She immediately sketches him and for some reason decides that she simply *has* to have him model for her. The attention may be a simple nuisance, an opportunity for a tortuous romance, or something more — the woman's drawings might reveal something about the character, perhaps something that he does not yet know about himself.

ARIES GANG

“Praise no maiden ‘til bedded,

No wife until buried,
No blade until blooded,
No turf until crossed.”

— *Hans Knudson, Aries Warlord, paraphrasing the words of Odin*

Type: Gang.

Rep: Tough fighters, prone to violence, but fair with their clients.

Brief: The Aries Gang works the Flowers Barrio, providing protection to the inhabitants and picking fights with outsiders. They patrol the streets in motorcycle-mounted groups.

Allies: Peace Force (grudging).

Enemies: Dog-Faces, Glorious Lords.

Fiery, impulsive, and warlike, members of the Aries Gang live up to the reputation of the astrological sign they follow. With over one hundred and fifty members, the gang is the largest on the Edge, but the energy of the members keeps them from presenting a unified fighting front. The alcohol and other intoxicants flowing through the members' bloodstreams don't help matters either.

Members of the Aries Gang love simple pleasures: whoring, drugging, feasting, and fighting. Those who can accept these motivations find them a good-natured crew. Even in battle they usually kill without malice, fighting for the challenge and the pleasure, and they are slow to form a grudge. When double-crossed or fighting Molly's baboon troops, however, they are likely to become enraged and to fight with bestial fury.

Hans Knudson took over the gang many years ago and has given the gang three main attributes: an emphasis on astrology, a Nordic flavor, and great success in their expansion.

The entrance requirement for the gang includes revealing one's date of birth so Hans can draw up a horoscope and determine whether the applicant is worth recruiting. For most of the members, astrology is not a big deal, but only those born under the sign of Aries can hope to achieve Hans's greatest favors and appointments to positions of power. Also, only men are allowed membership.

Hans also prefers members of Scandinavian extraction (for their "Viking blood"), but he'll take anyone who would fit in the gang's membership. Many members bleach their hair blond and grow full beards to fit the Nordic image.

Hans has told his men that the Valkyries watch them, waiting to select the best warriors, who will then go to Valhalla if they die in battle. Because of this indoctrination, and the drugs flowing through their bloodstreams, Aries warriors sometimes go berserk, flinging themselves suicidally into a fray. When berserk, an Aries warrior gets a bonus die on attacks, is immune to fear, and gains +5 hit points. These effects pass when the fight is over.

Members favor leather, tattoos, scarification, heavy metal, chains, beer, boasting, wrestling, body-building, motorcycles, and beef. Many have the Aries symbol (a vertical line that splits in two near the top, with each branch curving out and down) tattooed on some part of the body.

Every year the Aries Gang rents out a hall for a huge feast to which inhabitants of Flowers are invited, along with representatives of other gangs. The feast soon turns into a drunken orgy, with small fights commonplace. Killings and massive brawls are rare, and the Aries Gang specifically tells guests not to allow violence to escalate. Nevertheless, it's not exactly a safe place. Still, it is a major event in the barrio, and that people risk their necks to attend

proves that the Aries Gang knows how to show people a good time.

Leadership

Hans Knudson runs the Aries Gang with an unpredictable mixture of charisma and brute force, assuming the title of Warlord. Hans is an avid follower of astrology and only allows people born under the sign of Aries to attain positions of power in the gang. He calculates his own horoscopes and the horoscopes of enemies and allies to time raids, fights, and negotiations. He seems to have good luck with this system, having turned his gang into one of the biggest in the Edge, but some suspect that the astrological calculations are merely a device by which Hans's intuition determines the best courses of action. If nothing else, Hans's assurance to his men that a certain fight will certainly go in their direction is enough to boost their morale and tip an even fight in their favor.

If Hans were ever to be overthrown, the Aries Gang would probably return to the status of a minor gang.

GMCs

Hans Knudson

Aries Warlord

A broad-chested man with a flowing beard. His forehead bears the tattoos of Nordic runes, as well as the Aries symbol at dead center.

Norwegian man, age 44, 176 cm, 73 kg, blond hair, full beard.

Languages: Norwegian, Swedish, German, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage (knife) or X3 damage (battle axe)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (rugged)

Traits

Astrologer, 4 dice — With this ability, Hans can time important fights or peace meetings, judge his enemies, and judge his friends. (Finds out others' birth dates)

Fighter, 3 dice — The years have taught Knudson to fight with a great variety of weapons. He is always armed with a knife, but he has a battle axe for serious tangles. (Burly)

Good Leader, 3 dice — He knows how to boost morale, instill confidence, and enforce obedience, but much of his success at leading the Aries gang comes from his skills at astrology. (Confident air)

Peer Solgerkvist

Aries Warrior

Peer is very happy with his life as an Aries member. The gang serves as a large group of buddies with whom he can party, fight, and grow in prestige. The Aries symbol is tattooed over his right eye.

Usually wearing and carrying leather jeans and jacket, t-shirt, boots with steel-reinforced toes, switchblade, hatchet, and walkie-talkie.

Norwegian man, age 19, 184 cm, 78 kg, fair skin, blond hair.

Languages: Norwegian, Danish, Al Amarjan patois, some English.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with hatchet

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 points (fighting toughness)

Armor: 1 point (leathers)

Traits

Good Rumbler, 3 dice — The streets have taught Peer to fight with all manner of impromptu styles. If hurt, outnumbered, or really strung out on drugs, he might go berserk (bonus die on combat, fearless, +5 hit points). (Numerous scars)

Good Partier, 3 dice — Knows how to have a good time, which drugs to avoid, how to tell if a woman is available, and so forth. (Knows lots of young women)

Streetwise, 3 dice — Knows how to spot trouble, find people, obtain information, transact deals, and anything else involved in surviving and thriving on the merciless streets of Al Amarja. (Hangs out in the Plaza of Flowers)

Good Motorcyclist, 3 dice — Greatly enjoys speeding his bike through the urban obstacle course. (Often lugging motorcycle helmet)

Bad at Keeping His Temper — He suffers from the delusion that holding one's temper is akin to being afraid, so he is likely to let minor irritations spark him to violence. Only rolls 1 die to keep his temper. (Raises his voice)

Note: Peer is likely to be found under the influence, at least lightly, of one of the following drugs: alcohol, speed, coke, or blue shock.

Story Idea

An Aries gangster asks a PC to buy blue shock from a street vendor while the gangster waits out of sight. The vendor has told the Aries Gang that he is not selling drugs, and so hasn't been giving the gang a cut of profits. If the vendor sells the PC the shock, and the PC reports this, the vendor gets beat up.

SIR ARTHUR COMPTON

"The transgression does not deny the taboo but transcends it and completes it."

—*Georges Bataille, Eroticism*

"It's not a party until someone has spilled a drink on the wrong person, some guy has fondled the wrong woman, someone has said what should not be said, and someone has discovered what only the dead know."

—*Sir Arthur Compton*

Type: Patron of Decadence.

Rep: A very strange, very wealthy fellow whose parties are outrageous, albeit sometimes fatal.

Brief: Compton is a twisted old man who delights in the dark, gloomy, and malign. His bennies keep tabs on Satanists, decadent artists, and catastrophes. He has been known to dabble in necromantic magics, but he is not a truly powerful magician in his own right.

Allies: Monique D'Aubainne (distant), Glorious Lords, Delta Epsilon Theta.

Enemies: Earthlings.

Hidden behind burned out hulls of other buildings in Great Men stands a former factory surrounded by a wrought iron fence. Here lives Sir Arthur Compton, a man infamous for his tastes in the dark and forbidden. Usually the gates of the place are closed to all but his trusted bennies and operatives, but every few months the gates open wide as Compton throws an incredible party. Rumor has it that there has never yet been a party from which all the guests have returned.

Monique D'Aubainne sometimes attends Compton's parties, but more often he attends her private, elite gatherings.

Besides his lair in Great Men, Compton also owns a summer villa on the southern side of Mount Ralsius (see "The Bliss of Death" in *The Myth of Self*).

Compton's Estate

The grounds of Compton's estate are covered with stunted trees, rusted out trucks, scattered ruins, hulks of non-operational equipment, and other grim features. Those who think that this profusion of clutter provides ample cover for an intrusion should be aware that the mastiffs guarding the grounds are only the more visible form of defense. In addition to electronic alarms (and anti-personnel devices?) lurking among the clutter, there are rumored to be black magic wards that will shrivel your genitals, melt your eyes, or riddle your bones



Illustration by H.J. McKinney

with small, hairy worms. It could be that these magical wards are simply rumors, but do you want to test their veracity?

The Glorious Lords also provide security for Compton.

Compton has renovated the factory to his own liking, providing him with a spacious “mansion.” Within the building itself are several noteworthy rooms, including the following:

Ballroom

Once the warehouse of the factory, this huge room with thirty foot ceilings is now party central.

“Zoo”

A room that houses chimeras produced by taxidermy. The body parts of various animals have been forced together to create strange abominations. If you ask Sir Arthur nicely, perhaps he’ll show you his secret collection, the one that includes human anatomy in these dubious works of art.

Inner Sanctum

A room devoted to the study and practice of black magic. Those who have been there report feeling the sensation that someone was watching them.

Library

An impressive collection, including many original works on alchemy.

Gallery

The paintings are mostly oils in surrealist style. Titles include “Blistered Tongue,” “Impaled on the World,” “Suzy’s Eleventh Finger.” The gallery also includes macabre sculpture and implements from around the world, including Egyptian canopic jars (used to hold a mummy’s internal organs) and the hooks that the embalmers used to draw the brain out through the nose of the deceased, Javanese shadow puppets representing demons, an authentic French guillotine, a vise

for crushing testicles (one of the line mass-produced in the old Soviet Union), and other gruesome trophies from around the world.

GMCs

Sir Arthur Compton

Patron of Decadence

Something of a celebrity in the Edge, Compton makes his personal interest in decadence a public affair. He sponsors artists whose styles tend toward the grotesque and nihilistic, surrounds himself with disturbed bennies, and interferes with events in the Edge when doing so furthers his unique esthetic. He can be found holding picnics in vacant lots in Great Men, shocking guests at ritzy parties, and dining out with similarly wealthy tourists who share his dark outlook. His greatest claim to fame, however, is his penchant for throwing elaborate parties at his “mansion.”

Englishman, age 62, 182 cm, 65 kg, thin, close-cropped white hair, always impeccably dressed.

Languages: English, Latin, Greek, Arabic, Hebrew (mostly written).

Hit Points: 18 (unnatural stamina)

Magic Pool: 8 shots, but has usually spent 1 or 2 of them on “Gentle Touch” (see below).

Traits

The Black Hand, 3 dice (2 dice on account of “Slowing Down” flaw) — Compton is skilled at a secret martial art practiced by Europe’s occult underground. It consists largely of groin shots, eye gouging, elbows to the neck, and other “cheap shots.” (Smooth movement)

Gentle Touch (spell, level 12) — The Gentle Touch entails a five minute ritual that “charges” the caster. After that ritual, the caster can activate the spell by touching a person. (Touching someone does not automatically activate the spell; the caster must will it into effect.) Unless that person can resist with a roll at least equal to 12, the target loses all force of will for three hours. Until

the effects wear off, the target will go along with what people around him suggest. If the spell is not used within 6 hours, the “charge” dissipates. The caster may cast the spell several times to store several “charges.” Compton usually has at least one charge active at all times. (Knowledge of old books)

Wizard’s Safe Haven (spell, Level 9) — Requires Compton to draw a protective circle about himself. Minor spirits cannot enter the circle, and +9 is added to all of Compton’s rolls to resist spells cast into it. It has no effect on psychic powers. (Knowledge of old books)

Connections — He has enough special connections in various bureaus and establishments to be able to keep one step ahead of his enemies. (Has bennies)

Slowing Down, -1 die — Age and a decadent lifestyle have combined to wear out Compton’s body. He receives one fewer die than normal in all physical actions. (Old and worn-out)

Fowler

Manservant

See “The Bliss of Death” (in *The Myth of Self*), pp. 12-13.

Number Three

Bodyguard

“Number Three” is the name Compton gives to his most important bodyguard. (The first two were “Number One” and “Number Two,” each of which met grisly ends. Compton’s habit of numbering his bodyguards reflects the low value he puts on them personally and on human life in general.) Number Three accompanies Compton everywhere and therefore enjoys a life of some luxury, in exchange for being one of the most likely people in Compton’s entourage to leave this world in a permanent way sometime soon.

African man, age 30, 180 cm, 78 kg, well-muscled, clean-shaven, very short hair, several spiky silver earrings in left ear. Wears an armored jacket,

leather pants, sturdy boots, a cutlass on his hip, throwing knives in his jacket, and a first aid kit in a fanny pack.

Languages: French, English

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage with cutlass, X1 damage with throwing knives

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (brawn)

Armor: 1 die (armored jacket)

Traits

Bodyguarding, 4 dice — Includes spotting trouble before it happens, noticing concealed weapons, devotion to Compton, and a willingness to throw himself into the path of danger. (Watchful eyes)

Fighting, 3 dice — Mostly brawling, plus training in the Black Blade, a secret martial art using swords and daggers, practiced by the occult underground of Europe. (Bent nose, from repeated breaking)

First Aid, 3 dice — While his training mostly includes tending to mundane wounds, he has some familiarity with magical or psychic threats to life as well. (Carries first aid kit in fanny pack)

Trugga

Imprisoned Psychic Guardian

Deep in a secret chamber below Compton's house lies Trugga, an African girl of 14 years. She is tied to an examining table with nutrients constantly IV'd into her and waste cathetered out. Along with the nutrients are drugs that keep her in a disembodied (apparently unconscious) state. Beneath her on the table is a bone and leopard-skin charm that keeps her in a constantly agitated state. Trugga has been down here now for six years, and she is a dreadful sight. Her flesh is atrophied, her skin pale (for an African), her hair and nails long and unkempt. A simple blanket is draped over her naked body.

Trugga is Compton's unwilling psychic guardian. In her disembodied state, she roams the premises, ranting and raving inaudibly. When she detects a psychic presence, she attacks ferociously, following the trail in the

psychic field back to its source and attempting to devour the psychic. The charm under her body keeps her in a psychotic state, so she cannot be reasoned with.

Trugga cannot detect brains that are not psychically active, nor can she detect magical activity, so Compton and his cronies are safe. Any who might try to spy on or harm Compton with psychic powers, however, is in for a rude surprise. Trugga can strike just as a power is activated and before it has taken effect.

Trugga is one of the unfortunates who came to one of Sir Compton's parties and was never seen again.

African girl, age 14, 149 cm, 37 kg.

Languages: Swahili, French, a bit of English.

Psychic Pool: 10 shots

Traits

Devour Mind, 5 dice — Once she detects a psychic presence in the area, she attacks immediately. For every point by which she beats the target's psychic defense roll, the psychic takes 2 points of damage. Your typical psychic will be over and out within two or three rounds. If you wish to be merciful, rule that she loses contact when the target becomes unconscious. Psychics may suffer permanent psychic or physical damage from the attack. (Penetrating gaze, if she ever wakes up)

Aleksandr Rominosky

Bennie

Rominosky's special interest is execution. He can regularly be found at the Plaza of Justice to observe the hangings. He hopes to increase his fighting skill and sub-vocalization ability so that he will qualify as a cloak for Compton rather than a mere bennie. (Of course he may have to fake his own death and get plastic surgery before he could serve as a secret agent, since he is public about his service to Compton.)

He wears a red C on his shirt or jacket to let people know his relation to Compton. While he sometimes gets flak for his association, the "badge"

has often kept him from getting mauled or killed, as not many people want to earn Compton's wrath.

Slavic man, age 29, 176 cm, 72 kg, clean-shaven, straight black hair, red tattoo of an upside-down ankh on his left cheek, often wears a cutlass on his hip.

Languages: Polish, Russian, English.

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage with cutlass, X2 damage with dagger

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (martial training)

Psychic Pool: 5 shots

Traits

The Black Blade, 3 dice — A secret martial art using swords and daggers, practiced by the occult underground of Europe. (Well-muscled wrists)

Sub-Vocalization, 1 die — See p. 179. He knows better than to sub-vocalize on Compton's premises. (Mutters, even when not sub-vocalizing)

Flattery, 3 dice — He can win friends and influence people through what sounds like sincere and often subtle flattery (such as acting nervous around a woman rather than simply telling her she's good-looking). (Regularly drops compliments)

Decadent Lifestyle — Rominosky is not the healthiest person in the world, and he often suffers physical and emotional hangovers. Give him a penalty die on all actions when suffering from excess.

Story Ideas

- The characters come to one of Compton's parties and mingle in a very strange crowd. Perhaps they learn what happens to those missing guests (and have to act fast to keep from coming up missing themselves).
- Compton's bennies could be rivals or enemies of the PCs, using their connections and magical powers against them.
- A weird PC may wish to become a bennie of Compton's.

- Compton has something the PCs want, perhaps a book on magic with a formula they need or some other esoteric knowledge. Courting his favor may be an adventure in itself.

THE CUT-UPS

"Starfish and coffee,
Maple syrup and jam,
Butterscotch clouds, a tan-
gerine,
And a side order of ham.
If you set you mind free,
baby,
Maybe you'll understand.
Starfish and coffee,
Maple syrup and jam."

— *Prince, "Starfish and Coffee,"*

Type: Group? Gang? Conspiracy?

Rep: Lunatics.

Brief: A band of people who have gone past the boundaries of reality and use their unpredictability to fight Control Addicts on Al Amarja.

Allies: Earthlings (sometimes, in some ways).

Enemies: All Control Addicts.

Kergillians. Satanists. Mr. LeThuys. Movers. Pharaohs. It seems that Al Amarja is crawling with Control Addicts. But never fear — wherever there are Control Addicts, there are the Chaos Boys, riding the unspeakable geometry of the fractional dimensions.

The Cut-Ups Project is the Al Amarjan wing of the interdimensional Chaos Boys organization (if "organization" could be the right word). Dedicated to thwarting the plans of the sinister forces that seek to impose their will on all they see, the Cut-Ups don't attack the various conspiracies, but instead strike out at the very fabric of reality all of them depend on for their insidious plans. Their motto: "Dada was the theory, we are the practice." Their alternate motto: "This is the weather the cuckoo likes, armored division submissive to vernacular the world into a gambling birdhouse velocity."

The Cut-Ups Machine is an experimental reality-altering device that the Cut-Ups intend to activate whenever one of the groups gets too close to meeting its cruel goal. It's powered by words, torn or cut one by one from books, newspapers, and magazines. These scraps of paper are fed *en masse* into the Machine, and it emits sub-random waves that alter the very nature of reality, based on the words it plucks out of its hopper at random. People change, geography changes, the weather, basic physics, the nature of time, history — all can be swished about like bingo balls by the Machine.

The Cut-Ups include The Rather Quite Angry Kid, Doctor What, Mrs. Brinker and the Brain-Melting Brinker Twins, The Andalusia Dog, C. A. Radford, favorite children's cartoon character Tiffany Trilobite, a film director (internationally renowned for his surreal comic flair and cut-up animation style), and Robert "Doc" Cross.

Any and all of the aforementioned Control-obsessed groups would gladly destroy the Cut-Ups and their Machine if the opportunity presented itself. Somehow, reality never quite works that way...

For more information on the Cut-Ups and their enemies, be sure to check out the indispensable source-book *Weather the Cuckoo Likes* by Robin D. Laws.

Story Idea

One great thing about the Cut-Ups is that you can use them however you wish: as local "color," as unfathomable villains, as undependable allies, or (as they have sometimes served in my series) as blatant plot devices, doing whatever is necessary to move the plot as you want.

CHERYL D'AUBAINNE

"I don't care what you believe. Let's see you dance!"

—Cheryl D'Aubainne

Type: D'Aubainne.

Rep: An energetic, spiritual woman.

Brief: She runs the Temple of the Divine Experience. When Monique D'Aubainne dies, Cheryl hopes to use her position of leadership to support her bid for the office of President.

Allies: Monique D'Aubainne, Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne, Sommerites, Lydia Goodman, the Government, the Peace Force.

Enemies: Constance D'Aubainne (actually a rival rather than strictly an enemy), Glorious Lords and other Satanists.

The faithful at the Temple of the Divine Experience find Cheryl D'Aubainne something of a mystery. Her personal beliefs are hard to pin down. When you talk to her, she not only knows the vocabulary and doctrines of your particular branch of whichever religion to which you belong, but she seems to believe it, and she may well prove to have a deeper understanding of it than you. But she can't really believe it, can she? After all, she can talk the same way to the Missouri Synod Lutheran and the Mahayana Buddhist.

Cheryl D'Aubainne explains her facility with religious systems by saying, "Each religion is a path to the Summit, and from the Summit, one can see all the paths." In fact, she can determine how far along his path someone is, identify their next obstacle in that path, and talk to them about it. In this way she always seems wiser than those to whom she talks without seeming completely over their heads.

Those who do not believe in *chit*, the omnipotence that comes with enlightenment, sometimes decide that she must in fact be a psychic, reading the minds of those to whom she talks, though they may say she is doing so unconsciously.

Cheryl is celibate only in the strictest sense of the word.



GMCs

Cheryl D'Aubainne

Spiritual daughter of Her Exaltedness

Always active, intelligent, charming, and well-spoken.

She always wears a crystal trap in some item of jewelry. Usually a bodyguard nearby has a portable white thought generator, and she has even more impressive security in her living quarters outside of town.

French woman, age 51 (well-preserved), 169 cm, 59 kg, long, straight, blond hair, long nose.

Languages: French, English, Italian, Chinese, Hindi.

Traits

Spiritual Facility, 5 dice — Familiar with all brands of religion. This may be the result of authentic personal enlightenment or some kind of fringe power.

Leadership, 5 dice — Ruling is in her blood, though her style of leadership is less heavy-handed than that of her mother.

Simon Xin

Cheryl D'Aubainne's Bodyguard

Cheryl D'Aubainne's bodyguards are competent not only in defending her but also in blending in to her spiritual lifestyle. They are at home among the Sommerites, mystics, and holy people with whom Cheryl associates.

Simon is armed with SACQ, but only uses it in emergencies (naturally).

Use his stats for other members of Cheryl D'Aubainne's ample complement of guards.

Chinese man, age 30, 172 cm, 72 kg, black hair, dark complexion, smiles constantly.

Languages: Chinese, French, English.

Attack: 4 dice, X5 (armor-piercing) or X7 (hollow point) with Desert Eagle .44 Magnum automatic (has two pistols, one with hollow points, the other with armor-piercing rounds). Also X2 with tonfu.

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28 (pure guts)

Armor: 1 die (subtly reinforced clothing)

Traits

Bodyguarding, 4 dice — Includes fighting, staying alert, obeying orders, and so forth. (Relaxed but alert)

Spiritual Pursuits, 3 dice — Familiarity with various spiritual beliefs and practices, especially those popular at the Temple. (Can talk with people about religion)

Juana Salvador

Astral bodyguard

Juana is an astral being who possessed the body of a young Chilean woman. Juana is a devoted follower of

Cheryl and protects her from astral or magical attack. When any kind of magical assault is launched against Cheryl, Juana's body "faints" as she takes to the astral plane. There she can counter most magical manifestations and follow them back to their source. Once she has found the attacker (which takes approximately one round for every 1000 miles the spell-caster is distant), she attacks the culprit astrally. Those who die at her hands leave messy corpses.

Chilean mestizo woman, age 19, 164 cm, 65 kg, pudgy, black hair, brown eyes.

Languages: Spanish, Italian, broken English.

Attacks: 3 dice, X1 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 30 (supernatural stamina)

Astral Pool: 11 shots

Traits

Self-Defense, 3 dice — She has taken combat training just to be able to get out of trouble. (Relatively fit)

Thwart Magic, 5 dice — She can instantly detect magical attacks and head to the astral plane to block them. If she can roll higher than the roll for the incoming spell, it is blocked. If she rolls double the roll for the incoming spell, that spell is reflected back at the caster. (Emanates faint magical aura)

Astral Assault, 4 dice — Once someone has affected the astral plane through magic, Juana can find them and attack them astrally. Typically a person gets 2 dice for defense (though a wizard can gain two bonus dice by expending a shot from his magic pool). The damage factor is X2, and damage appears as gruesome lacerations on the physical body. (Emanates faint magical aura)

Story Ideas

If any of the PC's are spiritual in any extraordinary way, Cheryl D'Aubainne may take an interest in them and make an effort to acquaint herself with them. If they prove to be charlatans, she may rebuke or accept

them, depending on how you wish to play it.

CONSTANCE D'AUBAINNE

"My mother's hand is strong,
but mine is invisible."

—*Constance D'Aubainne*

Type: D'Aubainne.

Rep: A canny businesswoman.

Brief: Constance D'Aubainne runs Swaps and, through that position, controls much of the economic life on the island.

Allies: Monique D'Aubainne, Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne, the Government, Movers (member of Dionysus Cell), the Peace Force, the Net.

Enemies: Cheryl D'Aubainne (more rivals than enemies).

Just as Cheryl D'Aubainne is building a power base by leading the various spiritual communities on the island, so Constance is building her support by directing the island's economics. As the director of Swaps, she oversees the stock exchange and other markets, the First National Bank of Al Amarja, and various other economic groups. The capitalists of Al Amarja praise her for keeping taxes low, regulations lax, and business free to metastasize at will.

Constance's skill is two-edged. Personally, she is a commanding presence easily able to win people over to her point of view and to settle disputes between differing parties. Intellectually, she has an intuitive grasp of finance, abstracting the flow of cash as if it were energy moving through a system following the impersonal laws of economics.

Constance D'Aubainne is a Mover, though of course she cannot be sure just how high in the hierarchy she actually ranks. She also has ties to the Net, which is, after all, composed primarily of businesspeople rather than evil masterminds (or businesspeople who are also evil masterminds).

A current issue debated in economic circles is whether to free Al

Amarja's economy from the US dollar and allow anyone to issue their own currency. Let the laws of supply and demand determine whose currencies win out, say proponents. Constance is considering which side to take in this issue.

Constance D'Aubainne oversees the Golden Knights, Golden's security force. Through her connections, she has won them the right to carry weapons. They are highly trained, very orderly, and cooperate efficiently with the Peace Force, even though they have, of course, been infiltrated by various power groups.

GMCs

Constance D'Aubainne

Capitalist Daughter of Her Exaltedness

An incredible intellect is apparent in her sharp eyes and self-confident stance. She is usually seen in business suits, with her white hair under tight control.

Unmarried, she has been known to keep several lovers at a time, but none of them are business associates.

She wears a crystal trap on a pendant and also has a magic ring that she wears on a toe so as not to give it away. The ring makes her invisible on the astral plane, essentially making her immune to magical attacks, even those that produce physical manifestations (such as bolts of fire).

She usually stays near an active white thought generator.

French Woman, age 55, 171 cm, 61 kg, white hair, long, straight nose.

Languages: French, English, some German, some Japanese.

Traits

Leadership, 5 dice — A born leader, both of individuals and groups. (Confident stance)

Economics, 5 dice — She is amply skilled at both the theoretical analysis of supply and demand as well as the practical application of her knowledge to influence businesspeople, bankers, and politicians. (Wields numbers and percentages effortlessly)

Moving, 4 dice — Getting people to do and believe what she wants them to. Taught to her by the Movers. (Speaks rationally)

Anwar Hallajin

Constance's Bodyguard

Constance's bodyguards are very impressive, wearing uniforms that include tan outfits, a variety of weapons and gear, and reflective sunglasses. In addition to protecting her from harm, they add to her aura of authority.

Use Hallajin's stats for her other bodyguards. She certainly also has bodyguards who blend in with the crowd. These guards will have similar fighting stats but not all of the gear.

He is armed with SACQ, but only uses it in emergencies (naturally).

Iraqi man, age 29, 171 cm, 70 kg, black hair, tanned skin, moustache.

Languages: Arabic, French, English, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 4 dice, X5 (armor-piercing) or X7 (hollow point) with Desert Eagle .44 Magnum automatic (has two pistols, one with hollow points, the other with armor-piercing rounds). Also X2 with tonfu.

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28 (guts)

Armor: 1 die, subtly reinforced clothing

Traits

Bodyguarding, 4 dice — Fighting, spotting trouble, loyalty to Constance, and intimidating people. (Firm demeanor)

Athletics, 3 dice — Training keeps him in good shape, allowing him to run, jump, and climb with skill. (Trim)

Typical Golden Knight

Attack: 3 dice, X4 with Beretta 92F (9mm automatic pistol), X2 with truncheon.

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (trained toughness)

Traits

Guarding, 3 dice — Includes fighting, spotting hidden weapons, intimidating suspicious characters, etc. (Uniform)

Etiquette, 3 dice — Knows how to act among the wealthy so as to assure them that they are important people. (Says "Sir" or "Madam" to people in business suits)

Story Idea

Constance may make an appearance if the PCs involve themselves in redirecting the island's cash flow, but, as a Mover, she is wary of letting anyone know exactly what she is up to.

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE D'AUBAINNE

Because of his reclusiveness, he hardly counts as a force to be reckoned with, except within the Terminal. See p. 80.

MONIQUE D'AUBAINNE

"Government is not reason, it is not eloquence, it is force. Like fire, it is a dangerous servant and a fearful master."

—George Washington

Type: President.

Rep: Not to be messed with.

Brief: A dictator with a strong self-preservation instinct.

Allies: Cheryl D'Aubainne, Constance D'Aubainne, the Government, the Peace Force, Movers, Pharaohs.

Enemies: Earthlings, Cut-Ups.

Her Exaltedness, Monique D'Aubainne, Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of the Island, is the absolute ruler of Al Amarja and has been since she bought the place from Mussolini in 1940. Unsullied by such ideals as anti-Communism, Communism, Capitalism or other abstract guidelines, she has built a very nice world for herself and her family and friends. She sincerely hopes that other people can find hap-

piness on Al Amarja as well, but she doesn't lose much sleep over it.

She is deeply entangled in various plots, especially those involving the Movers and the Pharaohs. She knows about the Pharaohs, and they have promised her a position of power and luxury when they assume control. She is also a high level Mover leader, and they have helped her a great deal in exerting power on the island and abroad. Currently she is valuable to both groups, and they are vying for her loyalty.

She relies on the Pharaohs to provide Apep's Breath for medical treatments to maintain her health. Dr. Nusbaum is trying to find a way to synthesize Apep's Breath, so that she will not be dependent on the Pharaohs, while the Movers have already captured an Aphid to present to her should the Pharaohs withdraw support.

GMCS

Monique D'Aubainne

Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of Al Amarja

Incredibly well-preserved, Monique D'Aubainne strikes awe into the hearts of most people she meets. She wears only the most elegant, flattering, and fashionable clothes and jewelry.

Thanks to ground-breaking medical advances by Dr. Nusbaum (with a little help in the form of Apep's Breath from friendly Pharaohs), Monique has robust health and relatively youthful looks.

French woman, age 79 (looks about 60), 174 cm, 63 kg, curly white hair, long nose.

Languages: French, English, German, some Spanish.

Traits

Leadership, 6 dice — Very few people could have held the reins on Al Amarja this long. That Monique D'Aubainne has done so is a testament to her almost unearthly skill at leading people. (Complete confidence)

Personal Manipulation, 5 dice — Currying favor, intimidation, reading body language, subterfuge, straightfacing — you name it, she can do it. (At ease in any social situation)

Story Idea

While the PC's may see her regularly in *Al Amarja Today* or on AATV, she is cautious and busy enough to make an actual appearance in the series only rarely, if at all. When she does, it can either be a momentous event marked by strip searches, heavy security, curious onlookers, and so on, or she could pop up where she is least expected. ("Fancy meeting you here.") Primarily, she works best as a distant, awesome power, more a force of nature than a person.

DEEPS

Surely one of the most unusual subcultures of *Al Amarja*, the Deeps are described in "Deep Troubles" (in *The Myth of Self*).

DELTA EPSILON THETA

"The only knowledge absolutely attainable by man is that life is meaningless."

—Leo Tolstoy

Type: Fraternity.

Rep: Weird, scary guys.

Brief: Nihilist students who prefer black clothes and dismal personal philosophies.

Allies: Alpha Rho Tau (sister sorority).

Enemies: Sigma Omicron Beta.

Poets who write odes to excrement, philosophers who relish human stupidity, authors who try to evoke boredom in their readers — these and more will be found at the Deth frat house, often drinking hard liquor or taking nightmare. They impress the women of Alpha Rho Tau with their sensitivity.

Their rivals are the Sigma Omicron Betas, but conflict is gener-

ally kept to a minimum. The Sigma guys are bigger and stronger, but the Deths are fully capable of lacing the Sigmas' drugs with strychnine. Both frats are scary, albeit in different ways.

GMCs

Rigor Kwasek

Nihilistic Poet

Rigor has majored variously in psychology, religion, English, and philosophy in the university. He is currently "undecided." Since he views college as a "fascist institution designed to break individuals of their precious, private insanities," he is not too concerned about graduating, but the money from home would stop if he were to drop out of school, so he's still hanging in there.

Rigor often uses LSD, hash, and pot in an attempt to extirpate his "self" and transcend his ugly life.

Al Amarjan man of Slavic and African descent, age 21, 175 cm, 61 kg, brown skin, bald (shaved) head, scars in sunburst pattern originating from right eye. Wears black, baggy clothes, often barefoot.

Languages: English, Hindi, Sanskrit, some Latin.

Attacks: 2 dice plus penalty die

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 10

Traits

Liberal Education, 3 dice — He has dabbled in several different fields of study, but is an expert in none. (Makes inaccurate allusions to obscure authors)

Poetry, 3 dice — He is a gifted poet, though his recent habit of writing poems consisting entirely of nonsense syllables has made his work inaccessible to the public. ("Quotes" his own poems; it sounds like babble)

Scrawny, penalty die — Subsisting on a diet of mac and cheese, supplemented by baked beans and peanut butter sandwiches, has made Rigor thin and weak. He receives a penalty die on rolls that involve strength or size (but not on defense rolls, since he can easily move

his light body out of harm's way). (Scrawny)

Hallucinogens, ? — When on drugs, Rigor may suffer another penalty die on most actions, though his poetry may benefit. (Espouses apparently important but actually fallacious beliefs)

Story Ideas

Rigor saw something very important at a party held by Sir Arthur Compton. The PCs have to find him and convince him to reveal the information. Since physical abuse fulfills his self-image as the persecuted genius, it won't do much to get him to sing. Perhaps the PCs have to concoct a bizarre story with which Rigor would sympathize.

THE DOG-FACES

"Warning: This establishment protected by the Dog-Faces."

—the statement that businesses in *Four Points* display, provided they've been making their payments on time

Type: Gang.

Rep: Violent, bloody, unpredictable; but at least they sometimes keep the streets safe.

Brief: Molly, the Queen-Mother of Baboons, runs a gang composed primarily of partly-domesticated baboons. Businesses in the *Four Points Barrio* pay her protection money, and she protects them. She also holds a local monopoly on drug wholesaling.

Allies: Dmitri of Dmitri's Fix-It Shop (p. 87).

Enemies: Aries Gang, Glorious Lords.

Molly was just a friendly degenerate with three baboons she kept as pets and lovers, until her friend Dmitri Vatsavos of Dmitri's Fix-It Shop "repaired" her radio. Her baboons became more intelligent and obedient over the next few weeks, and when they tore apart the landlord who had come to collect back rent, she

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

realized she had a means to raise herself out of anonymity. She imported more baboons, who soon became intelligent and faithful as well. In a bloody coup, notable for the number of body parts missing from the conquered, she defeated the ruling Serpent's Kiss gang and set herself up as the protectress of Four Points. She hired several thugs to lead packs of baboons through the streets, dealing with danger and eliminating competition in the drug trade. She now makes an excellent living as the wholesaler of drugs in Four Points (retail sales being beneath her notice) and as the first line of defense for the inhabitants.

Her thugs patrol with up to six baboons that can kill, maim, and hold at bay opponents on command. After a while, though, the baboons revert and must return to the Jungle for reconditioning by the "radio."

The Jungle

Molly bought a burned out building for her headquarters and now calls it "the Jungle." (The fact that wild baboons don't live in the jungle is lost on her.) Her elegant quarters on the top floor include a jacuzzi, an impressive entertainment system, a luxurious and imaginative bedroom, the latest supply of drugs for the barrio, and the treasury (mostly in gold and dia-

monds). She also keeps an MP5 sub-machine gun hidden here, strictly for emergencies.

On the floor below is the conditioning center, where baboons stay in a locked room with the "radio" on 24 hours a day. Baboons tend to need a day of conditioning for every week spent without it. Since she can condition about six baboons at a time, this means she maintains about forty baboons at a time, with six or so being reconditioned at any time.

The conditioned baboons spend their time roaming the hulk of the Jungle, on patrol, or enjoying the attentions of their Queen-Mother. Also living in the Jungle are eight



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

thugs that work for her and patrol with the baboons. Currently Molly is allowing the baboons to breed so that she will not have to import others to replace casualties. She hopes that baboons exposed to the radio from birth will be particularly intelligent and obedient.

Three elevators still operate in the building; they are bare, skeletal, and dangerous. The interior, except for the luxurious upper floor, is broken down, burned out, sporadically lit, filled with baboon droppings and leavings from their meals, and generally creepy.

Baboon Patrols

The patrol of three to six baboons, with a thug in the lead, makes the rounds, checking on drug dealers to see if they are selling drugs that they did not buy from Molly. They also investigate crimes and locate those who have endangered clients. As they travel, they pick up protection fees that are due.

If the thug were to be killed or incapacitated, the toughest baboon in the group would take charge and probably attempt to return to the Jungle. Molly keeps track of the patrols, and when a thug gets taken out, she immediately dispatches another to find the baboons and take the man's place. The baboons will only follow humans that they know from the Jungle.

Patrols do not go beyond Four Points, though the insubstantial borders between barrios are sometimes fought over.

Emergency Service

The Dog-Faces have an emergency number. Clients in Four Points can call for emergency assistance, which generally consists of at least one "squad" car driven by a thug and carrying three to six baboons.

Baboon Patrols in Play

PCs will meet baboon patrols when they enter Four Points, but the patrols are likely to ignore them, having business to see to. If engaged in any pro-

longed fight in Four Points, they are likely to attract a patrol, which probably will attack whoever remains standing once the fight is over.

GMCs

Typical Baboon

A baboon can bite through your wrist, so watch out. They are incredibly strong and fierce, on top of which Molly's conditioning has made them somewhat intelligent.

Male chacmas, 115 cm long, 40 kg or more, black and gray fur, arched tail. (Females mass about 20 to 25 kg and are kept in the Jungle for breeding.)

Attack: 4 dice, X3 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 20 points of bestial resilience

Traits

Shredding People, 4 dice — With speed, agility, strength, and fangs, they can eviscerate enemies with ease. Their favored tactic is to gang up on enemies and dart in to bite them on unprotected areas, especially the buttocks. This harassment generally slows the victim until he is too weak to mount a decent defense, and the baboons close in. If forced to, however, the baboons are more than capable of charging into a melee and dicing their opponents. (Fangs)

Athletic, 4 dice — They can run, leap, dodge and climb with amazing facility. (Powerful legs)

Keen Senses, 3 dice — Good at tracking by smell, hearing ambushers, and so forth. (Constantly nosing around)

Bad at Maintaining Morale, 1 die — Against large numbers of determined warriors who can dish out as much as they take, the baboons are likely to revert to instinctive ways and scuttle out of the fight. If they aren't winning the fight within fifteen seconds (five rounds), they're not likely to stick around for more. Until they are on the losing side of a fight, however, they are fearless. (Hang together in groups)

Joey Ko

Typical Dog-Face Thug

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (brawn)

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice (Gruff manner)

Traits

Commanding Baboons, 3 dice

(Repertoire of standard orders)

Story Idea

- The PCs may regularly confront the Dog-Faces when in Four Points. Most of these encounters may be disturbing but will not be life-threatening. On the other hand, criminal activity in Four Points may bring a pack of baboons running, snarling, and just waiting to get another taste of human flesh.
- One of Molly's locally-born baboons takes particularly well to conditioning and gains human-level intelligence. It learns to understand human speech and to comprehend the situation in which his brethren suffer. He flees from the Jungle and runs across the PCs. Using hand gestures and a serious version of charades, it communicates its story, and its plea: it wants to destroy Molly and bring its people back to its homeland. Will the PCs help? If they do, they can assume the position of power that she now holds, or broker that position off to an allied gang. If they do not arrange for someone to step in in Molly's place, they unwittingly plunge Four Points into open battle as various gangs attempt to carve out large chunks of the territory for themselves.

Once Molly gains permission from other gangs, she will send patrols across the city to find the missing baboon, the one that seemed so promising.

THE EARTHLINGS

"There are thousands hacking at the branches of evil, to one who is striking at the roots."

—Thoreau

Type: Altruistic Conspiracy.

Rep: None, secret.

Brief: A large, intercontinental conspiracy of altruism, using the enemy's weapons of secrecy, sabotage, and even mind control for the good of humanity.

Allies: Lydia Goodman, Neutralizers.

Enemies: Glorious Lords, Movers, Monique D'Aubainne.

The Earthlings go by many names in many lands, and have had even more names through the centuries. No matter the manifestation, this conspiracy has always sought the greater good for humankind. Their philosophy attracts a mixed lot, from secular humanists to mystics. All of them, however, are devoted to fighting evil as productively as possible.

Initiates

Initiates among the Earthlings are usually led to believe that they work for a much smaller organization than they actually do. The Earthling leadership maintains several front organizations, some secret and some public, that recruit and judge members. Those who prove themselves to be honest, loyal, trustworthy, and valuable are brought into the greater secrets of the organization and told more about the organization's extent.

The Courageous

Those initiates that excel at the dangerous aspects of aiding humankind are known as "the courageous" or "courageous ones." They act as operatives, infiltrating enemy organizations, assassinating those that the world would be better off without, and generally doing what secret agents do, but for altruistic goals.

The Compassionate

Those initiates who show talent at caring for others are inducted into the ranks of "the compassionate."

"Compassionate ones" work either secretly, helping the courageous ones when the going gets rough, or publicly, as influential clergy, health care workers, and psychotherapists. Naturally, those who are public do not acknowledge any connection with the Earthlings.

The Learned

Those who have a gift for learning and teaching are invited to join "the learned." Like the compassionate ones, they either work secretly to aid the efforts of the courageous, or publicly, teaching the public, often with hidden agendas that are not apparent in the surface curriculum.

The Wise

Once a courageous, compassionate, or learned one has proved capable through years of service, he may be voted into the upper circle of "the wise." These are the leaders, who direct the actions of the three groups under them. Most of their plans are aimed toward improving humanity's lot on this planet, but often they set out to improve or test the moral fiber of their underlings as well. Thus some of the challenges faced by the courageous, the compassionate, or the learned are artificial situations arranged by the wise in order to teach these underlings or to learn more about them.

It is the wise who ultimately set the policies and goals for the Earthlings. Their overriding concern is human virtue. They concern themselves more with people's mental or moral states than with their physical ones. Ideally, they see humans as capable of wisdom, love, happiness, serenity, security, and confidence; and they oppose those things that undermine individuals' attempts to reach this level of maturity.

The Earthlings oppose dogma, censorship, government interference in private life, soul-sapping drug use,

oppression, and inequality. In direct confrontations, the courageous do most of their work against individuals and groups (multinational corporations, terrorist organizations, and secret societies) who try to gain power over others. In the overall plan as laid out by the wise, however, these dramatic, covert operations are only a small part of the Earthlings' operations. The compassionate and the learned are subtly doing battle with humankind's more abstract enemies: apathy, ignorance, fear, misunderstanding, racism, and intolerance.

Earthlings' Actions

The Earthlings' skill at secrecy makes it difficult to know what they have been responsible for, but they may have had a hand in the following events:

The Soviet Bomb — Helping the Soviet Union gain nuclear weaponry prevented a dangerous US hegemony, many conventional wars, and possibly a nuclear strike from the US against the USSR. It also gave Communism a chance to grow and discredit itself; if the Soviet Union had fallen by force rather than internal dissatisfaction, Marxism would still be regarded as a credible doctrine in intellectual circles.

Visual Communications — Earthlings have sped the development of visual communication, which brings images from across the world into people's homes and prevents governments from controlling what the people know. (The Earthlings, however, have had a hard time keeping television out of the control of the Movers and Pharaohs.)

World Hunger — Over the last 25 years, the Earthlings have dispelled the myth that people starve because there is not enough food. It is now generally understood that food distribution is the problem, not food production.

Political Sabotage — By keeping the Republicrats from fielding competent candidates for US president, the Earthlings have laid the

groundwork for public acceptance of a new party that will try to undo the damage that the Republocrats have caused the nation.

GMCs

Joana d'Fabelle

A Courageous One

D'Fabelle, originally from the streets of Rio De Janeiro, has come to Al Amarja on the trail of a Mover operative.

Brazilian mulatto woman, age 30, 165 cm, 60 kg. Bronze skin, short hair combed back from her face.

Languages: Portuguese, Spanish, English

Attack: 3 dice (wrestling only, penalty die with other fighting styles)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (determined)

Traits

Extremely Perceptive, 4 dice —

Living on the streets has taught her to judge people by body language, detect sneaks, and spot clues. She works mostly by watching a situation until she sees her target's weak spots. Only then does she move in. (Hangs back from crowds, observing)

Excellent Morale, 4 dice — She is fiercely committed to the Earthlings and their mission. Turning her from her mission through threats or enticements is difficult to impossible. (Demeanor of inner strength)

Good Wrestler, 3 dice — Her wiry body packs a surprising amount of strength, and the Earthlings have taught her well. She excels at disarming, pinning, immobilizing, throwing, tackling, and other effective but non-lethal techniques of dealing with assailants. She can also use her knife when she needs to, but tries not to get

herself into situations in which doing so is necessary. (Wiry body)

Dr. Fernando Rodriguez

A Compassionate One

Dr. Rodriguez works in the D'Aubainne Hospital as a surgeon. His remarkable bedside manner has sped the recovery of many patients. In addition to repairing patients' bodies, Dr. Rodriguez injects thoughts and suggestions into his conversations in an attempt to heal patients' hearts and minds. He has a remarkable knack for judging people and telling them what they need to hear. Through his well-placed words, he has saved marriages, eased addictions, built self-esteem, healed family relationships, and more. Dr. Rodriguez also serves as a low-level informant for the Earthlings on what's going on in the D'Aubainne Hospital, and when other Earthlings need special



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

medical care, he can see to it that they receive the attention they need.

Spanish man, age 40, 172 cm, 76 kg, black hair, tanned skin.

Languages: Spanish, English, some Catalan.

Excellent Intuitive Therapist, 4 dice — Dr. Rodriguez can quickly see what's troubling a person and decide what they need to hear to improve their lives.

Good Surgeon, 3 dice — Though not technically the best surgeon in the hospital, Dr. Rodriguez does put a lot of heart and care into his operations, and it shows. His excellent recovery record, however, comes from his uncanny ability to interact with his patients before and after surgery, giving them the spirit to help heal themselves.

Dr. Paulo Montserrat

A Learned One

Though his field is ostensibly history, Dr. Montserrat is actually teaching a secret curriculum of tolerance and goodwill. His history classes, enabled by his astonishing teaching skill, encourage the students to take on the perspective of the people they study. Once students have developed the ability to see the world through another's eyes, some of them, at least, will use this ability in present life and gain a better understanding of and appreciation for people who are different. Dr. Montserrat is sure to be a target of Throckmorton aggression as the Throckmorton operatives grow in power (see Throckmorton Operatives, below).

Catalan male, age 32, 176 cm, 72 kg, short black hair, smokes a pipe.

Languages: Catalan, Spanish, English, Latin.

Traits

Exceptional Teacher, 5 dice— Includes his ability to slip a secret agenda unnoticed into the curriculum. (Has several Teacher's Awards from students)

Nick Mallet

Escaped TV Character

See "The Fürchtegott File" (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 104.

Story Idea

If the PCs are "good people," more or less, they may work with the Earthlings in any variety of capacities.

First, the Earthlings anonymously hire the PCs for a mission of some kind. Based on the PCs' performance, the Earthlings decide either to forget about them or to find a way to use them more often.

If the Earthlings want to use the PCs and possibly induct them into the secret society, they first set up a front, such as a semi-licit business or a small secret society. The front might present itself as altruistic, or it might seem like just another power-seeking organization. This front hires or initiates the PCs. The PCs provide their various skills, and the front provides money, training, knowledge, and protection. During this phase, the PCs perform many missions for the Earthlings, including some that are tests of their ability, loyalty, and altruism. This relationship may be ideal for your playing group; the connection to the Earthling front provides the PCs with direction, information, and aid.

Once the PCs prove that they are loyal, trustworthy, skilled, and humanitarian, the Earthlings may decide to let them know about the true organization. Perhaps only select PCs will be inducted, or perhaps the whole group is worthy. Then again, as long as the PCs are doing well for the Earthlings while working for a front organization, the Earthlings may decide to keep the façade going indefinitely.

Make the switch from front organization to Earthling membership when the players are fully ready to take their own initiative and when they PCs have proved worthy members. Once inducted as true Earthlings (probably as courageous ones), the PCs will have much greater freedom in deciding which threats to pursue and how.

THE GARBAGE MEN

"It's all ours, and it's all free."

— *Scrounge*, referring to the bounty left in alleys and dumpsters throughout the Edge

Type: Public society.

Rep: They steal things if your garbage isn't good enough.

Brief: The Garbage Men live on the Brink. Every night they come up to the Edge and cart away garbage, which they then sort through for edibles and other useful items. They cultivate a disgusting appearance in order to be left in peace.

Allies: None.

Enemies: None.

Despite the modern appearances of the city, the Edge does not have modern sanitation services. Instead, they rely on a caste system similar to that found in Egypt: A group of people has the responsibility to take garbage, and in return can keep all the valuables they scrounge.

Within the caste itself is a hierarchy that determines how high up the Brink one can live. When garbage is first dumped down from the Edge, it lands on the first ledge, where the highest-ranking Garbage Men sort through it. That which they do not want, they dump down to the second ledge, where inhabitants do the same. Those that live on the sixth and lowest level are a truly miserable lot. They dump the remainings down into the sea.

At the top of this hierarchy are Scrounge and Theologia Okton, the husband-wife team that rules the Brink. Of secondary rank are the guards, operatives, and technicians in Okton's small crew. They live on the upper level with Okton and Scrounge.

GMCs

Sludge*Garbage Man Guard*

Guards oversee the steps that lead down to the uppermost terrace of the Brink, and Sludge is one of them. He has developed a special diet over the years, giving him an unusual weapon (see below).

He wears only a pair of ragged shorts, stained with multi-colored patches of organic matter, now sprouting life of their own. His entire body is covered with filth of various types.

Al Amarjan man, age 24, 183 cm, 69 kg, black, greasy hair, grime-covered skin.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with staff

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 18 (toughness)

Traits

Fetid Breath, 3 dice — When he opens his mouth and exhales air from his diseased lungs over his carious teeth, the result is a mind-assaulting stench. If his roll beats a character's toughness roll, that character may feel nauseous (penalty die on actions) or even pass out. Sludge gets one roll at the beginning of an encounter. (Fetid breath)

Fighting, 3 dice — Not formally trained, but tough and vicious. (Trim body)

Resistant, 4 dice — The Garbage Men are genetically resistant to disease and poisons, but Sludge has honed this trait to perfection. (In good health)

Story Idea

An important diary, fringe science device, or magical item has been lost in the garbage, and the PCs go to the Garbage Men to see if it can be retrieved. Convincing the guard to let them see Scrounge or Okton is difficult enough, but then the PCs must convince the leaders to help them.

Effects of Seklut Poison

The immediate effect lasts for eight to twelve hours as the metabolism adjusts itself to the seklut poison. The long-term effect is permanent. Most victims of the poison also suffer a less significant side effect. These effects are only examples, and many other effects are possible. A side effect (not correlated with the main effect) usually accompanies seklut poisoning.

Immediate Effect

Fevered semi-consciousness
Pain & heat under skin
Hallucinations
Muscle spasms
Uncontrollable shivers
could be anything

Long-Term Effect

general ill health
boosted senses
brain damage
increased toughness
quickened reflexes
strange things: psychic powers, change in body configuration, poisonous sweat, etc.

Side Effects

sensitive to bright light
strange taste in food & drink
nervous tic or twitch
bizarre body odor
change in color of skin, eyes, teeth, or hair
obsession

THE GLORIOUS LORDS

"We have chosen sides in the Great Battle. Drenched in the blood of our Enemy, we shall march victorious into Heaven."

—*Avan Bloodlord, leader of the Glorious Lords*

Type: Satanist gang.

Rep: Dangerous, psychotic, blood-thirsty, evil, perverse; but they throw great parties.

Brief: Avan Bloodlord commands the largest Satanist group in Al Amarja, a large, violent gang that dominates the Great Men Barrio.

Allies: Sir Arthur Compton.

Enemies: Aries Gang, Earthlings, Dog-Faces, rival Satanist gangs.

No one rises to power on Al Amarja without an edge. Avan

Bloodlord runs a huge gang of loyal, dangerous Satanists, and he uses their muscle to provide himself and his chosen circle with the best that decadence has to offer. With all the Satanists on the island, Avan needed some advantage to achieve this level of power. His advantage is a small thing: a centipede called the golden seklut.

The golden seklut is a Malaysian centipede that usually grows to a length of up to 40 cm. The Pharaohs, however, once had a small nuclear facility hidden in the Malaysian jungle which they abandoned when the safety systems were failing. This facility has been leaking radiation into the surrounding jungle for decades, and several of the local species have mutated as a result. One of the strangest mutations is that some of the golden sekluts have produced very small young, only 3 cm long. These smaller centipedes also have a very strange poison.

Mover operatives investigating the secret nuclear generator found these strange centipedes and took some of them back to Al Amarja for examination. Here, as luck would have it, a young Satanist and his crew of thugs attacked and killed the operatives in a feat of random violence. The young Satanist was Avan Bloodboy, who found the centipedes, found out what they did, and built a huge Satanist gang based on the power of their strange poison. He also changed his name to "Bloodlord."

The poison of the mutant sekluts has a different effect on each person who suffers its effects. In small doses it usually causes minor irritation, but in larger doses it interacts with the victim's metabolism and creates some very strange effects indeed. When Avan inducts someone into the Glorious Lords, he straps them naked to a table and covers them with mutant sekluts. The agitated struggles of the inductee are usually enough to get the sekluts to bite him repeatedly. After about fifteen minutes, Avan sweeps the sekluts away and waits eight to twelve hours for the poison to have its effect.

Those who receive a benefit from the effect of the poison are said to have received "Lucifer's Blessing." They now become full members of the Glorious Lords. Those who suffer ill effects are said to have suffered "Lucifer's Curse." They become servants for the Glorious Lords. Avan Bloodlord says that the effect one receives from the seklut poison depends on how Lucifer judges your soul. Those who are fit for membership in the Glorious Lords receive blessings, and those who are unfit receive curses. (Actually, random elements of individual metabolism are the determining factor.)

Whether the effect is good or ill, the victim is now addicted to the seklut poison. Going without it for a day brings distinct discomfort, and after three days the victim is incapacitated with pain, convulsions, and nightmares. Left alone, such a person will probably die from dehydration, but with help may pull through the exceedingly painful process. Breaking

the addiction does not remove the long-term effect of the poison. Because the poison is highly addictive, even those who suffer ill effects and find themselves servants of cruel Satanists rarely leave the gang.

Since Satanists have no real connection to the supernatural or to their supposed deity, the power of the sekluts has given Avan Bloodlord the edge he needed to achieve dominance among the Satanists on the island. The strange powers of his followers have fooled many into believing that Avan really does have a deal or two with the Devil.

GMC's

The Blessed

These are those who received a benefit from seklut poisoning.

Description varies, especially because of Seklut effects. Most have tattoos, piercings, scars, and other gaudy displays of self-adornment.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, one other language (not necessarily fluent)

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Armor: 1 point, leathers

Traits

Bullying, 3 dice. (Sneer)

Fighting, 3 dice. (Always armed)

Seklut Effect — Could be anything "good." This trait may affect the combat stats.

The Cursed

These are those who received detrimental effects from poisoning. They are essentially low-lives (p. 155), with the added misfortune of being addicted to seklut poison. They serve as slaves to the Blessed.

Description varies. They receive whatever tattoos, piercings, brands, and scars that their masters wish.

Story Ideas

Glorious Lords serve as excellent combatants: tough (but not too

tough), weird (but not too weird), and everybody hates them. They also serve as "local color."

GLUGS

"We are humanity, and humanity shall prevail."

—*religious leader of the glugs*

Type: Secret race.

Rep: None.

Brief: Descendents of true human stock from pre-history, a peaceful race that holds what we know as humanity in contempt.

Allies: None.

Enemies: Pharaohs.

Al Amarja is home to one of the few remaining pockets of humanity left on the planet, the glugs. Millennia ago they had a world-spanning civilization that lived in harmony with nature and that offered peace to all citizens. This utopia, however, was destroyed by the Eight Evil Sages. These evil scientists created a mutant strain of human, a bestial strain that enjoyed violence and conquest, and that instinctively sought to follow powerful leaders. The scientists also created the Pharaohs to command these mutants. The Eight Evil Sages, however, were destroyed, ending their plan for world dominion, but the profligate mutants soon overran human civilization and set up their own cultures. That mutant race is the race that currently dominates the earth and thinks of itself as "human."

Glugs are harder than "normal" humans, and their taste in food runs to the bitter and putrid. They apparently have a different sense of taste and smell. They also see better in the dark.

The distinguishing feature for a slug is a slight ridge or crest that starts at the hairline above the forehead and goes to the back of the skull. In addition, glugs tend to have bulging eyes and body odor that can be taken as disgusting or interesting, depending on the smeller. Apparently a small set of chromosomes controls slug-ness, and the set is dominant. The chart on page 126 shows the

Mutant-Glug Crossbreeding Chart

P Glug	P Glug p glug	H Glug 50% h-g 50% p-glug	"Human" half-glug
H Glug	50% h-g 50% p-g	25% p-glug 50% h-glug 25% human	50% h-glug 50% human
"Human"	half-glug	50% h-glug 50% human	human

P Glug = Pure Glug

H Glug = Half Glug

"Human" = mutant human

Note: Since glug genes are dominant, a half-glug is physically a Glug, differing only from a pure-glug by the genes he might pass on to progeny.

results of cross-breeding with mutant humans.

Glugs are secretive, and have their own, ancient religion, that includes prostration before a winged bull icon, depicting the deity. When their prayers prove to their deity, Armzhak, that they are still worthy, he shall come and remove all "mutants" from the planet, and leave only glugs.

They still speak an ancient tongue unrelated to any mutant language, but it is a difficult and limited language. Now that Monique D'Aubainne has ruled its public use illegal, it is used only for a secret tongue and for worship. Note that in the glug language, the word "Glug" means simply "human being," and that glugs consider the name to have a nice ring to it.

Glugs secrete a special sweat during intercourse, producing a very subtle smell. In humid environments, this sweat almost forms a mist around the glug. Repeated exposure to a glug's sex-sweat leads to addiction. Therefore, glugs mate for life. They

literally become addicted to each other, and sex outside this bond is unsatisfying.

When glugs mate with mutant ("normal") humans, the humans often become addicted after repeated exposure, but the mutant humans have no comparable secretion. Glug affection for mutants humans, therefore, is limited to the kind of affection that mutant humans show for each other (and as the world repeatedly proves, that ain't much). Some male glugs who have lost their mates become "sowers," sowing the mutant gene pool with Glug genes. They seduce one woman after another in an attempt to impregnate them and thus make glugs more common in the population. These glugs, raised by mutant mothers outside of Glug society, will not benefit from Glug teachings, but if the glugs ever need to protect themselves from the mutants again, they want to have some glugs who have infiltrated mutant society and who can easily be won over to the cause of the true humans.

GMCs

Glugs*Survivors of True Humanity*

Glugs pass as "normal" humans in the Edge, and most of them have jobs and lifestyles that keep them out of the attention of those who surround them. Kin ties within the community provide a safety net against personal calamity and poverty, so few if any glugs are desperately poor. Most glugs, therefore, blend into the crowd, neither poor enough to warrant pity or disgust nor flashy enough to attract attention.

Description varies, though they tend toward the North African mix of genes that is so common on Al Amarja. They dress conservatively, but not conspicuously so. A glug may have earrings, other piercings, tattoos, and so on, but these decorations are not as flamboyant as those popular among the more extravagant crowd.

Traits

Tough, 3 dice — They are hardier than "normal" humans. (Rarely sick)

Psychic Resistance, 5 dice —

Glugs cannot use psychic powers or magic, but they also resist these powers easily. (Glug)

Glug Traits — Better night vision (bonus die on relevant rolls), strange taste in food, sensitive to stimulants, addictive sex-sweat, and slight ridge on skull. (Ridge)

Family — A glug in need can call on the resources of an extended family for assistance. (Socializes with family)

Blending, 4 dice — From childhood, glugs are taught not to attract attention from the mutants. Glugs are highly skilled at appearing innocuous, going unnoticed, presenting a bland and easily-forgotten appearance, and so on. (Doesn't stand out in a crowd.)

Others — Glugs have other traits representing their hobbies, jobs, etc. (Signs vary)

Federico Georno*Orphan Half-Glug*

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 29-30.

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

Subject: *Homo sapiens alamarhensis*

Anatomy: Physically, *Homo sapiens alamarhensis* is practically indistinguishable from *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Skin color is typical for the area, specifically a dusty brown common among Northern Africans. Facial features and cranial proportions tend toward the Nilotic, with one exception (see "Crest," below). Whether these racial features are universal among the *alamarhensis*, the result of cross-breeding with *H. sap. sap.*, or the independent product of environmental influences is yet to be determined.

Crest: A ridge or crest runs along the top of the skull, originating just above the hairline and continuing past the top of the skull. This crest, however, is typically hidden from view by facial muscles anchored to it. In the living *Homo sapiens alamarhensis*, the crest is not visible, though it would be palpable if one knew where to search for it. This ridge seems similar to ridges found in *Australopithecus robustus*, and in that species is thought to have been related to an herbivorous diet. The ridge served as an anchor for the powerful jaw muscles needed to grind vegetable matter. Vegetarianism does not seem universal among *alamarhensis*, so perhaps the ridge is vestigial.

Physiology: Two features make themselves immediately known in regard to *alamarhensis*: an aversion to stimulants and the secretion of powerful pheromones.

Stimulants have a much more powerful effect on *alamarhensis* than on *H. sap. sap.*, so much so that stimulant use is actually dangerous to them. The caffeine found in a cup of coffee can cause disorientation, and jumped coffee can cause psychotomimesis or coma. Nicotine has similar effects.

It is interesting to speculate whether this inability to use stimulants has caused *H. sap. alamarhensis* to fall behind *H. sap. sap.* in cultural advancement, as inability to control one's productivity through stimulants would reduce overall intellectual and physical productivity. Perhaps it is this physiological weakness that has kept *alamarhensis* a mere branch in the human family tree.

Alamarhensis apparently secretes a pheromone when sexually stimulated. Unlike *H. sap. sap.* pheromoids, this secretion is easily detected by both the male and female nose, though the scent is hard to label. Some call it "musky," "thick," "pungent," or "bestial." Those who are addicted to it have called it "heady" and "energetic."

Homo sapiens sapiens finds this secretion highly addictive, though reports from addicts are far too subjective to determine whether the pheromone itself has a euphoric or aphrodisiac effect per se. Certainly for the addict, euphoria and aphrodisia are common responses to the drug. The addict also finds sexual congress with *H. sap. sap.* to be dissatisfying.

Some information suggests that each *alamarhensis* has a distinct secretion, and that addiction involves addiction to the secretion of a specific *alamarhensis*. The secretions of other specimens might provide nothing more than a mild placebo effect for one going through withdrawal.

It is unknown whether the secretion has an addictive effect on others of the *alamarhensis* species, or whether it may have another, unpredictable effect.

(Note: Examine diet & obtain sample of secretion. Compare.)

Culture: My ability to examine *alamarhensis* in their native culture has been severely restricted by their habit of secrecy. Apparently some *alamarhenses* are very close-knit and secretive, while others, mostly young adult males, involve themselves in the "night life" of Al Amarja.

Story Idea

The existence of glugs is a very well-kept secret, not one to reveal early in the series. Solving this mystery may be tied into the Pharaohs in one of two ways: the PCs discover the glugs, and learn about the Pharaohs from them; or the PCs learn about the Pharaohs, and find the glugs as allies in the fight against them.

An early introduction to the glugs may be a female PC's romantic involvement with an addictive Glug lover. It may be just this involvement that eventually leads the PCs to discover who the glugs really are.

Prop

The scientific report on glugs (termed *Homo sapiens alamarhensis* by the scientist) on the facing page could have been written by just about any scientist on the island. It could come into the hands of the PCs through various means: on a computer disk they steal while raiding an oppenheimer's labs, in the files of Movers who have stolen it from the author, or on the corpse of someone who has fallen prey to any of the various violent factions on the island.

LYDIA GOODMAN

"We all do what we can, the best way that we can."

— Lydia Goodman

Type: Patron of Fine Arts, Sommerite.

Rep: Mrs. Goodman is a generous woman who helps struggling artists and supports the work of the Sommerites.

Brief: Mrs. Goodman uses her vast wealth to support the arts, but only the more refined and beautiful. The more grotesque and bizarre artists might have better luck trying to get Sir Arthur Compton as a patron. A confirmed Sommerite, Goodman provides much of the support for this cult, receiving loyalty from the Sommerites in return. She also has access to many of the



island's secrets, and works covertly to protect humanity. She is an ally of the Earthlings, but has not joined their organization.

Allies: Sommerites, Earthlings.

Enemies: Movers, Glorious Lords.

At the Temple of the Divine Experience

The Sommerites use the Temple every Tuesday for their services, and on these days Goodman "holds court." During the service (or performance, if

that's a more accurate term), she sets up a table in the balcony and talks with all who come to see her. She deals freely with non-Sommerites, though more than a few artists have converted to her cult in hopes of getting more favorable support.

These meetings, due to their public nature, generally include only Goodman's more public bennies and their accomplishments or requests. Her covert bennies and operatives come to her mansion for more privacy.

The Goodman Mansion

About ten kilometers southeast of the Edge stands the Goodman mansion. The grounds are dotted with impressive bronze and marble statues, and the interior is like one great piece of art, with icons, statues, paintings, mosaics, tapestries, and computer animated video screens in great profusion. Classical music and the unmistakable voice of Karla Sommers plays over the sound system, and even the air bears the gentle scents of incense or herbs.

Several rooms of the upper floor serve as Mr. Goodman's offices, where he communicates to his business contacts through a vast array of computers and phone systems.

The west wing of the mansion houses Goodman's special projects, such as the laboratory of Marsha Grunder (see GMCs below).

The mansion is guarded by high-tech surveillance systems, as well as a psychovore in Lydia's private chambers.

GMCs

Lydia Goodman

Patron of Fine Arts

A stately, composed woman in her fifties to whose features time has been quite kind. She is white, but a dark complexion reveals a mixed heritage. She deals politely with everyone she contacts.

White (mostly) woman, age 54, 170 cm, 67 kg. Has a full head of elegantly curled, black hair, highlighted with gray. She is usually seen in a long, stylish dress, wearing tastefully expensive jewelry.

Languages: British English, French, Spanish.

Traits

Imposing, 4 dice — Lydia has a powerful presence that she can turn on at will, making her seem authoritative and possibly intimidating. (Presence)

Resources — Thanks to Mr. Goodman, and the contacts she has

made herself, Lydia has access to money and information. (Jewelry)

Miguell Acão

Goodman's Bodyguard

A lean man from Brazil whose golden brown skin and kinky black hair show the influence of Portuguese, African, and South American blood. He serves as Goodman's personal bodyguard and is usually at her side. The two of them joke, touch, and talk with the familiarity of lovers, but no one knows whether the two have a physical relationship. Miguell speaks with a rich, soft voice and dresses very sharply. He is a Sommerite, but not particularly devout.

Brazilian man, age 25, 172 cm, 63 kg, kinky black hair, nicely dressed.

Languages: Portuguese, Spanish, English.

Attack: 4 dice, X1 damage

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 30 (wiry resilience)

Traits

Excellent Comportment, 4 dice — Miguell's every word, gesture, and article of clothing reveal a deep awareness of the image he presents to the world. (Refined demeanor)

Excellent at Capeira, 4 dice —

An art form that combines dance with martial blows. Not only can he dance like nobody's business, with flips, spins, and kicks, but he can launch swift strikes and sweeps. (Lithe body)

Nigel Goodman

Lydia's Husband

Mr. Goodman has a shrewd sense of business that has allowed him to amass a substantial fortune. While he and his wife have little in common other than shared experience through decades of marriage, they love each other and work well as a team. Nigel loves to make money, and Lydia uses it to good ends.

British man, age 63, 168 cm, 78 kg. Stooped, balding, and overweight.

Languages: British English, German, Spanish.

Traits

Excellent Businessman, 4 dice — His sense for market trends, ability to see through business propaganda, and daring let him score big in stock markets around the world. (Excessive wealth)

Unimpressive, penalty die — Mr. Goodman has a hard time commanding attention and respect. (Stooped posture)

Marsha Grunder

Goodman's Scientist, Bennie

An Australian aborigine who has cut off all ties with her people to pursue scientific research. She lives at the Goodman mansion where Lydia has directed her studies toward investigating MDA-Cubed and finding a cure for its addiction. Grunder has received special chemical samples and laboratory equipment from the Earthlings, but since the drug is of extraterrestrial origin (from the kergillians), she has had little luck in unlocking its secrets. She is considering giving up the project and instead inventing a powerful aphrodisiac that is not addictive, thus pushing MDA-Cubed out of the market.

Native Australian woman, age 33, 156 cm, 54 kg.

Languages: Australian English, a bit of French.

Traits

Chemical Genius, 4 dice — She has a deep, intuitive sense of how chemistry works, and is very skilled at lab applications of her hunches. (Carries faint chemical odor)

Ferdi Alli

Goodman's Operative

A young man of native Al Amarjan stock (i.e., an indecipherable racial mix) who serves as an operative for Goodman. He holds a job as a waiter at Sad Mary's (see p. 100), but has access to generous resources through Goodman. In addition to keeping an eye on things in general, he is currently trying to trace the supply of MDA-Cubed to its origin, without much luck.

Al Amarjan male, age 26, 190 cm, 86 kg, long hair braided into a noose.

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois, some French.

Attack: 3 dice, X2

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (rugged)

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice. (Big and tough)

Covert Operations, 3 dice —

Included adopting false roles, eavesdropping, spotting inconsistencies in lies, etc. (Rarely talks, so he can eavesdrop more easily)

Story Idea

If the PCs find themselves up against powerful foes who are concocting one devious plot or another, they may receive money, information, and manpower from Goodman to aid them. First, though, she will invite them to a party at her mansion where her ben-nies subtly question and observe them to determine whether they are virtuous enough to be trusted. Goodman may even have Alli approach them in the Edge posing as a criminal trying to hire them for some devious plot. If the characters accept, they are not let into Goodman's confidence or given assistance.

Mrs. Goodman may come to serve as a patron for the party.

THE GOVERNMENT

"Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

—John F. Kennedy

Type: "Democratic" government.

Rep: A bunch of self-serving, power-hungry crooks who make an easy living off of our sweat and toil while pretending to offer leadership.

Brief: A bunch of self-serving, power-hungry crooks who make an easy living off of the Al Amarjans' sweat and toil while pretending to offer leadership.

Allies: D'Aubainnes, Peace Force, Chris Seversen (uneasy)

Enemies: Cut-Ups

Since most people with eyes to see and ears to hear know that the government of Al Amarja is a scam, the government does not have to spend an exorbitant amount of money pretending to govern and offering "services" to the populace. Because of this, the government runs on a modest, balanced budget. Taxes are low, and the government rarely interferes with the man on the street. When foreigners disparage the government, Al Amarjans sometimes reply, "At least we know it's a scam, and at least it's not very expensive."

The government is not entirely useless. In order to continue to attract tourists, the government keeps roads in repair, works to maintain an active economy, and suppresses violence that threatens to get out of hand.

The government does not provide socialized education, socialized medicine, socialized public transport, or most other socialist services taken for granted in developed nations.

President

Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne is currently the president of the island, and has been since 1940. Elections held every four years confirm the populace's firm support in her person and her policies. (There is a separate entry in this chapter for Her Exaltedness; see p. 117.)

Senate

Twenty-five Senators decide matters of government policy, appoint friends to various bureaucracies, eat for free at the Senate cafeteria, and write unbounceable checks at the Senate Bank.

Bureau of Health and Welfare

Responsible for various projects on the island, such as the D'Aubainne Hospital and D'Aubainne Asylum.

Bureau of Universal Justice

The Al Amarjan judicial system is somewhat different from that of many other democracies.

Most cases, civil and criminal, are tried before magistrates of the Court of Petty Matters. Though you might not guess it from the name, the "Petty Matters" court actually handles most criminal cases from jaywalking to murder, and takes on civil cases as well. Now and then an order comes down from the Bureau of Universal Justice specifying a case is to be surrendered to the Higher Court — which means the personal adjudication of Her Exaltedness. Also, any magistrate's decisions are subject to review by Monique D'Aubainne.

Al Amarjan magistrates are allowed to take bribes, so long as they pass 57% along to the government as its share. (The magistrate's portion is also considered taxable income.) The cut from bribes is a major source of government revenue.

Some might see this system as being terribly corrupt. The typical Al Amarjan would respond that it's only what happens behind the scenes and between the lines in other countries; at least here you have no delusions about what you're dealing with.

See Asat Airapetjan, below.

City Government

See *Friend or Foe?*, p. 41.

Center for Paranormal Control

A branch of the DBI. See p. 61.

Customs & Immigration

See p. 81.

Democratic Bureau of Investigation

This organization gathers intelligence on Al Amarjans for use by the Government. International intelligence is handled by an unknown number of secret operatives who report only to Monique D'Aubainne.

Democratic Guard

The military, ostensibly to protect the island from invasion. Actually the only action they've seen is providing heavy weapons back-up for special Peace Force actions.

Peace Force

See Peace Force, below.

GMCs

Asat Airapetjan

Beleaguered Magistrate

Asat Airapetjan just wants to be left alone. His idea of paradise is a nice quiet room, a few degrees below room temperature, where he can get in

bed, pull the covers over his head, and just clear his mind of all thought and turmoil for hours on end. He hates fuss and struggle, loves peace and quiet. Maybe he shouldn't have become a magistrate in the notorious "Petty Matters" bureau of the Al Amarjan Bureau of Universal Justice. The job consists entirely of attempting to maintain composure in the face of constant bickering and wrangling. But Airapetjan had little choice in the matter.

Twelve years ago he stood before the court, falsely accused of a bizarre charge called Conspiracy to Commit Seditious Vandalism. His pleas of innocence fell on deaf ears. The magistrate pronounced him guilty before hearing arguments for the defense,

and gave him three choices. He could accept a two year recess during which he would be confined to the Detention Center. Or a severe beating administered by Peace officers, followed by deportation. Or Airapetjan could agree to take the magistrate's place. He did so, was immediately handed the man's judicial robes, and was instructed by the bailiff to start the next case.

Over the years Airapetjan has determined that other magistrates were "called to the bench" in the same manner. He has contemplated handing the position off many times — but sometimes magistrates are rearrested on the original charges when they do. Sometimes they are not. It all seems to depend on the whims of



Illustration by H.J. McKinney

the higher-ups, who might be influential senators, or Her Exaltedness herself. Airapetjan is still afraid to risk abandoning his post.

He has never been trained in Al Amarjan law. This doesn't seem to make much difference; he makes judgements, and they are let stand or overturned by the Higher Court. Airapetjan hates to be overturned by Her Exaltedness, because he doesn't want her to notice his existence. Therefore, in criminal matters, he decides sentences based on perceived government interest in the case. Wealthy or influential clients are let off with mild censure; the poor take the full force of the law. If high-ranking Peace officers show up in court, he's more punitive than if the testifying officer is a mere street soldier.

Airapetjan is as amenable to bribes as any other Al Amarjan magistrate. Like most judges, Airapetjan, all things being equal, decides on behalf of the highest bidder. For propriety's sake, these negotiations take place in chambers. In criminal cases, the victim's lawyer usually ends up bidding against the defendant's, with the government prosecutor present to make sure the magistrate declares the correct amount of the bribe and delivers the government its cut.

Armenian man, age 35, 168 cm, 75 kg, balding, sorrowful eyes with dark rings under them, jowly features.

Languages: Armenian, English.

Traits

Wealthy, 4 dice — As a bribe recipient for twelve years, Airapetjan has more money than he knows what to do with. He's a man of simple desires, and the only things you can do with money involve noise and stress. (Expensive suits)

Aerial Photographer, 3 dice — This was his trade before his ill-fated trip to Al Amarja. He worked for the Soviet government and was sent here on an exchange mission. Curiously enough, the Al Amarjan photographer sent to Armenia never returned either... (Is lenient with anyone who can chat knowledgeably about cameras)

Politics, 3 dice — Though not a participant in Al Amarjan politics — that would be his idea of Hell — he does keep his ear to the ground so he can make the right judgements in court. If somehow drawn out, he could explain the intricacies of the island's influence structure in precise detail. (Fearful expression)

Hates his job — Airapetjan is profoundly unhappy. He thinks he's living something worse than a Kafka novel. At least Joseph K only had to sit through one trial.

Rixa Bekker

CPC Hound

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 10-12.

Cyril Doros

Corrupt Senator

Cyril Doros is one of Al Amarja's most powerful senators. This is not because the Senate is especially powerful, but because Doros is a quisling, shamelessly devoted to the Pharaoh masters whose support grants him worldly power and influence.

Greek-Al Amarjan man, age 58, 172 cm, 113 kg. Wears stuffy suits, most often surrounded by a gaggle of assistants, bodyguards and pages.

Languages: Al Amarjan Patois, Greek, English

Traits

Government Contacts, 4 dice — Doros is extraordinarily well-connected. He is owed favors by countless Al Amarjan bureaucrats, and most of the rest either fear his influence or at least are amenable to his bribes. (Carries a personal digital assistant loaded with phone numbers)

Politician, 4 dice — He knows how to play the game like the pro that he is. (Fake smile.)

Quisling — He has sold out to the Pharaohs. This can be an advantage in giving him influence and resources; on the other hand, he may be the first up against the wall if Monique decides she needs to send the Pharaohs a dramatic message. (Wears an ancient gold ring of inscrutable origin — a gift from Prem K. Sharma)

John Krishna Mohammed

City Manager

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 40-42.

Anima Nee-Owoo

CPC Inspector

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 48-49.

Keewatin Razutas

Clerk at the Hall of Records

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 51-52.

Adriana Ruiz

Assistant Director of the DBI

See "In the SACQ" (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 33.

Sydney J. Weeks

2nd-Generation Senator

See "In the SACQ" (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 34-35.

Isil Ziya

DBI Cloak

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 70-71.

Story Idea

As tourists, the PCs are subpoenaed to testify before the Senate on their impression of the island. Ostensibly, they are there to help the Senate decide how to make the island more attractive to tourists, but the PCs are also being observed as possible trouble-makers.

KERGILLIANS

"I think you're right, Ben. This soup could use a bit more rust."

—one kergillian-controlled human to another

Type: Secret Alien Race, Secret Society.

Rep: None.

Brief: Kergillians are alien organisms that form parasitic (or perhaps symbiotic) relationships with humans. They are organizing a solid beachhead on Al Amarja.

Allies: None.

Enemies: None, yet.

The kergillians are a crustacean-like race from a distant star who have been parasitically populating various star systems. Their latest venture is an attempt to populate earth. Since their bodies are not well-suited to most alien environments (including earth), they have developed the science of neuro-biology to great heights. Through years of study, they have developed a way of invading individual human (and non-human) nervous systems through a parasitic relationship, and they are now finding hosts to further their aims.

A kergillian looks like a horseshoe crab one and a half feet across with a very long tail. It suffers under the gravity and low oxygen levels of earth.

“Kergillian” can also refer to a human with a kergillian implant.

Kergillian Description

Kergillians are markedly similar to terran life, with similar nervous systems and physiological requirements. (That’s why they are interested in and capable of implanting themselves in human hosts.)

Physically, they are quite worthless in the terran environment. They can breathe air or water, but prefer a marine environment. The heavy gravity of earth (and the lack of buoyancy in the atmosphere, as compared to water) makes them sluggish. There’s really nothing a kergillian can do to defend itself if someone decides to stomp on it.

Mentally, they are not much more intelligent than humans. Their technology has simply advanced further. In the human environment they are at a loss (much as you would probably be if you were forced to survive in a medieval setting). They understand the basic principles of our science, but the specific applications that humans take for granted are too simple for them to have learned. By linking up to a human brain, however, they can access human knowledge and thus make do in this primitive setting.

Their main advantage is the genetically produced ability to become parasites, lose their bodies, and live in their hosts.

Secondarily, they have advanced technology that involves room-temperature superconductors and neuroscience. (Naturally, they have also mastered interstellar travel, but that’s another story.)

Kergillian Symbiosis

When the kergillians have identified humans that they wish to control, they lure or abduct them to the Red Orca, a ship under their control that usually stays in international waters in the Mediterranean (outside of national law). If the human is willing, such as someone selected from students at the School of True Sensation, then he is told half-truths about the kergillian process and given a kergillian implant. He is held on the ship until it is clear that the host is accepting the implant. If the host is unwilling, the kergillians imprison him and force the implant on him. They then keep him prisoner until the kergillian has complete control over the host, a process taking from three to four months.

To effect symbiosis, the kergillian grasps the back of the head and aligns its tail down the spine and up the anus. Tendrils from the tail penetrate the skin and interweave with the spinal cord, while the tail in the colon grows to derive nutrients from the human’s digestive system. In a few hours, the crab-like body of the kergillian falls off and dies, leaving a tail that is dependant on the human for sustenance and sensory input. Then the internal tendrils grow up into the brain itself, and in a week or two the tail itself falls away. A ganglion at the base of the human’s neck and a system of nerves woven throughout the nervous system are all that remain of the kergillian.

The kergillian “implant” has several different effects on its host, the most striking of which is the heightened capacity of the nervous system. The kergillian nerves serve as a “parallel processor” and stimulant, increasing the capacity and discrimi-

nation of sensory powers. The host also benefits from improved reflexes and the ability to override phenomena of the nervous system, such as pain and hunger. (Hosts gain a bonus die on relevant activities, including fighting.)

The host must eat slightly more to sustain the kergillian. Though the kergillian adds little mass, its nervous tissues burn proportionally larger amounts of glucose than human tissues. Additionally, hosts are sometimes struck by cravings for unusual foods that provide specific nutrients for the kergillian.

Unknown to the hosts, the kergillian does not stop growing once it has established itself. Over time, the kergillian ganglion sends more tendrils into the brain and begins to use its processing power for its own ends. The change is gradual, and hosts almost never notice their loss of self-control, at first. Instead, they come to view the kergillian’s thoughts as their own, not realizing that the thoughts are under alien direction. When the host’s consciousness realizes that it is losing control and tries to reassert itself, the kergillian takes definitive control over the brain, leaving the host’s consciousness as an impotent observer of its former body. (A perceptive host might notice the neural invasion before the kergillian has the capacity to take control, in which case the kergillian merely shuts down the host’s voluntary muscle system and waits for other kergillian hosts to take the body to a safe place where it will have time to complete its invasion. A desperate kergillian can even short circuit the host’s medulla oblongata, causing the host’s death, and its own.)

Surgically removing the kergillian does irreparable, perhaps fatal, damage to the human’s central nervous system.

A natural kergillian, without host, can communicate with a human-kergillian pair by aligning itself with the human spinal cord, as if it were going to implant itself. Its tendrils burrow beneath the skin and contact the kergillian ganglion, allowing rapid

interchange of data, almost like telepathy.

Most kergillians prefer men as hosts because they are physically stronger than women and have brains that are more easily dominated. Some kergillians, however, enjoy the female body because of its capacity to generate one of the galaxy's most powerful orgasms. Kergillians also enjoy the athletic, primate structure of the human body, and they often run, climb, jump, and dance just for the joyful experience of having a nimble, monkey-like body.

Kergillian Science

The kergillians benefit from three main advances that put their technology beyond ours: room-temperature superconductors, neuro-science, and interstellar travel.

The superconductors simply allow them to perform ordinary and extraordinary technological feats with very little energy. They have developed machines that allow their electronic devices to run on electricity from standard outlets.

Neuro-science has both allowed them to develop their symbiosis and provided them with weaponry with which to arm the hosts. Some examples are:

Stun Ring

Looks like a gold ring with a ruby inset, but can actually deliver a disruptive blow to the human nervous system on contact with skin. Roll four dice versus the target's roll (appropriate trait). If the kergillian wins, the human is knocked unconscious. Even if the human wins, he is likely to be dazed and disoriented, and to have a splitting headache. The ring is actually powered and activated remotely by a belt worn around the host's waist.

The kergillian stun powers do not affect non-humans, and kergillian hosts receive one more die than normal to resist.

Stun Ray

Effective at ranges of up to ten meters (though accuracy is impaired beyond three). Its effects are similar to those of the stun ring, but with four dice for point blank range, three dice for two to five meters, two dice for five to ten meters, and one die beyond that (if the ray even hits its target). The invisible ray spreads as it travels, so at ten meters people nearby the target may suffer slight effects as well. The ray can be swept across a group of opponents, though this lessens the impact on each person. Kergillians disguise the ray gun in a variety of forms, such as a calculator, a knife, or a ruler.

Stun Gas

A bluish smoke that disrupts the nervous system and causes nightmares in those that succumb to it. Even those who resist its full effects may find themselves hallucinating, at least mildly. It acts like the stun ring, but can affect any number of people caught within it.

Kergillian Activities

Currently the kergillians are acquiring more hosts so they can establish themselves in human society. They are still too small in number to resist a human counter-attack, so they are very secretive. They go to elaborate means to lure humans into becoming hosts, promising heightened senses and reflexes (see the First School of True Sensation, p. 93). A group of kergillians operates on Al Amarja, having full control over their hosts. Around them are a much larger number of kergillians who are at various stages of invading their hosts' brains.

They do have a large enough group and enough resources to begin some covert activities, though these are currently aimed mostly at keeping their secret.

To fund their activities, the kergillians manufacture MDA-Cubed in their lab in E-Z Sleep (p. 88). As the sole supplier of this drug, they can charge high prices and operate with plenty of money to spare.

The Red Orca

This ship is run entirely by human-kergillians completely dominated by their implants.

On board are kergillians awaiting human hosts, as well as the kergillian who is master-minding the invasion of Al Amarja. They live in low pools of briny water.

Betelguesan-kergillians also guard the ship.

The ship houses a monitor center to see what's going on at E-Z Sleep, possibly with remote detonators for self-destruct explosives planted in the hotel.

Occasionally a kergillian shuttle comes to the ship to supply it with kergillian food, new kergillians for implant, and information about the progress of the invasion on other fronts throughout the world.

Kergillian Fronts

See E-Z Sleep (p. 88) and The First School of True Sensation (p. 93).

Kergillians Going Native

Seeing the world through human eyes, feeling emotions through the human limbic system, interacting with a human body, and socializing with humans might have an unexpected effect on kergillians that have taken over their hosts. They might find themselves starting to think like humans and side with humans. Perhaps even now there are Kergillians in human bodies who have begun to hope that the kergillians do not succeed in dominating this planet. If the PC's can identify and work with these kergillians, infiltrating and disrupting the invasion may become much easier.

Alternate Hypothesis

The kergillians are merely glorified tourists. The first "invaders" were part of a company establishing themselves in new territory, and now vacationing kergillians come here to take human hosts and to have a wild time. (This would explain why the kergillians have established themselves

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

Illustration by Grey Thornberry



on Al Amarja, soon to be a major galactic tourist attraction.)

GMCS

Kamorro N'Duban

Kergillian Supervisor

Operates out of E-Z Sleep, p. 92.

Haraki Sumanoto

Leader of Al Amarjan Kergillians

The leader of the Al Amarjan front of the invasion, taking orders directly from superiors in the kergillian base on the far side of the moon.

Japanese man, age 28, 166 cm, 66 kg.

Languages: Japanese, English.

Traits

Leadership, 4 dice (plus bonus).
(Calm demeanor)

Kergillian Implant — Complete domination. (The implant is fascinated by its host's ability to produce sound; Sumanoto sings a lot, usually off-key.)

Typical Kergillian operative

Attack: 3 dice + bonus die, X2 or X3

Defense: 3 dice + bonus die

Hit Points: 25 (very durable)

Traits

Kergillian Implant — Gives bonus die on all activities related to reflexes, pain, sensation, etc. (Good reflexes)

Good at Fighting, 3 dice —
Perhaps with knife, pipe, martial arts, etc. (In fighting trim)

Good at Something Else, 3 dice —
Could be anything, from the host's human past. (Varies)

Strange Urges — For strange foods (or non-foods), or for strange behaviors that indicate that the kergillian-human symbiosis isn't quite working out perfectly. (Varies)

Betelguesan Guard

The kergillians have already conquered many other planets. On a

PROP: KERGILLIANS

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until the host accepts them completely. Once established they grant the host heightened sensations, but at the cost of inhuman urges. These urges are more often strange than dangerous, but one wonders whether an untrained mind can distinguish between its own thoughts and those slipped through the back door of consciousness. Perhaps they are entirely benign, as the hosts claim, or perhaps the belief that they are benign is merely implanted by the parasites. It is not inconceivable that they actually learn the mental patterns of their hosts and then devour their minds (or brains), mimicking the now-dead hosts and acquiring complete control of the bodies. A thorough autopsy of a host is obviously necessary, as are neurophysiological experiments on living hosts, but they are extremely secretive about their nature and protective of their dead. Cremation is universal among them.

So far, they have shown no coherent political activity, though perhaps their activities are simply too subtle for us to follow. The only thing that can be called a "policy" is that of paranoid secretiveness, which is understandable even if the beings are benign. Indeed, without projecting astrally, I would never have realized the existence of the Kergillians, let alone determining details as to their habits and those of their human hosts.

This paranoid need to protect their identity is what makes me fear now for my life.

planet orbiting Betelgeuse lives a large creature that appears to be a grotesque combination of horned toad and lobster. Though its intelligence is only that of a dog, the kergillians can implant themselves and raise the thing's intellect to the level of a human child. (The kergillian that implants itself in this unintelligent animal loses most of its intellectual capacity, so kergillian criminals are forced to take this role. This habit of punishing kergillians to acquire guards also explains why these hybrids are particularly bloodthirsty.) Among all the planets they have conquered, the kergillians have selected these Betelguesan creatures as guards on earth because they can survive in

earth's atmosphere, they are small enough to be moved surreptitiously through the terran population, and they are large enough to be quite dangerous.

Attack: 5 dice, X3 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Armor: 2 dice, chitin

Hit Points: 45 (crustacean toughness)

Traits

Extraordinarily Tough, 5 dice —

They can take a lot of damage before showing it. Those who attack them will have to use big weapons (like firearms or explosives), develop good tactics, or roll some pretty good dice. Part of the toughness comes from its

chitinous hide, part from its resilient constitution. In addition, it can lose limbs with relative impunity.

(Armored)

Exceptionally Vicious, 5 dice attack, 3 dice defense — With their mass, strength, and pincers, not to mention two rows of tiny claws running down its chest, the thing is more than a match for all but the best fighters. In addition, anyone fighting without big weaponry, such as axes, swords, and clubs, is likely to be outclassed by the beast, giving it a bonus die. (Pincers)

Easily Dehydrated — Unless the humidity is 90% or higher, these beasts have trouble breathing. They

slow down and eventually asphyxiate in dry air. (Live in misty rooms)

Story Ideas

The PCs hunt down the apparent manufacturer of MDA-Cubed, a neurotic scientist who is actually trying to duplicate the manufacturing process based on analysis of samples. She says she does not know how to make it, and doesn't believe that modern, general science knows how it's done. If given enough time, however, she'll be able to figure it out, develop a cure for MDA cubed dependence, and advance the cause of medicinal science. Her theory is that the CIA, using unpublished scientific techniques, is manufacturing the drug. Soon afterward, the kergillians, threatened with loss of their monopoly, off her.

Prop

Provided above is a fragment from a text written about the kergillians. It is meant to be fragmentary, perhaps just a scrap of paper that a sharp-eyed PC spots on the curb. For best effect, photocopy the fragment and then tear it so that the lower portion is missing. As to the identity of this astrally projecting agent who wrote the report, it could be a Neutralizer, a Hermetic Mover, or an independent yogi.

THE MR. LE THUYS

"Hello, Mr. LeThuy. How am I doing today?"

—Mr. LeThuy, to one of his operatives

Type: Conspiracy.

Rep: None.

Brief: A small group of nihilists who have infiltrated Al Amarjan society and are ready to start major destabilizations, leading eventually to destruction of the world.

Allies: None.

Enemies: Everyone, but no one else knows it yet.

Unlike the Pharaohs, Movers, kergillians, and other power groups

whose conspiratorial paths cross in Al Amarja, the Mr. LeThuys do not desire control. They desire destabilization, the dissolution of everything constructed, good or bad. Unlike the Cut-Ups, who love Chaos and bust up the plans of Control Freaks in the name of freedom, the Mr. LeThuys seek the *ultimate* in control. They pursue entropy. When everything is destroyed, all will be serene and pure. Everything will be equal. The Mr. LeThuys seek to obtain Order through destruction.

Tramh LeThuy was born in 1923 in what is now Vietnam. His family, moderately successful merchants with connections to the colonial rulers, were bewildered by their son. He had a brilliant mind, and devoured information about science and world religions. He also enjoyed torturing small animals.

Flash forward to the present. The short, pot-bellied, bespectacled Tramh LeThuy of today seems to be a mere newsstand owner in the Flowers barrio. In reality, he is the secret mastermind behind a growing conspiracy. He gathers together zeroes, low-lives, and other no-hopers and, in secret meetings, uses his unfathomable charisma (and carefully applied doses of Zoroaster?) to infect them with an unwavering devotion to nihilism. This newfound purpose in life, coupled with LeThuy's organizational skills, enable these derelicts to resurface and take new positions of responsibility. In a couple of decades, LeThuy has placed agents throughout Al Amarjan society and now feels he will soon be able to start destroying it.

This group is referred to as the Mr. LeThuys because, to show their devotion, its recruits voluntarily inject themselves with Tramh LeThuy's genetic material. Over time, they gradually transform into replicas of their master, physically and mentally. Few have noticed how many pot-bellied Vietnamese men with bottle-bottom glasses there seem to be doing important jobs in Al Amarja lately.

At this point, the LeThuys are testing the waters, beginning a few modest destabilization projects in the Edge. Their biggest success to date

has been the introduction of the drug Zoroaster (p. 51), which has already started to create more open and destructive conflicts between members of more established conspiracies. Eventually they plan for a universe in which everyone is either Mr. LeThuy or dead. And then they'll turn out the lights.

GMCs

Tramh LeThuy

Nihilist Mastermind

Quiet, assured, and well past the boundaries of what we know as "evil."

Vietnamese man, age 69 (b. 1923), 166 cm, 69 kg, black hair in "bowl" cut, pot-belly, thick glasses.

Traits

Charisma, 5 dice — Given a chance, LeThuy can talk people into just about anything. He specializes in giving the hopeless a twisted, nihilistic hope. (Gentle demeanor)

Brilliant, 4 dice — He has an uncanny intellect and has used it to amass a large array of knowledge, both practical and theoretical. (Can talk on just about any academic topic)

Poor Eyesight — With his glasses, he takes a penalty die on rolls involving eyesight. Without them, forget it. (Thick glasses)

May Ferendi

LeThuy's Oppenheimer

Once a promising science student, she was struck down by schizophrenia during post-graduate work. Mr. LeThuy found her homeless on the streets of the Edge, gave her new hope, and helped her return to her studies. With injections of LeThuy's genetic material, her schizophrenic interludes have decreased markedly.

Egyptian woman, age 35, 168 cm, 69 kg, long black hair held in a braid, glasses, pot-belly.

Traits

Fringe Geneticist, 2 dice — While not brilliant, she has managed one major breakthrough: the ability to treat LeThuy's DNA so that it incorporates itself into the DNA of others.

The process is slow, except in children and adolescents. As body cells die naturally, they are replaced by those that grow according to the directions of LeThuy's DNA. She has destroyed her notes. Her equipment only works for LeThuy's DNA, but another fringe scientist may be able to adapt it to the DNA of others. (Uses pseudo-scientific jargon)

Fringe Chemist, 2 dice — Her major accomplishment in this regard is the creation of Zoroaster. (Hands permanently stained by various chemicals)

Poor Health, penalty die — Repeated exposure to strange chemicals has taken its toll. She takes a penalty die on actions that require stamina or energy, including combat. (Wheezes under stress)

Jane Do Kwan LeThuy

Nihilistic Agent Provocateur

See "The Fürchtegott File" (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 104-105.

Marva LeThuy

Fanatical Nihilist

See "The Doppelgänger Plague" (*The Myth of Self*), p. 56.

Rex

LeThuy Theorist & Talking Dog

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 34-36.

Story Idea

Things are going well for the PCs. They're cleaning up a major conspiracy, succeeding in their new business network, rising to places of influence, whatever. Then suddenly things start to go wrong. Minor explosions, enemies coming from nowhere, mysterious deaths. Who is that little guy with the glasses they keep seeing watching them from the shadows? The PCs have been spotted building something, and have been targeted for a dose of entropy by the Mr. LeThuys.

THE MOVERS

"We are the sculptors of history, the painters of paradigms, the directors of real-life drama. We are artists, and humanity is our medium."

—attributed to a
Mover from Cell Z

Type: Major Conspiracy, Heavily Factionalized.

Rep: There are people pulling strings, but no one knows who they are. Some Al Amarjans pursue excellence in their respective fields in hopes of coming to the attention of these string-pullers, and being invited into their number.

Brief: The Movers are major conspiracy who have carried the art of disinformation to such a high level that the Movers themselves cannot have an accurate idea of who the Movers are as a whole. They might infiltrate and influ-



Illustration by Cheryl Mandus

ence every major political and private organization. Most Movers are in the game for personal power, though rumor has it that there is a higher cause that the top Movers (if they indeed exist) are serving.

Allies: Constance D'Aubainne, Monique D'Aubainne, Philosopher's Stone.

Enemies: Cut-ups, Cheryl D'Aubainne, Pharaohs.

The Movers believe that gross social motions (such as the civil rights movement in the US or the adoption of human sacrifice by the Aztecs) are caused by keypeople, termed Movers. Just as a small set of neurons can cause gross bodily movement beyond the physical power of the neurons themselves, so these Movers can cause large social events that they individually could never accomplish. Those who are not Movers are referred to as Matter. They are regarded as complex matter to be manipulated carefully, like unpredictable tools or partially tamed beasts. (Actually, sophisticated Movers acknowledge that the distinctions between Mover and Matter are of degree only.) Most "key people," however, are unconscious of their roles. They are, therefore, unable to perfect and control their powers. The Movers, as a group, consciously accept their power over others and try to increase it.

Within the group, the Movers manipulate each other. Those who join realize that they are Matter to the more powerful Movers, but they realize that the superior Movers will want to turn them into better Movers for their own benefit, to have more efficient tools at hand. The new Movers are pawns, but it is to the advantage of the superior Movers to upgrade the pawns, so the pawns allow themselves to be used.

The Movers use mental techniques to control their own thoughts and actions, and then learn techniques to control others. At beginning levels, the Movers are merely cunning. At medium levels, they become unnatural in their abilities, psychic, magical, whatever you want to call it. At higher levels, no one knows what they are

like, because they control or at least alter the perceptions of others.

Only a few outside the organization know of the Movers, and fewer still oppose it. The main, powerful Movers keep the organization a secret to protect it from the human urge to destroy that which controls them.

An outsider might say, "Now I'm only saying this because I've had a few too many, but there are these people that control everything: the media, politics, religious movements. I don't know if they're psychics or they're aliens or what, but they've got more power than you or I can imagine. I can't tell you how I've found this out, and I don't want you to be telling anyone, not no one, where you heard this rumor, because if there's one thing these manipulators don't like, it's people babbling about them. So let's just forget I said anything. There's nothing you can do about it anyhow, so you might as well pretend I'm just a drunk fool."

Mover Hierarchy

The Movers are essentially a pyramid scam on a grand scale. Joining the Movers means entering at the lowest ranks and slowly rising in the hierarchy, often by infiltrating other groups or recruiting new Movers to be under you. Until one has achieved a certain amount of power, however, a new member is at the mercy of her superiors, who can use her for ends of which she is totally unaware.

The only way to assure safety in this treacherous organization is to have knowledge or skills that make you so valuable that you have an edge on the competition and you become too important to eliminate. Every recruit believes that they have the requisite advantage over the other Movers. Otherwise they wouldn't join. And of course they believe they have an advantage. That is exactly what their superiors want them to believe.

Newcomers

They may be inducted, tested, and even trained for years before they are told outright about the organization.

A newcomer who knows what's going on might say, "We are all subject to control by the leaders of the Movers. The best way to protect oneself is to make yourself valuable to them. In addition, they train those who are allied with them. While the leaders could Move the newcomers to join, unless they join of their own free will, they will require constant supervision to maintain their loyalty. The last free decision a Mover makes is to become a Mover."

Initiates

They carry out the plans of the leaders and of the higher level initiates. Only rarely are they aware of the plans that they are carrying out.

Leaders

No one knows anything about the Leaders except for what they have Moved others to know, and that's probably false anyway.

Mover Cells

The Movers are heavily factionalized into competing groups, known as Cells. Cells are usually under the leadership of an individual or small number of Movers, and they tend to specialize in certain areas of control, such as psychic powers, political manipulation, criminal business, or sorcery.

Often these Cells have names of their own, and many people join a cabal without ever finding out that it is actually a Mover Cell.

Just as often, someone joins what they believe to be a Mover Cell, but in fact they have joined an unrelated cabal that uses the Mover name to attract members and that may well be infiltrated and controlled entirely by unknown Movers.

Cells generally accepted as valid and powerful include the following: Gladstein Cell — Specializing in fringe science. They trade their

knowledge with other Cells for wealth and political influence.

Cell Z — Mysterious, even among the Movers. They may be the true leaders of the Movers, or they may be cultivating that rumor to gain negotiating power. (Of the Cells listed here, this is the one most likely not to exist, to be a product of a disinformation campaign.)

Vornites — Specialists in personal domination, including mundane and psychic techniques. They may be the true leaders of the Movers, using their powers of control and disinformation to make themselves seem on par with other Cells, thereby reducing challenges from other Cells. (See “Dreaming on the Verge of Strife” in *Forgotten Lives*, pp. 79-80, for more about the Vornite agenda.)

Hermetic Cell — Specialists in the occult, though their reputed powers may be more the result of a clever PR campaign than of any actual magical ability. They secretly dominate a number of cults and covens.

Dionysus Cell — Aesthetes who use their power to collect classic art and to lead luxurious lives. They consider themselves to be the best Movers because they have personal wealth to show for their efforts, while most other Movers are caught up in maddeningly confusing political games.

If there is indeed a central leadership, they are beyond the Cells described above, either working directly within these Cells to a common end, or forming a Cell of their own that they have successfully kept hidden from other Movers.

The Mover Paradox

Imagine a Mover who plots an insidious and successful disinformation campaign against an enemy Mover. By the time the campaign is finished, the target is completely in the dark in regards to her true standing, believing the lies that the plotting Mover has fed her. Now the plotter takes time to

reflect, and he must come to the conclusion that it is possible that another, superior Mover has likewise plotted against him. All that he believes about the Movers, his position in the organization, who he can trust and why, indeed any important piece of information he may have might be the result of another Mover's disinformation campaign. Objectively, he comes to realize that he really cannot count on any of his information.

Are the Movers the latest incarnation of an ancient, secret conspiracy? Or are they a recent phenomenon? Are they led by extremely powerful Movers who are using the less powerful for their own ends, or are the Movers without any coherent leadership? Is there a secret goal or directive being followed? Ultimately, the Mover acknowledges that there is no way to know the answers to any of these questions because any beliefs, no matter what the evidence may suggest, could be simply what more powerful Movers want you to believe.

The Mover Agenda

Since the Movers are divided into several Cells, they cannot provide a united front. They have, however, been able to achieve a few general goals:

Skepticism: Thanks to the Movers, many otherwise open-minded people refuse even to consider the existence of psi powers, ghosts, etc. This unreasonable skepticism allows the Movers to keep these secrets largely to themselves.

Manipulability: While many of the Movers have different aims, they all want to society to be more easily manipulable. To this end, they have encouraged the spread of television, mediocrity in education, censorship, and political disaffection (especially in the US and Canada). Note that increased visual communications and (temporary) political stagnation are also aims of the Earthlings. Perhaps the Earthlings have been manipulating the Movers into putting these

items on their agenda, or perhaps the reverse is true.

GMCs

Typical Mover Operative

Operatives often have it better than those who are trying to achieve a place in the leadership. Without ephemeral aspirations for great personal power at some future date, an operative expects tangible rewards for her service: money, privilege, and respect. Since the superiors usually have little to worry about from such low-level Movers, they are often willing to accommodate operatives handsomely.

Of course, many operative are under the mistaken assumption that they are working for some other organization with specific political goals, so many also serve out of a sense of duty.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Traits

Moving, 3 dice — At this level, it primarily concerns individual manipulation, getting people to believe and do what the cloak wants them to. (Non-threatening demeanor)

Fighting, 3 dice. (In good shape)

Specialty, 3 dice (or 1 die) — Could be breaking & entering, mechanics, science, etiquette, or any other trait the Movers may find valuable. If a fringe power or “technical” trait, it is 1 die. (Varies)

Mover Leader

A mid-level Mover, in charge of operatives and struggling to rise in the hierarchy. Probably involved in at least three schemes within the Movers themselves, some of them working at cross-purposes.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Traits

Moving, 4 dice — In addition to personal manipulation, includes get-

ting groups to believe and act the way the Mover wants them to. (Has lots of “connections”)

Specialty, 4 dice (or 2 dice) — Could be familiarity with government bureaucracy, political cartooning, stealth, etc. If a fringe power or “technical” trait, it is 2 dice.

Fighting, 3 dice. (In good shape)

Matti Aaltonen

Incompetent (Hermetic)

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 71-72.

Elwood Cardinal

Rising Conspiracy Star

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 64-65.

Randy Carter

Gladstein Dupe

See “Dreaming on the Verge of Strife” (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 94-95.

Constance D’Aubainne

Capitalist Daughter of Monique D’Aubainne

(Dionysus Cell)

See p. 116.

Lou Farrazi

Proprietor of Lou’s Booze

Informer for a Mover operative, see p. 68.

Prof. Giorgos Antonio Hamati

Mover Ideologue & Recruiter

See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 30-32.

Simon Grace

Vornite Troubleshooter

See “Dreaming on the Verge of Strife” (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 93.

Inongé Kitleli

Vornite Observer

See “Dreaming on the Verge of Strife” (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 93-94.

Maggie Kopek

Infiltrator of the Exalted Order

See *Wildest Dreams*, p. 29.

Ishaq al-Masha

Occultist

Proprietor of Forbidden Words, a bookstore in Great Men, and a Hermetic Cell member. See *Friend or Foe?*, pp. 38-40.

Mary Olekobaii

Mover Cloak

Mary is the Mover in charge of monitoring the Cut-Ups. See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 32-33.

Edmondo Roma/Priority

Ambitious Mover

See “In the SACQ” (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 32-33.

Eric Rome

Former Operative?

A patient at the Sylvan Pines facility, Rome claims to have been a Mover...but he may simply be delusional. (See *Welcome to Sylvan Pines*, p. 11.)

Madame Vylaska

Mover Operative (Cell Z)

See p. 73.

Story Idea

The PCs are invited into a small conspiracy that apparently favors their goals, though it is actually a Mover-dominated front. The PCs perform several dubious operations before finding out who they are really working for. When they realize who is behind the scheme, they have the option of joining the Movers or fighting them.

The GMCs who help the PCs realize that they are being used may be Movers from a rival Cell trying to sabotage their rivals’ operations. The PCs may be offered a position in the conspiracy of the “helpful” Movers,

again without knowing who it is with whom they are dealing.

THE NET

“We obey the law — the law of supply and demand.”

—a *Net crimelord*

Type: Crime ring.

Rep: They mean business.

Brief: A sophisticated crime ring. Most of their operations are international.

Allies: The Peace Force.

Enemies: Earthlings, police agencies of other countries.

The Net is an international criminal organization with its headquarters on Al Amarja. Most of their operations are international, in countries where illegal gambling, prostitution, and drugs provide immense profits on those pursuits. Very little of their profits come from activity on Al Amarja, but since they have an understanding with the Peace Force, they find Al Amarja a fine location for their headquarters.

The Net is full of businessmen who have realized that the best profits lie in dealing illegal substances and providing illegal services. Unfortunately, many of them soon learn that selling heroin is not as profitable as selling each other out, and mistrust is rampant within the organization.

The Movers and Pharaohs have infiltrated the Net and manipulate it to their diverse ends. The Net is capable of moving large amounts of cash, manpower, equipment, and weaponry, making them a valuable puppet for more powerful conspiracies.

The Net has tried to get the Peace Force to enforce anti-drug laws more strictly in order to boost their profits, but the Peace Force administration has largely refused. They do not want their men dying needlessly over what should be left as a question of economics, and they would have to build more prisons if they were to imprison more drug dealers. The best the Net has managed is encouraging the Peace Force to crack down on var-

Illustration by H.J. McKinney



ious specific competitors in the drug trade.

GMCs

Giblets Granberry

Petty Crook

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 26-27.

Sheila Haywood

Criminal Criminal Lawyer

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 73-74.

"Jessica"

Net Associate

See "In the SACQ" (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 34.

The Samoa "Twins"

Net Muscle X 2

See "The Fürchtegott File" (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 101-102.

Moritz Vetter

Net Leader

Vetter is the president of Al Amarjan Investments, a position he uses to gain information about the financial community of Al Amarja and to launder the Net's profits from abroad. Lately he has become worried about a conspiracy that he thinks is called "The Puppeteers," which he

believes has infiltrated the Net. Actually, Mover operatives in the Net have disinformed him so as to cover their own tracks. Vetter finds release from his worries in ever-increasing doses of Zorro, a habit that may soon lead to disaster.

German man, age 49, 175 cm, 74 kg. Tanned skin, blond hair, cheerful demeanor, dresses like a successful businessman (which he is).

Languages: German, English

Attack: 3 dice plus penalty die, various weapons

Defense: 3 dice plus penalty die

Hit Points: 18, toughness

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice (penalized) — He had to learn the dirtier aspects of the

business while he advanced in the hierarchy. (Unfazed by violence)

Business, 4 dice — Whether it is reprimanding subordinates, mollifying superiors, planing long-range economic strategies, or driving a hard bargain, Vetter knows how to get the job done. (Wealthy)

Criminal Contacts — If he doesn't know what is happening in the (mundane) criminal underworld, he can probably find out in a day or two. (Frequently in meetings with his operatives)

Slowing Down, penalty die — A sedentary life has taken the edge off his physical prowess. Apply the penalty die to most physical rolls, including combat. (Muscles turning flabby)

Story Idea

When following the trail of a Pharaoh quisling or Mover operative, the PCs come across someone who seems to be a mundane criminal, but who is actually working for the Movers or Pharaohs. If the PCs can reveal this criminal's conspiratorial connections to his colleagues in the Net before the mole's allies (or the Peace Force) get them, they can let the Net do the dirty work of neutralizing the fellow.

THE NEUTRALIZERS

"What I wouldn't give for a nice, predictable vampire to neutralize!"

—*Islam Petri, reflecting on the foes he has had to deal with on Al Amarja*

Type: Secret Organization.

Rep: None.

Brief: An organization devoted to finding and eliminating supernatural threats to humanity, without letting the public at large catch on.

Allies: Earthlings.

Enemies: Supernatural, extraterrestrial, trans-dimensional, and fringe scientific creatures of all kinds.

The Neutralizers are concerned with the "non-mundane" of all kinds. They are aware of psychic powers, magics, and extraterrestrials; but they take pains to see to it that the world in general does not learn about such things. The branch on Al Amarja is merely one office of a much larger organization, possibly with secret ties to major governments or even the U.N. They are apparently attempting to protect humanity, possibly by eliminating unnatural entities and manifestations, possibly by forming a mutually agreed-upon peace with those forces that are either benign or too powerful to be eliminated.

GMCs

Islam Petri

Expert Eliminator of the Unnatural

Petri poses as a free lance hack reporter, often writing for *Al Amarja Today*.

Moroccan man, age 32, 176 cm, 68 kg. Lean and tough, with a short, black, kinky beard and artificially straightened black hair.

Languages: Arabic, French, English, Spanish, a bit of Basque.

Attack: 3 dice with just about any weapon

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 24 (grit)

Traits

Neutralization of the Unnatural, 4 dice — That Petri has been assigned to Al Amarja is proof of his capabilities. He can identify the more standard types of weird science, psychic, and supernatural manifestations; and he can take advantage of their specific vulnerabilities with ease. He is highly skilled at observation, blending into a crowd, breaking & entering, identifying unnatural entities by physical evidence, and keeping his cool when faced with the unknown. (Array of specialized equipment)

Straight-Facing, 3 dice — He can lie with facility, and has hundreds of memorized lies and fallacious explanations for most situations. He uses this capability to throw curious people off

the scent of the unnatural, such as explaining away psychic or magical occurrences. (Poker face)

Fighting, 3 dice — He has pitted himself against a variety of creatures with a variety of weapons, and he is good with just about anything that can cause damage, including his bare fists. (Numerous scars on body)

Nonsense Association — Petri has a unique way of encoding his reports, at least those that he intends for his own use only. He sits at his computer screen, thinks about what he wants to record, and then types randomly, his fingers flying over the keyboard at incredible speed. He watches the letters and other characters that appear on the screen and associates his thoughts with those random characters. When he looks back over the nonsense material, he can remember exactly what he was thinking when he typed those characters. Since this method is not a code, it cannot be "broken," nor can other Neutralizers read it. (Pages of "nonsense" on file)

Ingrid Fjernsen

Discorporate Psychic

Fjernsen provides valuable psychic back-up for Petri. Though severe cerebral palsy has left her confined to a wheelchair, it has also somehow released powerful psychic abilities, which have been carefully trained by the Neutralizers.

She rarely leaves the Neutralizer headquarters on Al Amarja, using her contagious possession skills to accompany Petri on his investigations. At first she rides along in his body, and when he needs some physical aid, he touches a likely prospect and she possesses him. The possessed person then aids Petri in whatever way is necessary, and Fjernsen later Blind Spots the person to make him forget whatever strange things he may have seen.

Fjernsen prefers to possess the bodies of women, especially young, healthy, and attractive women. She also appreciates a trip to the Plaza of Flowers, where she will "ride along" with a woman who is enjoying the nightlife. While possessing women, she has picked up a mild psychologi-

cal addiction to cocaine, but she cannot become physically addicted by experiencing drug effects psychically.

Swedish woman, 42 years, 170 cm, 63 kg, limbs distorted and mostly useless, poor muscle control.

Languages: Swedish, English.

Attacks: Forget it.

Defense: She's helpless.

Hit Points: 9

Psychic Pool: 7 shots

Traits

Contagious Possession, 4 dice — She can send her consciousness into anyone who touches her, and then can travel into any body that the possessed person touches. While possessing another, she can sense through that person's senses. In addition, she can exert her will and take control of the body. She cannot speak to the person that she possesses, but when "riding along" with Petri she will control him temporarily and make him say (in his own voice) or write down what she wants to say. It looks like Petri is talking to himself, so he tends to find a private place before carrying on these conversations. She can use her other fringe powers while possessing someone. (Glassy eyes)

Blind Spot, 4 dice — See Fringe Powers, p. 184. (Glassy eyes)

Mind Scan, 2 dice — See Fringe Powers, p. 186. (Glassy eyes)

Evan MacDonald

Renegade Neutralizer

See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 29-32.

Other Neutralizers

Petri and Fjerdson can call for help from their organization, receiving manpower or supplies or both usually within twenty-four hours. The most common sort of aid is a number of trained but mundane operatives, though they may be able to call on sorcerers or other unnatural allies.

Story Ideas

The Neutralizers can play a variety of roles in your series, depending on the

nature of the PCs. They may assist the PCs in dealing with unnatural threats, or may hire (or otherwise persuade) the PCs to help them. If the PCs include unnatural characters, however, the Neutralizers might come after them, either to eliminate them, to determine whether they pose a threat to humanity, or to study them.

OTTO'S MEN

"Democracy and decency depend on people like you and tools like this."

—*Otto, speaking to his men and hefting his Louisville Slugger*

Type: Gang.

Rep: Not dangerous if you stay out of their way. Among inhabitants of Justice, he is a hero.

Brief: Otto's Men are about seventy working class Joes who fight for the lifestyle they desire. They march around their turf, the Justice Barrio, in small groups and beat up or even kill undesirables. Though they are crudely armed and not professionally trained, a lifestyle low on chemicals and heavy on physical labor has made them some of the tougher folks on the island.

Allies: Peace Force (shaky).

Enemies: Glorious Lords, street criminals.

Otto Finkelstein, a burly, hairy, beer-drinking, man, got sick of the low-lives, criminals, and deviants that were wandering around his neighborhood and setting a bad example for his kids. After a viewing of *Walking Tall* and a six pack, he picked up his Louisville Slugger and went after the people he hated. After pounding a few skulls, the low-lives and degenerates started to gang up on him. To his surprise other people he hardly knew came pouring out of their tenelements and joined in to help him. Twenty-three "undesirables" in all died that day, along with five of Otto's men. Otto currently has charges of mob action, murder, battery, assault with a deadly weapon, *ad infinitum*, against him, but the mas-

sacre was twelve years ago, and the trial isn't scheduled for another five years or so. Until then, Otto is free on his own recognizance.

After the day of that fight, Otto became a hero, and now an informal group known simply as "Otto's Men" patrols the Justice Barrio to keep out those whose presence might be a bad influence on the kids. Otto himself rarely patrols, but rather directs events from his apartment, keeping track of his men by walkie-talkie.

Only men can join the group. Women, they say, belong in the home raising those kids to fear God and their dads.

In time of crisis, Otto can call on about three hundred other men who will take to the streets with tire irons, butcher knives, lead pipes, two-by-fours, and anything else within reach.

Otto's Apartment

This is the group's headquarters, as well as Otto's home. He lives here with his wife and several kids, and has one room devoted to his organization. He has walkie-talkies, baseball bats, poorly organized files on people in the barrio, and centerfolds decorating the walls. A table in the center of the small room serves as the meeting place for the more important members of the gang.

Several nearby apartments in the same building hold important members in the gang, though bear in mind that there is no official hierarchy, other than that Otto is the boss.

Penetrating the headquarters would be woefully easy, using magic, psi powers, or even traditional espionage techniques. Definitely a low-level operation. Actually infiltrating would be more difficult, as inductees are known personally by the members who let them in. And infiltration wouldn't be too useful, as the general membership is never going to do anything other than keep their own streets safe for their families. It would be hard to manipulate them to other ends.

Otto's Men Patrols

Generally numbering four or five, these groups wander the barrio, especially the Plaza of Justice, looking for undesirables. Since Otto's Men are not paid, the inhabitants of Justice often treat them to drinks, meals, and other gifts. They spend a lot of time socializing, chatting with their friends, and getting to know newcomers.

Otto's Men in Play

The PCs will no doubt run into a patrol if they enter the Justice Barrio. If the PCs are dressed strangely or act suspiciously, Otto's Men will harass them or at least warn them off. If they seem like good folks, Otto's Men may help them find who they're looking for and warn them of the dangers to be found in other barrios.

GMCs

Typical Otto's Man

Wears a cap that says "Otto's Men" on it, carries a baseball bat over his shoulder, and has a walkie-talkie and flashlight on his belt.

Attack: 3 dice, X2

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (brawn)

Traits

Good at Bashing Undesirables, 3 dice — He swings his well-worn bat with enthusiasm, raw power, and high morale. (Well-developed arm muscles)

Good at Spotting Trouble, 3 dice — Patrolling his barrio has trained him to spot drug dealers, hookers, crooks, poets, homosexuals, intellectuals, and other "undesirables." He can also notice concealed weapons and tell when trouble is about to start. (Always scanning crowds)

Good Morale, 3 dice — Unlikely to be tempted, bribed, or intimidated when duty calls. (Talks highly of Otto)

Lousy at Expressing Himself, 1 die — The only way he knows to express his love for his wife and kids is to beat the brains out of undesirables to pro-

tect his family. That's why he loves this job. (Forgets kids' birthdays)

Story Idea

An enemy agent has a cover that lets him live in peace in the Justice Barrio, where he has lived for years. He has cultivated very good relations with Otto and his men through monetary support and a carefully controlled persona. As the PCs close in on the agent, he alerts Otto's Men that a bunch of "fascist, homosexual drug dealers" are after him. Otto's Men make any moves against the agent dangerous unless they can provide proof that he is not who he claims to be, in which case the difficulty will be getting to the agent before Otto's Men turn him to squishy pulp.

PEACE FORCE

"To Serve and Protect"

—*The motto of the Peace Force, meaning to serve and protect Monique D'Aubainne*

Type: Police.

Rep: Don't mess with them, and they might not mess with you.

Brief: Heavily armed Peace Force Officers patrol the streets to ensure that they are safe for Her Exaltedness and her friends.

Allies: All the D'Aubainnes, the Government, the Net.

Enemies: People who get in their way or threaten their bosses.

The Peace Force is Monique D'Aubainne's first (and most expendable) line of defense against threats on the island. Since Peace Officers are not the best trained or most reliable of her followers, they are routinely denied the facts as to what is really going on and why they are really given certain assignments.

Peace Officers are very likely to accost PCs that look dangerous. Anyone with a crossbow or taser will certainly be asked to present his license immediately, and unusual characters may be forced to show their passports or just hassled. Peace Officers may also pretend to be help-

ful as an excuse to ask what burger are up to.

Loyal Defenders

For special cases, the Peace Force has the equivalent of a SWAT team — the Loyal Defenders. They get a diet controlled (and adulterated) by Dr. Nusbaum, intensive physical training, psychological conditioning, and the best equipment. Because the Peace Force sinks so much capital into each Loyal Defender, they are only used when they are really needed, probably after a few of the Peace Force regulars have already bought the farm.

Whatever the situation, the Loyal Defenders will arrive with the right equipment: helicopters, concussion grenades, .50 caliber machine guns, or even strange devices that have been kept secretly in reserve.

The Loyal Defenders live and train in the Iron Cage on the Plaza of Arms.

GMCs

Lt. Bob Anderson

Cranky Cop

Not as corrupt as the average officer; maybe that's why he's so cynical and cranky. Standard Peace Officer traits. See "The Hive" (*The Myth of Self*), p. 35.

Julian Blanc

Peace Officer

Blanc became a Peace Officer after serving a stint as a criminal. When his gang of crooks started coming under pressure from the Net, his life was in danger. He applied for a job with the Peace Force, and was accepted only after he turned informer and helped the Force capture his former colleagues. (Unknown to Julian, the Force's interest in his gang resulted from bribes provided by the Net.)

Attack: 3 dice, X2 (nightstick) or X4 (MP5 sub-machine gun)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Armor: 1 die.



C.B.F.
'96

Loyal to the Peace Force, 3 dice — A rigorous training program that encourages them to believe that they are above and beyond other people makes the Peace Officers loyal to the Force. (Looks down on “civilians”)

Franklin Davis

Loyal Defender

Once he came to Al Amarja, Davis soon found his calling. He

US black man, age 32, 187 cm, 90 kg, light-skinned black, bald.

Traits

Peace Officer Training, 3 dice — Peace Officers are trained in unarmed combat, firearms, and various other weapons. They can also spot hidden weapons, sense trouble brewing, issue authoritative commands and perform a variety of other tasks important to doing their job. (Firm voice)

started with fighting at Sad Mary’s but soon joined the Peace Force. Impressed by his abilities, his superiors soon offered him a position as a Loyal Defender. He has served with distinction and relish ever since.

Attack: 5 dice, damage depends on weapons, possible penalty die if heavily armored

Defense: 5 dice, possible penalty die if heavily armored

Hit Points: 35 (unnatural brawn)

Armor: Up to 3 dice, depending on need

Traits

Fighting, 5 dice — A combination of steroids, experience, martial arts, and physical training produces an incredible fighting machine. (Impressive physique)

Morale, 4 dice — The Loyal Defenders are conditioned to be fearless, loyal, and brutal. Little can deter them. (Never cries out in pain)

Captain Ali Mukabar

Nascent Throckmorton

See “The Hive” (*The Myth of Self*), p. 35.

Rodney “Hot Rod” Serengeti

Crooked Cop

See *Wildest Dreams*, pp. 28-29.

Lt. Noska van der Keuken

Tulpa Cop

See *Wildest Dreams*, p. 8.

Story Ideas

The PCs, thanks to various questionable actions, come under suspicion from the Peace Force. At first the Peace Force watches them, then takes them in for questioning. If the PCs can provide valuable information, the Peace Force may let them go so that the PCs can continue to do legwork for them. If the PCs are uncooperative, they may have to cut a deal, or be deported.

PHARAOHS

“We were created to control. After millennia of slow manipulation, the hour of conquest is at hand. Our destiny is upon us. Rejoice, brethren, as the haughty mutants become our cattle.”

—a Pharaoh

Type: Secret race and conspiracy.

Rep: None.

Brief: Immortal humanoids created from glug stock to serve the Eight Evil Sages as viceroys. They have secretly manipulated human history to produce advanced technology, and now are ready to re-assume their dominance over the human race.

Allies: Monique D’Aubainne.

Enemies: Movers.

Many thousands of years ago, when the Eight Evil Sages decided to rule the world, they created the Pharaohs to serve under them and rule for them. Until that time, glugs (true humans) were the only people on earth. The Eight Evil Sages created a race of malign warrior slaves (ancestors of “normal” humans), the Pharaohs to rule them, and the Aphids to feed the Pharaohs.

When glug heroes defeated the Eight Evil Sages, the warrior-slaves went wild and swarmed over the land. Procreating rapidly and delighting in bloody conquest, they were too much for the peaceful glugs, and they destroyed almost all of humanity. The Pharaohs attempted to control these mutant warriors, but without success. Without the support of the Eight Evil Sages, even they could not control the violent, primal natures of the mutants.

When the mutants created their own civilizations, modelled after the fallen glug society, the Pharaohs decided to bide their time. Being immortal, they could wait out the mutants and take control when the time was right. In addition, with civilization destroyed, the Pharaohs had precious little to rule. Over the millennia, they have guided human development, hoping to create a race that they could rule, and that would be worth ruling in the first place.

When the Enlightenment came to Europe, the Pharaohs were puzzled. Issues like “liberty,” “freedom,” and “inalienable rights” were totally alien to them, beyond their grasp. The mutant humans had evolved a society that the Pharaohs did not fully understand. Some warned that they should strike immediately to keep the mutants from advancing any further.

But “immediately” to an immortal means something entirely different from what it means to you and me. Eventually they agreed that the time was right to put the yoke around humanity’s neck and regain control. By that time centuries had passed. Now, in the Twentieth Century, the Pharaohs are frankly bewildered by how suddenly the mutant warrior-slaves have moved from an understandable monarchical society to a civilization that values diversity, freedom of expression, new ideas, and personal liberty.

They have decided they can delay no longer.

A Note on the Nature of Humanity

Glugs are the “true humans.” The five billion people that currently dominate the world are mutants genetically engineered from the basic glug stock. The terms “slave-warrior” and “mutant-human” refer to this now-dominant but degenerate race. For the sake of the readers’ egos, however, “glug” is often used to name the true, original humans, and “human” or “normal human” designates the incredibly common mutants.

The Pharaohs’ Nature

Pharaohs are superficially indistinguishable from normal humans. Internally, they have an atrophied immune system, but otherwise the only noticeable difference is the sharp, cartilaginous feeding tube that usually lies hidden beneath a fold of skin on the left wrist. When feeding on an Aphid, a Pharaoh extends this tube and pierces the Aphid’s flesh near his special glands (see below). Unless you catch a Pharaoh feeding, you’ll never see this tube.

The milky secretion produced by the Aphids, called “Apep’s Breath,” interacts in unknown ways with the metabolism of the Pharaoh, making him immune to disease and decay. Thus, the Pharaohs are immortal. They can, however, be slain by physical means, a weakness that makes them extremely paranoid and defen-

sive. Rather than risk careless accidents or acts of random violence, the Pharaohs have spent the vast majority of their lives holed up in secret hideouts, running their schemes through vast networks of loyal followers (quislings, see below).

Lately, however, as humanity has become less predictable and the plots of the Pharaohs are coming to their conclusion, many of them have come out of hiding to control their machinations more directly. Internal competition among the Pharaohs has also increased. They all assume that they will indeed be able to assume total domination of humanity, and once this happens, some Pharaohs will be able to establish themselves with considerable power over their fellows as well. As rivals up the stakes by increasing their scheming and involving themselves personally with the plots, other Pharaohs must likewise risk personal involvement to keep from being on the bottom when the Pharaohs take over. Now, after millennia of slow, careful manipulation, the Pharaohs themselves are worried enough of each other to start taking risks.

Pharaohs are old, and their mental limits do not encompass modern technology, art, politics, science, or any other sophisticated human developments. Thousands of years ago, as children, they developed certain patterns of understanding the world, and these basic premises cannot change. They can never learn to grasp modern physics, laugh at modern humor, understand 20th century theology, or dance to rock and roll. That's why they need human quislings to do the interpreting for them.

Pharaohs are also unable to comprehend magic. They have a large arsenal of magical devices and texts, but they are loathe to give them out, even to trusted quislings, because they do not want more incomprehensible power in the hands of the mutants.

Aphids

Aphids appear to be human, though they share a few noticeable characteristics. They have puffy, upturned lips, heavy eyelids, and a languorous man-

ner. They are slow of thought and action, often losing track of such details as what day it is, what's happening around them, and what country they are in. Their most important feature is a set of glands not found in human physiology, a system that runs parallel to the lymph system and produces a milky secretion that smells like corn syrup.

This secretion, called "Apep's Breath," gives the Pharaohs their immortality. Any Pharaoh deprived of it begins to age and suffer ailments like a normal human. (In fact, a deprived Pharaoh often falls apart quickly, as they have hardly any immune system of their own.) A Pharaoh uses the feeding tube in his left arm to feed, puncturing the aphid's flesh and draining off the secretion. After a feeding, an Aphid perks up and becomes more alert. Some try to escape their masters at this point, but the reach of the Pharaohs is long, their grasp tight. Eventually the secretion builds up again, leading to lethargy, and few Aphids have ever truly escaped their fates.

Aphids, unable to benefit from their own secretion, have normal lifespans, so the Pharaohs breed them in their secret retreats to maintain a constant supply of Apep's Breath.

Dr. Nusbaum has developed a way to treat Apep's Breath so that it slows aging in humans. The success of this process is demonstrated by Her Exaltedness's good health.

Quislings

Unable to perform all their work in person, and unwilling to put themselves in even minor danger, the Pharaohs have generally worked through huge networks of servants, spies, and informers, known collectively as quislings. About a sixth of the quislings, the most powerful ones, actually know who their masters are. They have been rewarded for their treachery by some of the vast wealth the Pharaohs have accumulated over the ages. Quislings in the 20th century have the added incentive that they will be among the rulers, not the

ruled, when the Pharaohs take power, so many of them are just as devious and committed as their leaders, working for more than just money and favors.

The majority of the quislings, however, only know they are working for someone above their immediate bosses. They guess that they are working for a secret society like the Movers, ignorant of the true goal of their actions.

The Pharaoh quislings operate a great number of fronts, some legitimate, some illicit.

Machinations

Over the past several thousand years, the Pharaohs have masterminded several major plots. Most important has been guiding history.

The Pharaohs oversaw the development of three major civilizations: the Chinese, the European, and the African. The Chinese society was designed as an ideal civilization best suited for the healthy development of individuals and communities. The European society was designed as an experimental crucible to develop more powerful technology and alternate social structures. The African culture was designed to produce powerful magical knowledge.

Unfortunately, out-of-control Europeans destroyed African civilization through the slave trade. Fearing slavers, many Africans refused to farm any more than was required for subsistence. The glorious civilization of Africa fell apart almost overnight once there was not enough food to support the cities. The Pharaohs managed to salvage some of the more valuable inventions of the Africans, and have since masterminded a disinformation campaign designed to hide the fact that there ever was an advanced civilization in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Under Pharaoh influence, European culture has ignored common sense and human decency in creating fiendish weaponry, dangerous technology, and an inhuman society. The Pharaohs are happy with the powerful devices and sciences invented by the Westerners.

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

Illustration by Ovi Hondru



Smaller machinations include suppressing magic (since they can't use it, they don't want humans to know about it); encouraging the concentration of power at higher levels, especially the U.N. (so governments will be easier to dominate, when the time comes); and promoting censorship (to keep human society from evolving even further beyond their easy control).

On a smaller scale, the Pharaohs have striven to keep their quislings in positions of power in governments and corporations throughout the world.

G M C s

Hektor Kiptavos

Pharaoh Quisling

He is a chief operative on Al Amarja, and he knows who he's working for. Every time service is slow at a restaurant, or a woman refuses his advances, or he hits too many red lights in a row, he fantasizes about the time when he and his masters will rule the world.

Greek man, age 43, 171 cm, 63 kg. A spry, wrinkled man with a graying moustache, walks with a black cane.

Languages: Greek, English, Al Amarjan patois, some Arabic

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage with sword cane

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (fierce commitment)

Armor: 1 die of armor under bulky clothes

Traits

Swift Fighter, 3 dice — Despite his age, Kiptavos moves with surprising and deadly speed. He walks with a cane, in which is hidden a keenly sharpened sword that he uses two-handed. (Agile step)

Excellent at Covert Operations, 4 dice — Kiptavos has mastered the various arts of working subtly: shadowing, lying, reading body language, and so forth. (Rarely surprised)

Contacts, 4 dice — Kiptavos has granted a lot of favors to a lot of people. When in need, he can call in favors on short notice. (Has a small book of coded telephone numbers)

Hypnosis, 3 dice — Though he can only use this talent on the willing, he has found it useful to help others recall details or shed bad habits. (Smooth voice)

Jesus de la Playa

Flaky Movie Director

A quisling. See "Misplaced Childhood" (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 9-10.

Mounia Qutbuddin

Bitter Quisling

She monitors the Cut-Ups, whom the Pharaohs justly regard as a threat to their plans. See *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*, pp. 33-34.

Prem K. Sharma

Pharaoh

Mr. Sharma often visits Al Amarja in person. While he has numerous operatives, including Hektor Kiptavos, he doesn't trust them fully, and he takes it upon himself to supervise actions on Al Amarja personally.

He appears to be a middle-aged Indian gentleman, usually in a nice but not flashy suit. He is always in the presence of three to ten bodyguards who blend into the crowd so as not to attract attention to him, in addition to one highly visible bodyguard who deters attacks from low-lives who otherwise might want to collect a piece of Sharma's wealth for themselves.

"Prem K. Sharma," of course, is an assumed name, as are his entire identity, affected accent, and official papers.

"Indian" man, age 32 (apparently), 176 cm, 67 kg, short black hair, brown skin, clean-shaven.

Languages: Most of them, including archaic forms of modern languages and many lost tongues.

Attacks: 5 dice, damage varies by weapon

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 70 points (unnaturally resilient constitution)

Traits

Just About Anything, 5 dice —

Sharma has had time to practice just about every mundane art of import. If it is important for him to do it, and it does not require understanding of advanced science or modern thought, roll 5 dice for him, whether it is waltzing, fighting, sneaking, climbing, or fencing. This high level of skill comes from innate potential as well as centuries of practice. (Complete confidence)

Use Technology, 2 dice —

Relatively unfamiliar with modern devices, such as computers and electronic security systems, Sharma is no better than average at tasks that involve repairing, identifying, or using them. (Dislikes modern technology)

Ur-Master, 5 dice — This power works as described in "GM Rules," except that it requires no psychic dice to use. For a Pharaoh, this is not a fringe power but an innate, normal ability. This power, with his "5 dice with everything" trait, gives Sharma 10 dice when trying to intimidate or command someone. Needless to say, he can order most people about at will. (Complete obedience from underlings)

Closed Mind — Like all Pharaohs, Sharma cannot comprehend quantum physics, modern art, egalitarianism, and other creations of the modern human mind.

Svieta

Professional Bag Lady

A quisling operative. See "Misplaced Childhood" (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 12.

Tarent

Trusted Quisling Thug

See "Misplaced Childhood" (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 12.

Thuan Tram

Quisling Coordinator

See “Misplaced Childhood” (in *Forgotten Lives*), pp. 12-13.

Story Ideas

See p. 222.

THE PHILOSOPHERS’ STONE

“Where’s your sense of adventure?”

— *Dr. Thomas Rambeau, persuading Drs. DeConcini and Northrup to join him on Al Amarja.*

Type: Small Secret Society.

Rep: None, though the individual members are known as competent scientists in their respective public circles.

Brief: A small group of oppenheimers trying to find out how to give people “superpowers.”

Allies & Enemies: One of the scientists is a Mover, but the others in the group do not know about this connection.

The four scientists who compose the Philosopher’s Stone have persuaded themselves that human beings are capable of manifesting superhuman powers under the proper circumstances, and have vowed to discover just what these “proper circumstances” may be. Dr. Rambeau chose Al Amarja as their location because their highly controversial experiments might receive less legal persecution in this area. He convinced the other three scientists to move here to follow their lives’ dreams.

Members of the Philosopher’s Stone have different ideas of how to activate superhuman powers. Northrup wants to rewrite genes and hopes the Human Genome Project will help him learn which “junk genes” will activate which powers. He is interested in any mechanism for altering a living person’s genes. DeConcini believes superpowers can be brought out by the appropriate

external stimulus, such as chemicals. Weisberger’s perspective is more mystical; he is interested in spiritual or psychic powers. Of the four, Rambeau is by far the most utilitarian and least caught up in his own ideas of what “should” work. He would be willing to develop technological shortcuts, such as powered armor or improved cybernetics.

The Philosopher’s Stone conducts its research in D’Aubainne University facilities when possible and in Weisberger’s labs when necessary. Many of their subjects are gullible undergraduates, but for their most intense experiments they’ve taken to using derelicts and other “expendable” people. They are trying to keep the outside world from finding out about their research until they’re ready to patent something and get filthy rich and famous. Their experiments to date have been uniformly disappointing.

Of course, there are plenty of examples of people or entities with fringe powers on Al Amarja, but the Movers do not want the Stone to investigate these “super-powered” people. Rather, the Movers want to force the Stone to work essentially from scratch, while they themselves learn the more easily accessible secrets of transcending what most people accept as “human limits.” Through Dr. Rambeau, then, the Movers at once provide some help in terms of financing, occasional expert advice, and security; but at the same time the Movers have kept the scientists from investigating or contacting the psychics and unnatural human phenotypes that thrive in the Al Amarjan underground. The Movers hope that this strict limitation on information will lead the Stone to new insights that Mover oppenheimers have overlooked, but if worst comes to worst and these restrictions keep the Stone from discovering anything at all, then at least it is the Stone and not the Movers who have wasted their time.

GM Cs

Dr. Thomas Rambeau

Manipulating Mover & Oppenheimer

Thomas Rambeau is responsible for the creation of the Philosopher’s Stone. He has been teaching at the D’Aubainne University for seven years. He personally recruited Drs. DeConcini and Northrup from Columbia University, New York, and Weisberger from the University of Ingolstadt. His honeyed tongue keeps other members of the group from irritating each other more than they already do, and his enthusiasm is largely responsible for keeping their research going.

French man, age 32, 169 cm, 60 kg. Short black hair, confident smile, dresses conservatively.

Languages: French, English, German.

Traits

Honeyed Tongue, 4 dice —

Rambeau is very charming (except when depressed, see below) and can easily talk people into thinking that what he wants them to do is a really good idea, and why didn’t they think of it? (Confident smile)

Fringe Scientist, 2 dice — He is officially a genetics researcher under Dr. Northrup, but he doesn’t strictly specialize in any one area of study. His “specialty” is anything on or beyond the cutting edge of scientific knowledge. (Weird vocabulary)

Mediocre Hypnotist, 1 die —

Nothing flashy, but he can usually make the Stone’s experimental subjects forget what they’ve been through. (Owns a few self-hypnosis tapes)

Poor Emotional Control, 1 die —

Rambeau is a manic-depressive, though he has learned to push himself toward the manic end of the spectrum most of the time. He is usually enthusiastic and confident in his ability to talk his way out of troubles, but when depressed he tends to lose his temper and say whatever comes to mind (leaving him an even bigger

mess out of which to talk himself).
(Always smiling or sulking)

Timothy Marvin DeConcini

Tough, Elder Scientist

Timothy Marvin DeConcini is a patriotic Italian-American who misses his beloved country, though being near Italy and in an English-speaking land isn't all that bad. He knew Northrup at Columbia and thought him something of a disrespectful youth. In Al Amarja, Northrup is officially DeConcini's superior, and sometimes Rambeau's honeyed tongue has to overwork itself to keep the two of them on speaking terms. DeConcini has learned a thing or two from Northrup, though he will never admit this. In addition, however, he has begun picking up Northrup's streak of ruthlessness.

US Italian man, age 53, 181 cm, 81 kg. Black hair, serious demeanor, dresses well.

Languages: US English, some Italian.

Attack: 3 dice with bare hands, knives, or guns

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 18 (sheer mass)

Traits

Good Scientist, 3 dice —

DeConcini's specialty is the reaction of the human organism to stress (disease, injury, perceived danger, drugs, etc.), but he knows enough about biology and science in general to be a valued member of the Human Genome Project. (Well-educated)

Good Fighter, 3 dice — Though he's not as young as he used to be, he stays in pretty good shape and has retained a lot of the combat training he received in the U.S. Army. His knowledge of biology allows him to view his aging body as a mechanism with which he is thoroughly familiar. His exercise regimen works precisely and efficiently to preserve as much youthful strength and speed as possible. (In good shape)

Patriot — He still considers himself "a good American" and is prone to react with hostility when others put the USA down.

Poor Vision — During combat training in the Army, DeConcini took a blow to the head that has gradually affected his sight. By now his unaugmented vision is quite blurry, and he wears glasses with a very strong prescription. Without his glasses, he would receive a penalty die on all actions within arm's reach (including combat) and would be all but helpless at more distant tasks (such as throwing an object accurately or recognizing somebody by sight). (Thick glasses)

Gregory Northrup

Ruthless Oppenheimer

Northrup, a native of New Mexico, studied biology (and student politics) at Berkeley. As a professor at Columbia, his politics were definitely left-of-center (one reason for mutual antipathy between him and DeConcini), but like others of his generation he was becoming more self-involved. He had come to believe that "junk genes" contain the instructions for activating superhuman powers. Despite his brilliance in genetics, however, his research was going nowhere until Dr. Rambeau recruited him to the Stone.

US (mixed European stock) man, age 45, 177 cm, 68 kg. Sandy blond hair (unkempt), rumpled clothes, often appears distracted or lost in thought.

Languages: US English, some Spanish.

Attack: 3 dice unarmed or with knives

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (vitality)

Traits

Excellent Geneticist, 4 dice —

Undeniably Northrup is one of world's top geneticists; the only reason Northrup has not made major advances in the field is his pre-occupation with "junk genes" and superhuman powers, an interest that may well lead nowhere. (Has a file of awards, recommendations, etc.)

Martial Arts, 3 dice — In Berkeley in the '60s you could learn anything if you knew where to look.

Northrup learned martial arts. (Does wrist-stretching exercises)

Good at Politics, 3 dice — He's well-informed and articulate, but on Al Amarja these traits could be fatal. (Likes to talk politics)

Cold Fish, 1 die — His single-mindedness makes him oblivious to the feelings of others (especially experimental subjects). (Casually rude)

Paul Weisberger

Talkative Alchemist

If he hadn't gotten a reputation as something of a flake, Weisberger would probably have gotten a degree in medicine. His term paper for a history of science class, "Alchemy and the Transmutation of the Self," brought him to the attention of Dr. Rambeau. Dr. Rambeau convinced Weisberger to come to Al Amarja and arranged (through Mover manipulation) to have him set up in a pharmacy in the Science Barrio. He lives above his pharmacy and has a small lab in the basement that his colleagues use when they can't access the facilities at D'Aubainne U. (They pretend to get together to play cards, but DeConcini and Northrup are only half-baked players and the others are helpless.)

German man, age 26, 180 cm, 71 kg. Very short blond hair, likes to wear black.

Languages: German, passable English, Greek, and Latin.

Traits

Incredibly Persistent — Once Weisberger starts something, he'll keep doing it until he gets it right. If an experimental subject showed no effects from a 50-volt shock, Northrup would go to 100 volts, whereas Weisberger would try the same process on a hundred different subjects. This persistence can be a great asset for keeping attention focused on a seemingly hopeless path of investigation, but it can also keep him from giving up and going on to new and more profitable avenues of investigation. 4 dice or 1 die, depend-

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

Illustration by C. Brent Ferguson



ing on the situation. (Never takes “no” for an answer)

Alchemist, 1 die — He has a comprehensive but idiosyncratic understanding of the discipline, believing that the sought-after transmutation of lead into gold was a metaphor for self-transformation. His knowledge includes enough information about chemicals to let him get by as a pharmacist, but please note that the others in the Stone never allow him to fulfill their prescriptions. (Tries to meditate when waiting around)

Garrulous, 1 die — Weisberger will talk to whomever is around on whatever topic strikes his fancy, often something esoteric or mystical (and not necessarily accurate). Unfortunately, his willingness to talk is exceeded only by his inability to talk about interesting topics. (Always talking)

Story Ideas

Any time a PC does something obviously unusual or shows some form of

unnatural power in public (such as flying across a street in broad daylight — I’ve seen it happen), the *Philosopher’s Stone* may move in to investigate. Perhaps certain members are working on their own, or perhaps the Movers believe that the PC is too much of an unknown quantity to risk their own oppenheimers, so Rambeau is given the go-ahead to capture said individual. Dr. Rambeau hires a “security team” (actually Mover operatives) that kidnaps the PC and turns him over to the Stone. If the PC is lucky, the Stone will discover something useful (or the other PCs will rescue him) before the misguided oppenheimers do irreparable damage with their highly intrusive tests.

Subtle clues in the Stone’s facilities may lead to a Mover cell. To throw in a twist, Pharaoh quislings may know about the Stone and aid the PCs in destroying it.

The *Philosopher’s Stone* is an excellent mystery for inexperienced PC’s to crack: small, not too powerful,

and capable of leading to bigger mysteries.

PUBLIC

“Insanity is the exception in individuals. In groups, parties, people, and times, it is the rule.”

—Nietzsche

“Pardon me for living,
But this is my world too.
I can’t help it if what’s cool
to us,
Might be strange to you.”

— “New Power
Generation,” Prince

Type: The Public at Large.

Rep: Varied, but often in sad shape.

Brief: A lot of different people afflicted with a lot of different problems.

Allies: None that they know about.

Enemies: Mostly they worry about the Peace Force.

The public in general is described in the Deep Overview. Below are stats for specific groups found within the population. The following stats are for general use. For instance, the important GMCs described in this chapter certainly have friends, extra bodyguards, and additional bennies not described. Furthermore, the PCs are likely to encounter plenty of people randomly, and you can use these stats as a basis for designing these GMCs at a moment's notice.

GMCs

Average

John or Jane Doe

These are the typical people who fill the Edge. While they are the most common type of person one may meet on the street, they may be the ones with whom the PCs have the least relevant contact, as they rarely are helpful or detrimental to the PCs.

Description varies dramatically from person to person. Body ornamentation (tattoos, piercings, outrageous hair, etc.) is common. Many of them go armed with knives, steel-reinforced boots, switchblades, and so forth. Average adult height and mass in the Edge is about 170 cm and 65 kg for men and about 165 cm and 55 kg for women.

Language: Al Amarjan patois, English, at least a smattering of another language.

Attack: 2 dice plus penalty die, X1 unarmed or X2 armed

Defense: 2 dice plus penalty die

Hit Points: 12

Traits

Job Trait, 3 dice — Some skill or trait related to their job, such as running cash registers, washing dishes, or mopping. (Sign varies, but often includes eyes dulled with boredom)

Hobby Trait, 3 dice — Some skill, trait, or knowledge related to a hobby, such as familiarity with modern music, knowledge of the best bars, poetry, or a repertoire of opening lines for picking up dates. (Sign varies, but often includes tendency to talk about things that only they find interesting)

Family, ? dice — This trait can be an advantage (representing family members that can provide loans, moral support, information, and general help) or a disadvantage (representing a dysfunctional attachment to family members who make one's life miserable). (Sign varies, but may include the need to call Mother every day or a set of family pictures in one's purse or wallet)

Unhealthy Lifestyle, penalty die — Inhabitants of the Edge, like urban dwellers and modern people worldwide, tend to have unhealthy lifestyles that hamper their performance: insufficient exercise, troubled family relations, dysfunctional world views, use of drugs (most often alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine), unrealistic dreams, unsatisfied hopes, and an inability to understand and control one's own mind. They receive a penalty die on all actions for these various detrimental traits and practices. When portraying an "average," invent a flaw every time this penalty die applies to a new trait. For instance, if an "average" tries to convince a character of something, mention the GMCs bad breath (which causes the penalty die). Or if a PC chases an "average," mention that the GMC pants heavily, representing poor cardiovascular health. (Sign varies, but often includes lack of energy, inability to reason, and strongly held but immature beliefs)

Competents

Those who stand out in a crowd

About ten percent of the population falls into this category. These are the people who have gotten their acts together, but have not become leaders, agents, or other remarkable types.

Description varies dramatically between individuals, but "competents" are likely to have no fashion sense (if they've decided that it's not important to them) or an impressive personal style (rather than always trying to catch up with the trends).

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, at least some familiarity with another language.

Traits

Job Skill, 3 dice — Some trait related to the person's job. Competents do not necessarily have much better jobs than Joe or Jane Doe as many of them look to their personal lives for fulfillment. (Sign varies)

Hobby Skill, 3 dice — Some trait related to a hobby or outside interest, such as music, art, history, or science (layman's understanding only). (Sign varies, but often includes the ability to speak engagingly on the topic)

"Family," 3 dice — Represents either a strong bond to one's natural family (if that family is healthy) or to an adopted "family" of close friends. (Sign varies)

Flaw, ? — Everyone has a flaw, though it may be relatively minor, such as biting one's nails. The flaw might directly influence the traits and combat abilities listed above, but not necessarily. (Sign varies)

Leaders

Local celebrities, self-made men

This category includes those who have achieved something with their lives, such as founded a successful and respected small business, attained the status of local celebrity, or otherwise put themselves above the majority of the population. They represent perhaps 3% of the population.

Description varies, but they tend to be at least 25 years old and more often at least 30, as it takes a while to figure life out and get on top of it.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, at least one other language.

Traits

Identity, 4 dice — This catch-all trait covers what the GMC does. It may be "managing a bar," "rapper," "scholar," or some other trait. (Sign varies)

Outside Interest, 3 dice — Only a few "leaders" devote all their energy to their careers. Most have some outside interest, such as cars, botany, Shakespeare, Islam, whittling, or another field. (Sign varies)

Confidence, 3 dice — Represents the self-assurance, force of will, and belief in one's self that is necessary to

succeed, and also grows as one succeeds. Can be used to resist intimidation, persuasion, or even psychic domination. (Confident demeanor)

Flaw, ? — Some flaw, perhaps major or minor.

Empties

Soulless Wanderers

While common knowledge has it that Lemurian psychic vampires suck the minds from people and turn them into Empties, the true culprits are a small group of fringe scientists who have developed a way to measure the human soul, capture it when it leaves the body at death, and store it. The body that remains without its soul becomes an Empty.

Founded by remnants of the CIA's infamous MK ULTRA mind-control project of the '50s and '60s, the "Death Sucker" project (as it is known) is attempting to gain the power to control and exterminate human souls. Currently they are perfecting their capture and storage techniques. Detaching a soul is easiest when the subject is in great pain, so the scientists involved in the project have become skilled at inflicting terrible wounds in their victims, and they make a habit of using blue shock to heighten their victims' death agonies. The myth of the Lemurian vampires is merely disinformation designed to keep the project secret.

With the support of the Al Amarjan government, the Death Suckers operate in a secret underground facility. Rather than deliver Empties directly to the government, the Death Suckers release them into the Edge. In that way, the government workers who receive the Empties are kept completely in the dark as to the government's complicity in their creation.

Empties can only be "killed" by dismemberment, thorough burning, dissolution in acid, and other indisputable means.

Empties can drain the magic power from magical people near them. This process allows the Empty to return temporarily to "normal" life, but it leaves the victim unable to use

magic, permanently. (A PC, of course, should be able to find some interesting and demanding way to recover his magical power. It would make a good story.)

Description varies, although most Empties sport disgusting wounds that would normally be fatal.

Languages: Empties do not speak.

Attack: 3 dice, X1 with bare hands

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: n/a

Traits

Magic Drain — See above.

Mindless Violence, 3 dice —

When forced to, an Empty fights with extreme violence and impressive energy.

Escaping Confinement, 3 dice —

Empties are surprisingly good at finding their way out of any type of confinement.

Low-Lives

The desperate poor

Somewhere between the average citizen and the zero is the low-life. Low-lives have a lot of troubles, but they retain their ability to get something done in the world. Most are "employed" in petty crime, such as prostitution, drug retailing, purse snatching, and other high-risk endeavors.

Descriptions vary; some are able to effect the façade of some wealth, such as clean clothes and a well-groomed appearance.

Language: Al Amarjan patois.

Attacks: 2 dice plus penalty die, X1 unarmed, or X2 armed

Defense: 2 dice plus penalty die

Hit Points: 12

Traits

Saving Grace, 3 dice — Each low-life has a "saving grace," some talent or skill that keeps them from dropping to "zero" status. It might be good looks, fast reflexes, family connections, or even an unreliable fringe power. If the "saving grace" applies to combat, the low-life might fight without the penalty die, or may get 3

dice instead of 2 (still with the penalty die). (Sign varies)

Destructive Lifestyle, penalty die — Like most people on the Edge, low-lives have lifestyles that keep them from meeting their potential, and thus suffer a penalty die on just about every action. (Signs vary)

Maniacs

The uncontrollably violent

Every once in a while, someone snaps. Maybe they get a big lead pipe and wade into a bar swinging with all their might until someone takes them out. Maybe they leap on people and try to bite their faces off. Whatever it is, it isn't pretty. Anyone could go amok, but most often it is those who are least able to handle life that slip.

To create a maniac, take a character type from one of the other categories listed here and change the following stats:

Description is as normal, except for the blood-curdling screams and demonic visage.

Attack: Add a full extra die to represent ferocity and inhuman strength.

Hit Points: add +10, but the maniac loses these extra points when (or if) the mania subsides

Mutants

Past the norm of morphologic diversity

The Edge boasts an impressive mutant sub-culture, as those whose physical appearance may cause distress in other countries congregate here where their differences are less of a handicap. Mutants can fall into any other category listed here, such as mutant pubes, mutant leaders, and mutant toughs. Use the appropriate stats for that type, with the inclusion of that character's unique mutation or mutations.

Most mutations are detrimental, possibly resulting in misshapen bone structure, disproportionate limbs, infertility, or neural dysfunction. The GMC mutants who are most likely to be major elements of a plot, however, usually come from the fortunate few

who benefit at least in some way from their mutations. Possible beneficial mutations include thick skin (providing armor), fringe powers, loss of need for sleep, uncanny intelligence or insight, speedy recovery of shock damage (the half hit points lost that recover normally), heightened endurance, and so on. Craft these mutations individually to make them interesting parts of the plot or background.

See “Bitter & Herb’s,” p. 74, for some examples of mutants. Other examples can be found in various adventures and supplements; e.g., Slickstick and Joey the Dog Boy in “The Fürchtegott File” (*Forgotten Lives*, pp. 102-104).

Pubes

Adolescents with legal adult status

Under Al Amarjan law, anyone who has reached puberty may apply for legal adulthood. Al Amarjans consider treatment of “minors” in other nations to be senselessly unjust.

The pubes try desperately to be seen as regular adults, and they would resent my portraying them as a separate group as I am now. Nevertheless, they deserve separate treatment. Note that pubes generally do not have connection to a family, as most of them ostracize their parents in a misguided attempt to prove their adulthood.

Description varies, though they follow trends in fashion, favor tattoos as “proof” of adulthood, and sometimes effect “adult” dress, such as business suits.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 2 dice plus penalty die, X1 unarmed or X2 armed

Defense: 2 dice plus penalty die

Hit Points: 10

Traits

Job or Hobby Skill, 3 dice — Some trait related either to the pube’s job or to an outside interest, such as pizza delivery or fashion. (Sign varies)

Adolescent, penalty die — Due to their immature minds and bodies, pubes receive a penalty die on just about every roll, except for rolls involving those things at which the

young have no disadvantage (e.g., accepting a startling new idea, recovering from wounds). Those pubes that are gang members or “toughs” may ignore this penalty on certain rolls. A fast pube, for instance, might not receive a penalty die in combat. (Sign is simply an adolescent body)

Toughs

Those who live by brawn

This category includes bouncers, bodyguards, members of violent gangs, and others for whom fighting is a way of life or a livelihood.

Description varies, but they tend to be males between the ages of 17 and 30 of at least average height (170 cm).

Language: Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice, X1 unarmed, X2 armed

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (brawn)

Armor: 1 point of leathers

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice — Most of these people are not formally trained, and may not be proficient with weapons besides those they usually use. (Scars, weaponry, muscle definition)

Outside Interest, 3 dice — While such interests may not often come into play, everyone is interested in something, such as auto mechanics, sports, or impressing potential dates. (Sign varies)

Flaw, ? — A “tough’s” flaw does not usually interfere with their fighting ability. In fact, it might well be a result of this way of life (nasty-looking scars) or a cause of it (a squeaky voice for which he was teased, until he started lifting weights and feeding people curbs). (Sign varies)

Zeroes

Life’s casualties

Human derelicts, victims of strange drug overdoses, schizophrenics denied care, and other people fundamentally unable to handle life’s rigors. Their lives are dominated by the search for food and shelter, typically

along with a supply of some drug (usually alcohol).

Description varies, though they are universally dirty and poorly attired.

Language: Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 1 die

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 10

Traits

Street Knowledge, 3 dice —

Strictly knowledge of the best places to panhandle, where one can find a good night’s sleep, how best to approach burger, and so on. (The sign is simply that they are alive, proof of their ability to survive)

Impaired, 1 die — Thanks to somatic mental disturbance, alcoholic stupor, sub-standard diet, and other factors, they receive 1 fewer dice on all rolls that they normally would. (Unshaven, incoherent)

Story Idea

If the PCs have been messing with tough opponents, you can allow them to mix it up with average folks for a change. Even a 2 dice fighter should be able to take out the average Al Amarjan.

SANDMEN

Type: Sociopathic drug pushers.

Rep: Creepy.

Brief: Very creepy.

Allies: The Exalted Order of Dream Kinds (see *Wildest Dreams*)

Enemies: Tulpas, Peace Force, the Net, humankind in general

Trade in the drug Nightmare is monopolized by the Sandmen and their allies (for the moment), the Exalted Order of Dream Kings. In popular perception, the Dream Kings are “sandmen”; in reality, the true Sandmen are more like a sub-species than a secret society. They are genetically different from regular humans, and they have a sub-culture with its own slang and customs.

For full information on the Sandmen, tulpas, and the Exalted Order, see *Wildest Dreams*.

DR. CHRIS SEVERSEN

"Hmm... Let me think about that."

—Chris Seversen,
responding to a scientist's
technical question

Type: Patron.

Rep: A slightly eccentric but brilliant scientist, mostly known among the elite and the intelligentsia.

Brief: Dr. Chris Seversen is the artificial persona of three openheimers who live in a mansion on the coast north and east of the Edge.

Allies: The Government (uneasy).

Enemies: None.

As far as the world at large knows, Dr. Chris Seversen is the

author of several important fringe science treatises. More importantly to the island, she is a patron of science, supporting other brave investigators who are trying to expand the scope of human knowledge.

Though her investigations include the exploration and use of psychic powers, she has received informal license from the government to continue unmolested. No doubt this freedom results from her having shared with the D'Aubainnes the secret of the Seversen Disruption Field (see p. 54). As long as she continues to provide the government with some fruits of her research, she will be allowed to continue it, even though it is, strictly speaking, illegal.

Dr. Seversen commonly aids her wounded bennies with fringe science. When she does so, she and Samson

accompany the bennie to Samson's medical lab. There Dr. Seversen gives the benny a general anesthetic, and Samson performs the actual medical operation. In this way, the patient does not see that it is Samson who is the physician. PCs may become suspicious, however, when they realize that Samson is always there to "help" Dr. Seversen with medical tasks.

Key to Maps

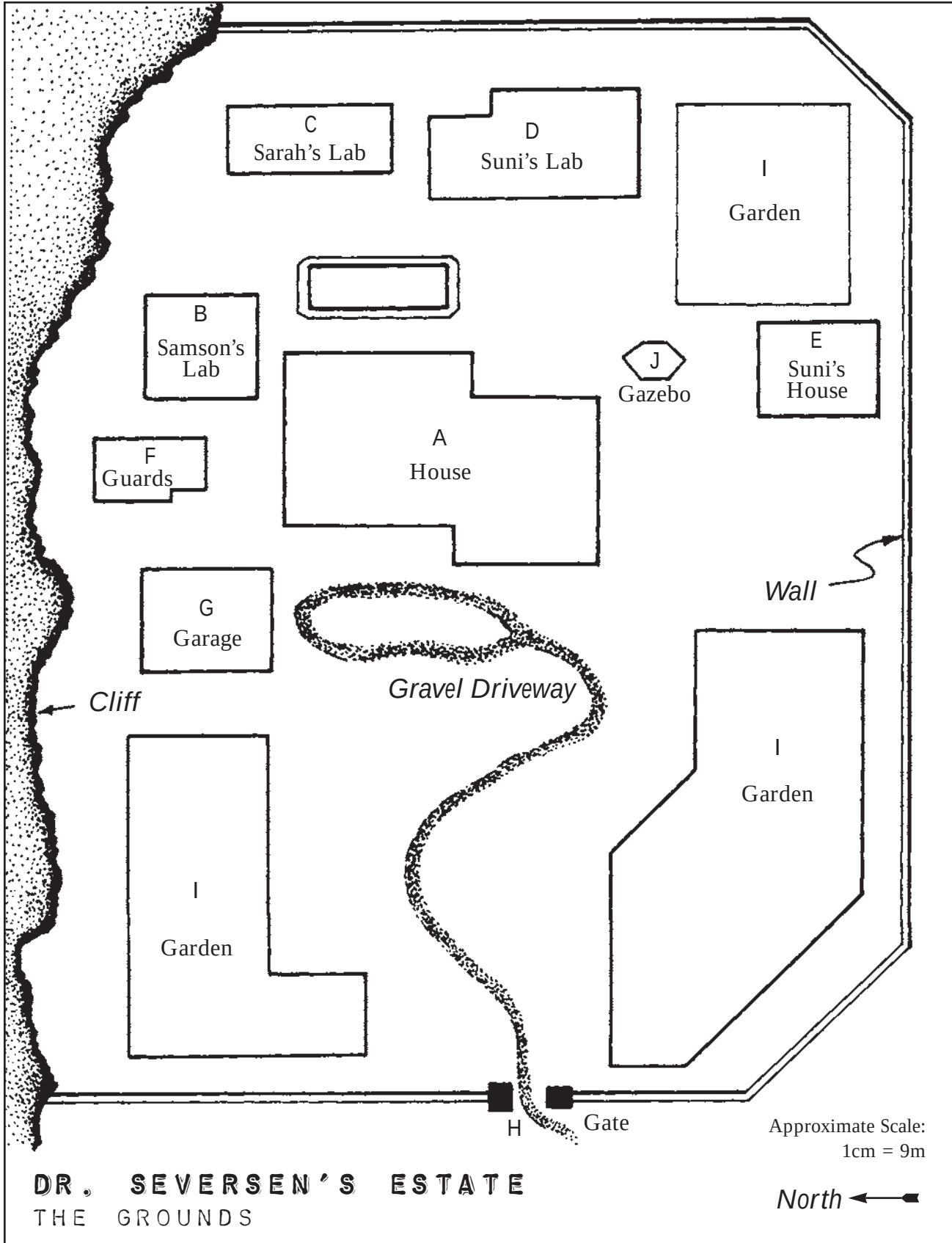
Map of the Grounds

A. House. A three-story, light gray mansion. On the roof is a large battery of solar collectors, a windmill, and a television satellite. Dr. Seversen, Samson, and Sarah live here, along with authentic servants. Details on other maps, below.



Illustration by H.J. McKinney

OVER THE EDGE



Cartography by Eric Hotz

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

Illustration by Cheryl Mandus



B. Samson's Laboratory. While the guests are here, this lab is sealed off. The doors are locked, the lights out, the shades drawn, alarms activated, and most of the equipment is put away. Anyone gaining entrance sees a dissected, preserved corpse on an operating table, discreetly covered with a white sheet. In the lab are acupuncture probes, medicinal herbs, surgical and forensic equipment, a centrifuge, hypodermics, various drugs, a Geiger counter, a doctor's bag, and so on.

C. Sarah's Laboratory. This laboratory is divided into two sections: one a sparse but comfortable room filled with wooden cabinets that contain crystals, dowsing wands, pyramids, and other "new age" paraphernalia, and another filled with high-tech electronic equipment that she uses to test psychic powers. Any psychic sensitive who enters this area is subject to disruptive psychic energies and vibrations that Applequist's equipment gives off. The more sensitive the psychic is, the more strongly affected he is by these energies, suffering anything

from apparently sourceless discomfort to a splitting headache.

D. Suni's Laboratory. In addition to the impressive array of electronic devices, most used for detecting brain activity, Dr. Asaka keeps clusters of living human brain tissue in a locked cabinet.

E. Suni's House. Dr. Asaka and her husband live here, a sparse house whose decor is obviously influenced by Zen esthetics.

F. Guards. From this building, the guards monitor activity throughout the estate on their video monitors. Patrols leave from and return to this building. At least two guards are always on guard here.

G. Garage. Contains three expensive automobiles and a mechanic's work area.

H. Gate. Monitored by a video camera and opened electronically from building F.

I. Garden. Some of these gardens grow vegetables, but the most impressive ones are those that Ishano Asaka sculpts to esthetic perfection.

J. Gazebo. A small, raised, covered area where a table for go (a popular Asian game) stands.

K. Pool. Plenty of space for tanning, and a small bar.

House

The entire house is protected by psychically attuned wires that pulse with electric energy. These wires, an invention of the combined efforts of Applequist (Sarah) and Rie (Suni), create an interference barrier on the "psychic plane." This field prevents accurate psychic spying or manipulation through it, though psychic activities within the house are not hampered.

A series of alarms (electric eyes, motion sensors, pressure sensitive plates, etc) also protect the house from mundane intrusion.

Ground Floor

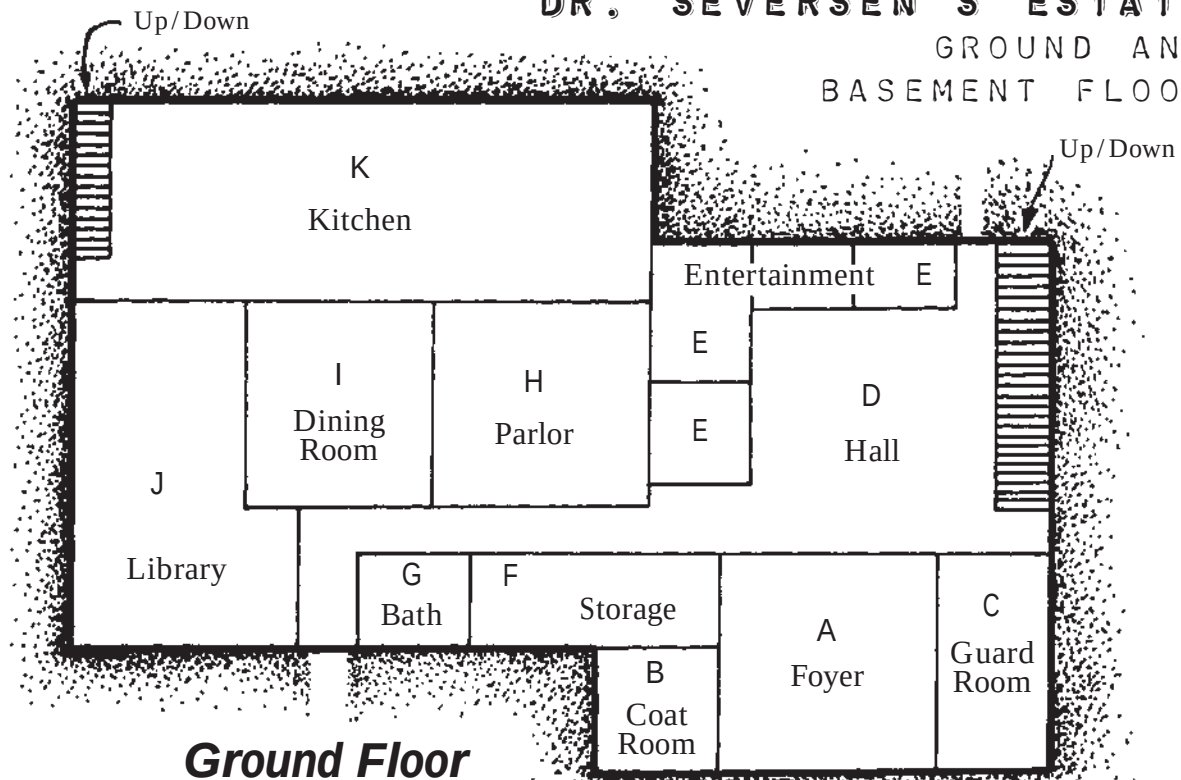
A. Foyer.

B. Coat Room.

C. Guardroom. Always locked, but not usually occupied. Has

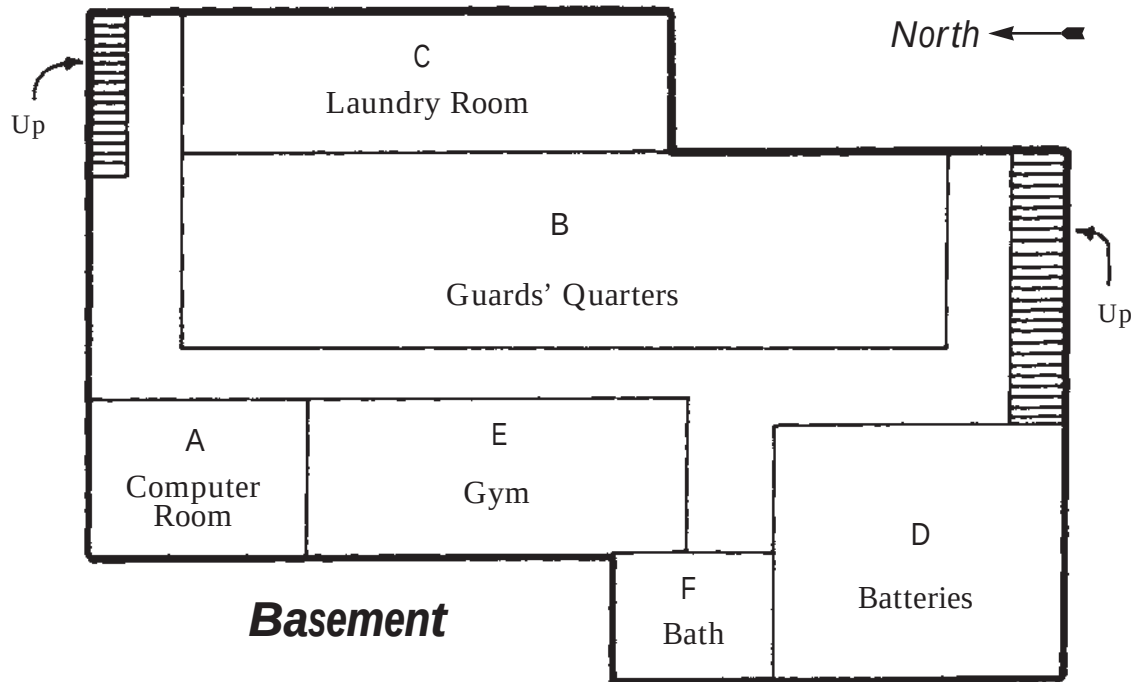
DR. SEVERSEN'S ESTATE

GROUND AND
BASEMENT FLOOR



Approximate Scale:
1cm = 4m

North ←



video monitors and alarm sensors. One can open the gate from here.

D. Hall. The ceiling is 8 m high here, and one can see up to the second floor.

E. Entertainment Cells. Each is equipped with a television, VCR, stereo, and one specialty item. These items are a synthesizer in one room, a computer (with plenty of games) in another, a shelf of pornography (all genders; prose, photographs, and video tapes), and an array of recreational drugs (discreetly locked in a drawer).

F. Storage.

G. Bathroom.

H. Parlor. A very comfortable room with an array of sofas, recliners, and chairs. Also has a pool table and a large, round table for snacks, games, and such.

I. Dining Room. The table can be extended from long to very long, as need dictates.

J. Library. In addition to a great many texts that treat the three scientists' fields of study, the library has a large selection of strange, experimental, and avant garde fiction (Borges, Phillip K. Dick, L. Ron Hubbard, Poe, etc.). A photocopier and computer terminal clash somewhat with the elegant 19th century façade that the room presents.

K. Kitchen. Huge, well-equipped, and modern.

Basement

A. Computer Room. The mainframe that powers the terminals throughout the estate runs here in a room cooled to 10° C.

B. Guards Quarters. Guards live here.

C. Laundry Room. Four washers, four driers, and a large sink.

D. Batteries. Excess energy from the solar cells & windmill are stored here for later use. Extra electricity comes in on overground wires, and the mansion has an emergency generator for back-up.

E. Gym. Primarily for use by the guards, but other residents and guests are free to use it as well.

F. Bath.

Second Floor

A. Master Bedroom. Dr. Seversen stays here, even when guests are not around. Her supply of make-up and other personal items is astonishing.

B. Guest Rooms. The three scientists stay in three of these rooms most of the time, but they give them up to guests and move to smaller rooms during the convocation.

C. Servants' Quarters. During the convocation, when Samson, Suni, & Sarah stay here, it is more crowded than usual.

D. Conference Room. A comfortable den with books, a coffee maker, an espresso machine, microwave oven, computer terminal, desk, coffee table, and three chairs. Dr. Seversen holds her one-on-one conferences with the guests in this room.

E. Bath.

F. Hall. Carpeted, with paintings adorning the walls. Near the stairs, the hallway looks down to the ground floor.

Third Floor

A. Balcony. A stone-tiled balcony with large potted plants. It overlooks the cliffs that drop down to the sea. The crashing of the surf sounds soft and gentle at this distance.

B. Guest Rooms.

C. Bath. With a large tub and a hot tub.

D. Meditation Room. In the closet are candles, statuette of the Buddha, and incense sticks.

E. Access to Roof.

GMCS

Dr. Chris Seversen

Patron of fringe science

Actually, her name is Sheila Blake, an actress hired many years ago to portray the fictitious Dr. Seversen. She is highly skilled at asking the right questions, and years of successfully portraying a confident persona have made her very confident indeed.

She wears a rose quartz crystal trap around her neck to prevent psychic attacks and investigations. She wears a headpiece walkie-talkie, which she explains is for keeping in touch with her guards (though actually it is for keeping in touch with the "servants").

US (European stock) woman, age 38, 169 cm, 66 kg. She has a dynamic energy that makes her attractive despite her frankly plain features. Her face is a bit lumpy, and her blond hair is of medium length and slightly curled.

Traits

Excellent at Acting, 4 dice — A method actress extraordinaire, Blake has practically turned herself into Dr. Seversen. She can also mimic just about any emotion that may come in handy. (None; the sign of good acting is that others can't tell that one is acting)

Dynamic, 3 dice — She is filled with vitality, both physical and mental. (Energetic)

Samson, butler (Dr. Mbatagu Kunilla)

Fringe medical expert

"Samson" has had great success in combining knowledge of various fringe medical traditions, including a secret tradition from his native Zimbabwe. (This tradition is the product of the African civilization that was destroyed by the slave trade.)

African man, age 35, 183 cm, 78 kg. Short hair, receding hairline, strong cheekbones.

Languages: British English, Cishona

Attack: 3 dice with whatever he can get his hand on

Defense: 2 dice

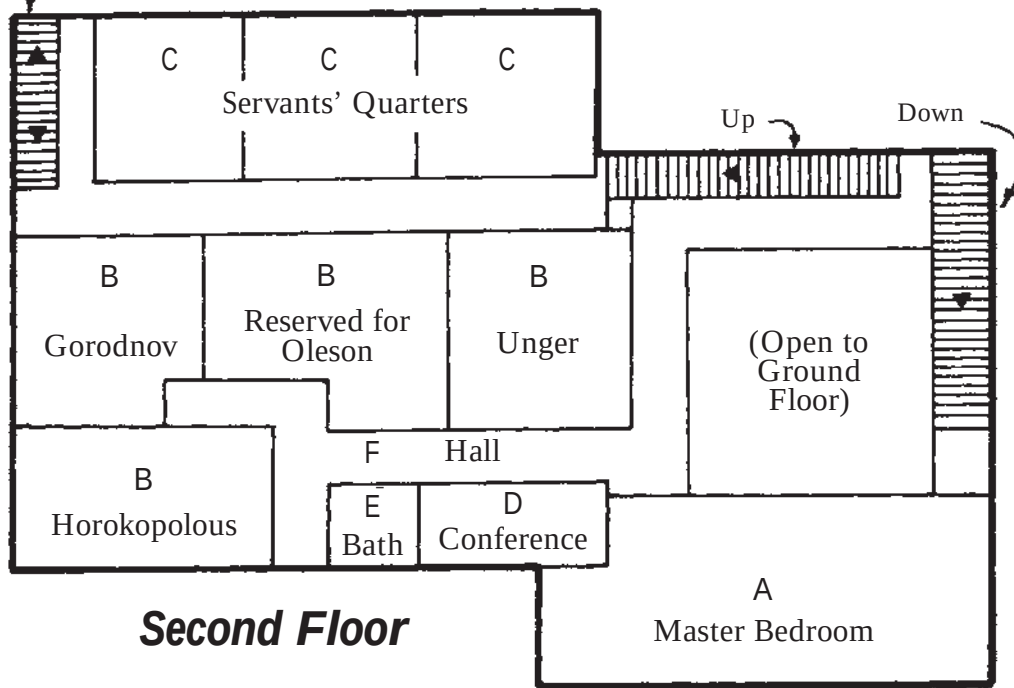
Hit Points: 21 (muscle)

Traits

Excellent at Fringe Medicine, 3 dice — Whether its orgones, *ch'i* pathways, or naturopathic techniques, "Samson" knows about it. In an emergency, he may be able to relieve pain, repair severed nerves, cure "incurable" diseases, cause unconsciousness, or perform other dramatic actions on the human body. He will

DR. SEVERSEN'S ESTATE
SECOND AND THIRD FLOORS

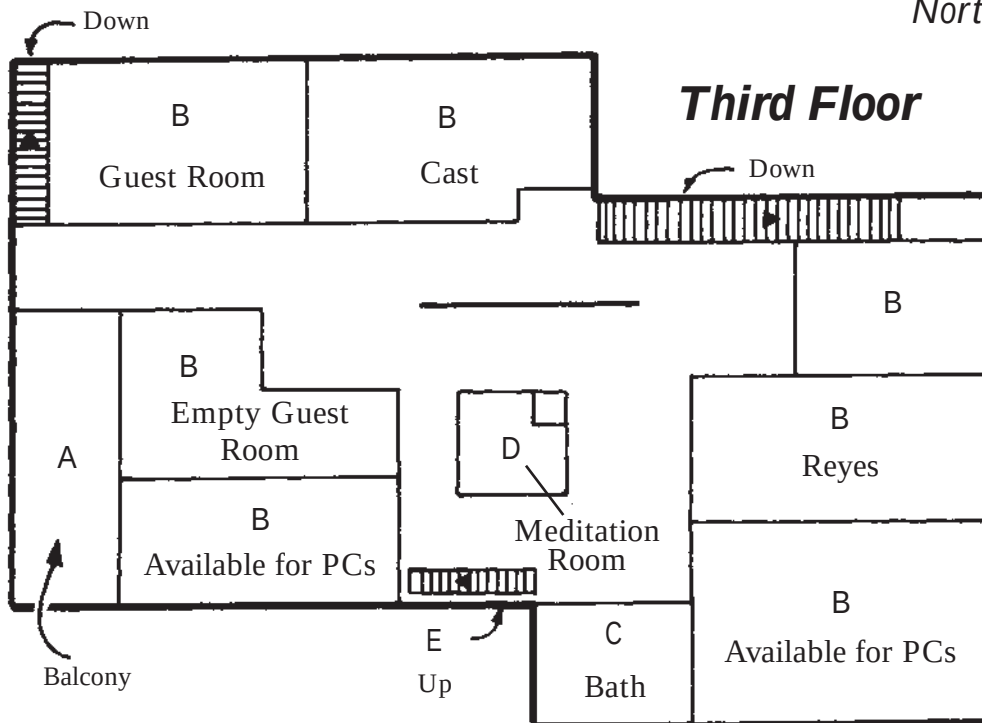
Up/Down



Second Floor

Approximate Scale:
1cm = 4m

North ←



Third Floor

only do so, however, if the effect is worth revealing that he is more than just a butler. (In good health)

Strong, 3 dice — The raw strength he developed as a folk doctor's "muscle" has never left him. (Muscles and mass)

Sarah, maid

(Jennifer Applequist)

An expert in the psychic energies and abilities, she has studied karate, partly for self-defense and partly for mind-training, but she's not terribly good at it.

She is currently trying to find a way to drain psychic energy, a precursor to being able to store and utilize it at will. Depending on your needs, she may well have developed a fringe power herself.

US (European stock) woman, age 42, 167 cm, 68 kg. She is chubby, but has an attractive sparkle in her eye.

Attack: 3 dice with "open hand," X1 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (trained resilience)

Traits

Excellent at Occult Manipulation, 3 dice — She has more knowledge than raw psychic power, but she knows enough to protect herself. She often uses technological techniques (with Dr. Asaka's help). (Unconcerned with "mundane" affairs)

Good Karate Fighter, 3 dice — Knows the basics of punches, kicks, blocks, and falls, as well and concentration techniques. (Practices a little every day)

Suni, maid

(Dr. Rie Asaka)

A Japanese psychologist whose neurological investigations have led her to experimental electrical work. Her laboratory is a bewildering array of circuits, neurological diagnostic devices, computers, and experimental contraptions. She is currently attempting to develop a device that can read basic thoughts or emotions through electrodes taped to the head.

Japanese woman, age 57, 155 cm, 50 kg. Small, thin, and nimble.

Languages: Japanese, English, some German

Traits

Fringe Electroneurology, 4 dice — Precise abilities depend on the needs of your plot, since she is always developing new techniques. (Observes strangers for facial tics and habitual actions, as clues to the person's mental state)

Ishano Asaka

Gardener

Ishano is "Suni's" husband, and also the gardener for the estate, a role that he fulfills with Zen simplicity and elegance. He is also a *de facto* bodyguard, since his mastery of karate makes him quite formidable, even at the age of sixty-two.

Japanese man, age 62, 160 cm, 55 kg, bald, wispy beard, gentle demeanor.

Attack: 6 dice at "Gentle Lightning," X2 damage (see below)

Attack: 3 dice, X1 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 15

Traits

Excellent at Gardening, 4 dice — His Zen approach gives his gardens a fulfilling combination of the natural and the controlled. (Often carrying a rake for gravel)

Masterful at Karate, 3 dice (plus "Gentle Lightning") — While highly experienced at this art, Ishano has lost much of his stamina and speed. His only real chance against a very good fighter is to take his opponent out with one punch, something he tries to accomplish with his secret "Gentle Lightning" punch. He can only make this strike once, after which he must wait at least ten minutes to re-charge his *ki* (vital energy).

Guards

These fellows were chosen for three qualities: mental stability, loyalty, and lack of imagination. Each is equipped with a billy club, three throwing knives, a flashlight, and a walkie-talkie.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 w/ billy club, X1 w/ throwing knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (brawn)

Traits

Good Brawlers, 3 dice — They fight well, even in the face of overwhelming odds. (Train regularly)

Perceptive, 3 dice — They're good at keeping an eye on things, spotting hidden weapons, noticing missing items, and so forth. (Catch facial expressions, even momentary ones)

Servants

The staff includes a mechanic, a cook, and several maids. They are well-paid, chosen for their ability to keep secrets.

Morena Dragout

Bennie

Dragout gathers information for Dr. Seversen, as well as running errands in the Edge. She is hard to miss on her large motorcycle, with a sidecar for her dog, Patches. Patches is a mutt, so ugly she's cute. What makes Dragout so valuable to Seversen is that Dragout and Patches can communicate.

Al Amarjan woman, age 19, 167 cm, 60 kg. Dark skin, long hair dyed almost white, incredible collection of earrings in each ear.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Science, 1 die — Some courses in science at the university and an innate aptitude for reasoning give Dragout some scientific ability, but not enough to make her an accomplished scientist. (Takes evening classes at the U)

Talk to Patches — When she was twelve, Dragout found Patches wandering on the streets of the Edge. They became fast friends, and Dragout soon learned to "read" the messages in Patches's barks and facial expressions. While their communication is not perfect, they can communicate simple ideas. Patches serves as an unobtrusive spy for Dragout's investigations. Dragout has tried to talk to other animals, but has had no success. (Adores Patches)

SIGMA EPSILON XI

"Good morning. By the way, what's your name again?"

— a *Sigma Ep* girl

Type: Sorority.

Rep: For a good time, call...

Brief: A sorority at the university dominated by young women bent on careers as models, actresses, or prize-wives.

Allies: Sigma Omicron Beta (brother fraternity).

Enemies: Alpha Rho Tau.

Those unfortunates whose best attribute is good looks band together in Sigma Epsilon Xi to help each other share this burden and hide their distress behind a façade of endless parties, strings of boyfriends, and hyperactive social lives.

GMCs

Jennifer Jackson

Sigma Ep Chick

Jennifer is majoring in business at the University, but she is much more concerned with her social life than with homework. She has been dating Antoine Maribella of Sigma Om on and off for a year (see next column).

Al Amarjan woman, age 19, 162 cm, 51 kg, blond hair (dyed), blue eyes (from contacts), generous make-up, shapely body, trendy clothes, rings, earrings. Her easily tanned skin reveals a touch of African in her otherwise European genetic background.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, some Italian and German.

Attacks: 2 dice plus penalty die, X1 unarmed

Defense: 2 dice plus a penalty die
Hit Points: 12

Traits

Fashion, 3 dice — Using the right make-up, choosing clothes that accentuate her body's virtues, and using the "in" slang. (Well-dressed)

Toying, 3 dice — Teasing interested men, confusing and confounding boyfriends, playing power games with

roommates, and otherwise getting and keeping the upper hand in personal relationships. (Has no long-lasting friendships)

Wimpy, penalty die — As part of the "feminine" persona she effects, Jennifer has neglected her physical potential. She receives a penalty die on all demanding physical rolls, such as fighting or using a corkscrew. (Asks guys for help)

Story Idea

A male PC thinks he's in heaven when he attracts the attention of a beautiful college girl. Unfortunately, Jennifer is just toying with him to make Antoine jealous. She likes to see him beat people up over her.

SIGMA OMICRON BETA

"Come on, babe. I bought you dinner, didn't I?"

— a *Sigma Om* guy

Type: Fraternity/gang.

Rep: Rowdy, but not really dangerous.

Brief: A fraternity at the D'Aubainne University composed mostly of jocks.

Allies: Sigma Epsilon Xi (Sister sorority).

Enemies: Delta Epsilon Theta.

Sigma Om patrols the Science Barrio to keep it suitable for student life, but their penchant for large brawls often causes trouble. Former students often retain membership in the fraternity, so members can be found throughout the Edge.

GMCs

Antoine Maribella

College Jock

Antoine is majoring in phy ed at the University, but his studies are a sideline to his activities with his frat. For the past year he has been dating Jennifer Jackson of Sigma Ep (see above). He likes her because he thinks dating a beautiful girl is proof of his masculinity. When someone else takes interest in her, and when she responds to his attention, Antoine takes this as a challenge to his masculinity, and he is prone to demonstrating his masculinity in no uncertain terms.

Al Amarjan man, age 20, 191 cm, 95 kg, black hair, bronze skin, highly defined muscles. His wardrobe consists mostly of shorts, football jerseys, muscle shirts, T's, and sweats.



Illustration by H.J. McKinney

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, some English, some Italian.

Attack: 4 dice, X1 unarmed

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 25 (brawn)

Traits

Strong, 4 dice — Though

Antoine lifts weights mostly to shape his body into a more impressive form, he has also developed considerable strength as a side effect. (Huge, well-defined muscles; dearth of body fat)

Brawling, 3 dice — A few years on the wrestling team and some practical experience have made him an adequate fighter. (Menacing stance)

Dim, penalty die — Antoine has never taken the time to learn to think. He gets a penalty die on all rolls to figure things out. (Simple vocabulary)

Story Idea

Some conspiracy that the PCs are hunting manipulates Antoine to mess them up. The enemies might use fringe powers, weird science, or simple deception.

SOMMERITES

“Have you heard the good tunes?”

—a *Sommerite* missionary

Type: Cult.

Rep: Crazy, but they throw good parties.

Brief: People who believe rock vocalist Karla Sommers to be divine, mostly young women.

Allies: Cheryl D’Aubainne, Lydia Goodman.

Enemies: Glorious Lords.

To most people, Karla Sommers is a well-known rock vocalist, but to the Sommerites, she is divine. The Sommerites have developed a religion based on adoration of Sommers and interpretation of her lyrics. The ill-defined tenets of the faith include value for human life and sensuality, vague mystical strains, and a feel-good philosophy.

A few of the Sommerites are completely caught up in the lifestyle, ordering their lives around listening to Sommers’s music, partying with other

Sommerites, and spreading the “good tunes.” Most, however, are much less involved, and some are casual Sommerites in the same way that many US Americans are casual Christians. Mixed in with Sommerism are various elements of New Age philosophy, including belief in synchronicity, practicing the power of positive thinking, and seeing the universe as a glorious, beautiful mystery.

The Sommerites are not usually dangerous. In fact, many people find them to be a pleasant addition to the otherwise glum and dangerous world of the Edge. They are, however, capable of defending themselves, especially if they need to call on the help of Lydia Goodman.

Karla Sommers herself has not publicly acknowledged the existence of the cult. And who is Karla Sommers? Maybe she is a talented, progressive vocalist whose talent and vision make her less popular than more conformist artists. Maybe she is a pop star carefully crafted by canny managers. Maybe she is divine, humanity’s last hope in the face of otherwise overwhelming dangers. You are free to make her what you wish.

The Sommerites worship at the Temple of the Divine Experience on Tuesday nights, and they are present in force at the Saturday night parties.

GMCS

Joy Laughter

Sommerite Spokeswoman and Singer

Although the Sommerites have no official hierarchy, Laughter is regarded as their de facto leader. In addition to explicating Sommers’s lyrics, she does a remarkable job of mimicking her singing style. Only rarely does she use her power to declare someone a blasphemer, but when she does, the victim may find out just how many Sommerites there really are in the Edge, and how seriously they are offended by blasphemy. There is no definition as to what does and does not qualify as “blasphemy.”

Al Amarjan woman of mostly European descent, age 27, 156 cm, 52

kg, long black hair, oval face, bright & intelligent eyes. Her dress varies greatly from day to day, just as does Karla Sommers’s during her concerts.

Languages: English, French, and some Greek.

Traits

Mimicking Karla Sommers, 6 dice — Her ability to mimic Sommers’s voice and gestures is so remarkable that Laughter has come to believe that she is actually “channeling” Sommers’s divine spirit, which just might be the case. (Incredible performances)

Leading, 3 dice — In addition to the respect given her for her ability to mimic Sommers, Laughter earns more respect through her ability to lead confidently and efficiently. (Sommerites often come to her for advice)

Nightmares — Joy is troubled by recurrent nightmares. She thinks of them as astral attacks by enemies of Sommers or as internal challenges that she must overcome in order to progress spiritually. The nightmares may be either one, both, or just plain nightmares. (Sometimes tired even after a good night’s sleep)

THROCKMORTON OPERATIVES

“But every day is born a man

Who hates what he can’t understand

Who thinks the answer is to kill

Who thinks his actions are God’s will”

— “*Freedom Now*,” Tracy Chapman

Type: Secret Society.

Rep: None.

Brief: Individuals are falling under the influence of the Throckmorton Device, which will not begin operation for another ten years. (Indeed, it has not even been invented yet.) See p. 220.

Allies: None.

Enemies: They hate non-conformists, but they are not yet common enough for anyone to consider them an enemy.

All about the island are individuals who feel a newfound sense of purpose, but just what this “purpose” is, they are not so sure. They are fascist secret agents for a police state that has not yet materialized. Each operative works independently, completely unaware of the other operatives on the island. Currently they are amassing files on deviants, assassinating the troublesome, and achieving positions of power within both legitimate and illicit circles. The Throckmorton Device has various effects on people depending on how fully they’ve been dominated.

Light Domination: Those who are lightly dominated cannot be recognized as Throckmortons. They have a strong sense of morals, cleanliness, and judgmentality. Under influence of the device, they develop a distaste for things that Throckmorton doesn’t like (see insert). This distaste is usually light, and most dominated people retain an open mind about at least a few of the things mentioned above.

Active Domination: These people feel an almost religious sense of duty toward humanity to oppose those things that Throckmorton doesn’t like. Naturally, most of them feel an acute sense of paranoia, as they are constantly surrounded by what they hate. Most of them maintain their current jobs and so forth, but they begin to act, either secretly or overtly, against what they see as threats to society. Most of them begin at least to compile notes about the “unacceptable behavior” of those around them.

The actively dominated people are the most vocal, sometimes speaking out on call-in shows, on street corners, or in dens of iniquity.

Actively dominated men always shave their faces and keep their hair short. Actively dominated women always shave their legs and underarms.

Total Domination: These are the most dangerous of the Throckmorton group. Though entirely unable to verbalize what their plans are, they act with apparent premeditation. They can even spontaneously give and recognize “passwords” (implanted in their brains by the Device) so as to identify other totally dominated operatives. Those under total domination are not generally vocal

or public, but they have been responsible for several assassinations, fires, and other covert actions. They are more careful than the actively dominated, pursuing their plans with care and subterfuge. They sometimes work alone, sometimes in small groups.

Totally dominated men shave their chests, and sometimes underarms and eyebrows. Totally dominated women shave their arms.

What Throckmorton Doesn’t Like

Tattoos, recreational drugs (other than nicotine, alcohol, and caffeine), homosexual behavior, body hair, modern music, modern art, uppity womenfolk, body piercings (including earrings for men), and intellectuals.

G M C s

Angela Reyes

Future Inventor of the Throckmorton Device

(See p. 86)

Simbuto Cye Anbali

Throckmorton Operative (Totally Dominated)

Simbuto Cye Anbali is a young man from Africa who came to the island in what he imagined would be the first step in a grand acting career. He joined the Black Death Theater Troupe and showed some promise in avant-garde roles, but then the Throckmorton device began to weave its invisible tendrils into those tight, private spaces between his neural link-ups. As the influence grew, Anbali left the troupe, threw away his earrings, switched from harder drugs to cigarettes and beer, gave up the occasional homosexual contact, ostracized himself from his former friends, and took a job as a data processor in the Golden Barrio. He has shaved his beard, armpits, chest, and eyebrows. He has ritual scars across his chest, and he is currently saving money for plastic surgery to have them removed.

Anbali has also taken a wife and now has a one-year old daughter (whom he has

potty-trained mercilessly). He selected his wife based on the following criteria: African extraction, submissiveness, clean lifestyle, and desire to raise a family. Anbali foresees the day when he will have a well-trained group of offspring to help in his mighty task (whatever that task might be).

At night, Anbali dreams of marching goose-step in a huge parade toward some unseen leader, before whom he can lay down his will and his life.

Lately, Anbali has taken to scouting out the Plaza of Flowers, trying to identify people who deserve assassination. After killing a few junkies and homosexuals, Anbali has decided to focus his attacks on the few people who truly deserve his attention. He currently has his eye on Rock-Hard Roger, a gay stripper whose act is quite popular at certain clubs. Anbali fumes at the thought of Roger blatantly advertising his “perversion” and enticing others to join in on the sin.

North African man, age 30, 170 cm, 66 kg, no eyebrows, clean-shaven, stern demeanor, conservatively dressed.

Languages: Arabic, French, English, Berber (spoken only)

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage.

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (determination)

Traits

Excellent Morale, 4 dice —

Anbali resists torture, bribery, threats, and temptations with inhuman resolve. (Stern demeanor)

Good Fighter, 3 dice — Anbali relishes the vibration in his hand when he strikes someone with a blunt object, so he prefers casual weapons like baseball bats. Pipes are special favorites of his because they ring dully after a good, solid hit. (Powerful arms)

Good Actor, 3 dice — His experience as an aspiring actor carries over, and he is able to assume various roles to infiltrate areas where he would not normally be welcome. He finds it revolting, however, to adopt roles that oppose his sense of right and wrong, so he can only keep up such pretenses a short while. (Knows local actors)

Bad at Keeping Cool, penalty die — When confronted by things that

Throckmorton doesn't like, he has a hard time playing it cool. Sweat tends to pop up on his forehead and run into his eyes (no eyebrows, remember?) when faced with deviants. With concentration, he can use his acting skills to hide his discomfort, but often he doesn't make the effort to hide his feelings. (Grimaces at what he doesn't like)

Thuki Meringo

Salvaged Low-Life

See "The Fürchtegott File" (in *Forgotten Lives*), p. 98.

Captain Ali Mukabar

Nascent Throckmorton

See "The Hive" (*The Myth of Self*), p. 35.

Tiger Tasanawinyou

Dissociative Throckmorton

See "Deep Troubles" (*The Myth of Self*), p. 75.

Story Ideas

See The Throckmorton Device, p. 220.

TULPAS

"How am I doing?"

—Ed Koch

Type: Secret Race.

Rep: None.

Brief: Psychic beings that conform to the ideas of others.

Allies: None.

Enemies: Sandmen; they fear psychics and each other, too.

Tulpas are free-floating concentrations of psychic energy that for some reason coalesce and take on human form. The twisted atmosphere of Al Amarja somehow encourages this. Little is known about this process because the tulpas are, like most secret races, extremely, uh, well, secretive.

Tulpas, in a sense, become physical embodiments of the mental projections of those they encounter. A tulpa in its early formative stages is just a vague light or shadow materializing in a corner or alcove. It must wait until a human (or other sentient being) encounters it.

The tulpa will then physically change to match whatever the sentient imagines it to be. The longer one individual looks at and thinks about who they're seeing, the more detailed the persona the tulpa will adopt. The tulpa will then travel about, gaining details — physical appearance, imaginary life history, habits, speech patterns, etc. — as they bump into more and more people who form impressions of them.

For example, a tulpa begins to materialize behind the piano in Den of Thieves in the Sunken Plaza. The first person to see its shadowy form is a worried burger who feels women are always preying on him. The tulpa becomes the predatory gorgeous woman he is thinking about, and approaches him. Frightened by the reputation of the bar, the burger further assumes she'll be violent and heavily-armed, so she becomes such. A bouncer approaches her, and assumes she'd have to be insane or dangerous or both to cause trouble here, so she becomes both. This particular tulpa is not going to be a good citizen, but depending on who the burger had expected to run into, the result could also have been a shrumpy aging accountant, a naïve fellow tourist, or Wayne Newton.

Tulpas know they are tulpas but try to forget this, and would never admit this shame to anyone, even on pain of death. Like Pinocchio, they want nothing more in the world than to be human. A tulpa can sense other tulpas, and they avoid each other like the plague. The reason for this is that if two tulpas meet, since each knows the other's true form, both quickly tend to lose all the carefully accrued details of humanity they've built up, possibly over years. Only a tulpa stricken with self-loathing for the persona they've built up will seek out other tulpas, hoping to lose a few layers of identity that they then can replace with something more likeable. The other tulpa, however, will likely try to flee in this case.

Anyone you encounter in Al Amarja could be a tulpa. That bodyguard over there, the bartender, a bouncer, a Peace Force officer... Say, don't the D'Aubainnes tend to act just how everyone would expect them to?

For more information on tulpas, see the sourcebook *Wildest Dreams*.

Alternate Hypothesis

Every sentient being on the planet is a malleable being of psychic energy, much like a tulpa. Most of us, however, have personal goals and motivations that influence our physical and mental attributes at least as much as others' projections have; and we've forced ourselves to forget our true nature. What makes a normal person different from a tulpa is that a tulpa is motiveless, and thus subject only to mental projections, needs, and expectations of others. Also, tulpas have a harder time forgetting their non-physical nature. Perhaps exposure to tulpas, especially psychic contact, would give a person a brief glimpse of the universe as it really is: an infinite number of immortal spirits donning temporary identities in various "worlds" as they play out their intricate, never-ending games with no true concern other than shared amusement. What would one do with this knowledge?

Story Idea

The cooperative GMC who's been helping the PCs on their mission sure is a blessing to have around. The longer they've worked with her, the more helpful and useful she's become (conforming to what they at first wanted and now expect). Then she starts acting paranoid, as if someone is after her. When she shows up the next day, she has a tattoo on her forehead, a slightly different voice, strange clothes, and a vicious temperament. Her personality has, in one day, taken a dramatic turn for the worse, and she no longer remembers the PCs. Another tulpa, trying to rid himself of accrued evil attributes, has hunted her down and trapped her, forcing close contact until they both lost several years' worth of traits. She wound up in the wrong crowd, and now is a different person. The continued attention and faith of the PCs may slowly bring her around, but only solving the mysteries of the tulpas will the PCs be able to develop a coherent strategy for helping her. Of course, once they know who she really is, they must never see her again, as their presence would destroy her just as that of another tulpa's would.

SOCIETY INTERACTION AT A GLANCE

This chart summarizes the reactions of various people, groups, and races to the other people, groups, and races found on Al Amarja. By cross-referencing one group with another, you can find out what these groups think of each other (or whether they even know about each other). Each phrase states the opinion, attitude, actions, or desires that are typical between those groups. The group on the left-hand column is the group with the attitude or intent, while the group on the top of the column is the group toward whom that attitude, action, or intent is directed.

Example: The Aries Gang dislikes Sir Arthur Compton, and Compton holds the Aries Gang in contempt. Within their own ranks, the Aries Gang members are friendly, whereas people associated with Compton tend to compete with each other.

If the phrase is in parentheses, the group does not know about the other group in question, and the phrase is how the group might react upon finding out about the second group.

Example: The glugs avoid the Peace Force, but the Peace Force does not know about the glugs. If the Peace Force found out about the glugs, they would follow orders

from above in dealing with them.

When a word or phrase is in quotes, it represents what one group might say about another.

Example: The Sommerites think that the Glorious Lords are "creepy."

Note that these phrases represent what a group wants to do, not necessarily what the group is capable of. How far each group gets in regards to its goals for other groups depends on your series, as many of these conflicts will play out in your game, and the PCs may well have a hand in determining who wins which conflicts.

Example: Otto's Men would like to pulverize Sir Arthur Compton, but they are not able to, and they might even pass up a chance to do so if they thought the attack would have repercussions for their families.

If a phrase includes a "?," it means that the reaction of one group to another is not certain. How a group reacts to another, in this case, depends on the needs of your series and the actions of the PCs.

Example: Otto's Men might oppose or follow the Throckmorton Operatives.

When cross-referencing a group with itself, the phrase you get represents how members of that group get along with each other. If the "group" is an individual, then the phrase represents how that person feels about himself.

Example: Members of the Delta fraternity compete with and envy each other. Also, Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne is confused about himself.

Keep in mind that some of these groups are very large and diverse. Just because the Movers know about the Pharaohs and oppose them doesn't by any means that every Mover knows about the Pharaohs. All it means is that enough important Movers know for that knowledge to affect the Movers as a whole. Similarly, there may be one or two functionaries in the government who do know about the glugs, but they may be receiving bribes to keep silent.

NOTE

If you want to get a quick feel for a group's nature, cross-reference it with the public and with itself. This should give you a rough idea of what those guys are about.

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

	Alpha RT	Aries Gang	Compton	Cut-Ups	Cheryl D'
Alpha Rho Tau	easy-going	dislike	curious	confused	admire
Aries Gang	ignore	friendly	dislike	dislike	like
Compton	corrupt	contempt	competetive	contempt	despise
Cut-Ups	charm	vole	cirrus	express	greenish
Cheryl D'Aubainne	like	respect	disgust	humored	happy
Constance D'Aubainne	ignore	dislike	disgust	hate	rivals
Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	ignore	ignore	ignore	intrigued	ignore
Monique D'Aubainne	ignore	use	use, enjoy	hate	keep an eye on
Delta Epsilon Theta	allies	fear	respect	intrigued	dislike
Dog-Faces	ignore	fight	ignore	hate	ignore
Earthlings	ignore	dislike	oppose	curious	like
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	"prudes"	retailers	"corporate account"	ignore	ignore
Garbage Men	ignore	fear	fear	ignore	ignore
Glorious Lords	victimize	fight	allies	eviscerate	hate
Glugs	ignore	ignore	avoid	ignore	disrespect
Lydia Goodman	like	respect	despise	intrigued	friendly
Government	ignore	spy on	worried	dislike	listen to
Kergillians	ignore	dislike	avoid	confused	avoid
LeThuys	disrupt	disrupt	kill last	foil	destroy
Movers	ignore	manipulate	infiltrate	eradicate	infiltrate
the Net	ignore	business relationship	avoid	confused	ignore
Neutralizers	ignore	wary	investigate, neutralize	investigate	ignore
Otto's Men	tell jokes about	respect	pulverize	confused	like
Peace Force	ignore	business agreement	wary	incarcerate	bend to
Pharaohs	confused	ignore	form alliance?	destroy	confused
Philosopher's Stone	ignore	ignore	avoid	try to study	ignore
the Public	wonder	respect	fear	varies	admire
Sandmen	hobbies	party favors	ignore	confused	contempt
Seversen	ignore	ignore	dislike	study	ignore
Sigma Epsilon Xi	despise	admire	curious	befuddled	like
Sigma Omicron Beta	despise	compete	uncomfortable	confused	"Weird"
Sommerites	recruit	respect	dislike	confused	allied
Throckmortons	dislike	dislike	hate	destroy	despise
Tulpas	All reactions depend on the individual tulpa.				

OVER THE EDGE

	Constance D'	Jean-Ch. D'	Monique D'	Delta E. T.
Alpha Rho Tau	dislike	intrigued	hate	adore
Aries Gang	like	ignore	respect	despise
Compton	respect	ignore	friendly	recruits from
Cut-Ups	spigot	*%70	hedge throbber	wing nut
Cheryl D'Aubainne	rivals	confused	grudging respect	accept
Constance D'Aubainne	proud	ignore	respect	contempt
Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	ignore	confused	obey	might chat with
Monique D'Aubainne	guide	exasperated	proud	dislike
Delta Epsilon Theta	dislike	dislike	hate	compete, envy
Dog-Faces	ignore	ignore	respect	accept
Earthlings	wary	ignore	wary	pity
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	appease	ignore	avoid notice	customers
Garbage Men	ignore	ignore	subservient	ignore
Glorious Lords	dislike	ignore	dislike	mock
Glugs	avoid	ignore	hide from	ignore
Lydia Goodman	neutral	ignore	avoid trouble	like
Government	bend to	ignore	lick boots	ignore
Kergillians	avoid	ignore	wary	ignore
LeThuys	destroy	ignore	destroy	kill last
Movers	manipulate	ignore	infiltrate, manipulate, cooperate	ignore
the Net	business relationship	ignore	invite her to parties	ignore
Neutralizers	respect	ignore	hide from	ignore
Otto's Men	like	ignore	respect	contempt
Peace Force	bow to	ignore	lick boots	pick on
Pharaohs	ignore	ignore	infiltrate, manipulate, promise alliance	can't comprehend
Philosopher's Stone	ignore	ignore	avoid	amused
the Public	admire	ignore	fear	dislike
Sandmen	ignore	ignore	avoid	"slate"
Seversen	ignore	ignore	uneasy cooperation	amused
Sigma Epsilon Xi	ignore	ignore	ignore	abhor
Sigma Omicron Beta	ignore	ignore	ignore	pick on
Sommerites	distrust	ignore	wary	pity
Throckmortons	respect	ignore	she's not tough enough	hate, disgust
Tulpas	All reactions depend upon the individual tulpa.			

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

	Dog-Faces	Earthlings	Exalted Order	Garbage Men	Glorious Lords
Alpha Rho Tau	disgust	(groove on)	creepy	see beauty in	fear
Aries Gang	fight	(accept)	(extort)	take for granted	fight
Compton	dislike	(oppose)	intrigued	mock	allies
Cut-Ups	jelly bean	armadillo	chessboard	howdy	carbuncle
Cheryl D'Aubainne	dislike	(help, on own terms)	dislike	pity	hate
Constance D'Aubainne	accept	(oppose)	amused by	take for granted	dislike
Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	ignore	(ignore)	ignore	ignore	ignore
Monique D'Aubainne	accept	protect own interests	collects info on	keep in line	spy on
Delta Epsilon Theta	fear	("Futile")	"Cool"	admire	admire, fear
Dog-Faces	functional	(ignore)	(extort)	dislike hierarchy	dislike
Earthlings	dislike	cooperative	(oppose)	pity	oppose, spy on
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	avoid	(oppose)	initiates	ignore	customers
Garbage Men	fear	(ignore)	(ignore)	harsh hierarchy	fear
Glorious Lords	hate	(oppose)	admire	abuse	competetive, violent
Glugs	ignore	(hide from)	(ignore)	accept	fear, avoid
Lydia Goodman	dislike	(ally?)	(dislike)	pity	hate
Government	spy on	(follow orders)	(spy on)	use	spy on
Kergillians	infiltrate	(hide from)	(ignore)	ignore	ignore
LeThuys	disrupt	(disrupt)	(use)	dislike	kill last
Movers	wary, curious	infiltrate, disinform, use	(manipulate)	ignore	infiltrate
the Net	wary	(oppose)	competitive	ignore	dislike
Neutralizers	wary	(side with)	(investigate)	ignore	investigate, dislike
Otto's Men	dislike	(respect)	(destroy)	dislike	fight
Peace Force	dislike	(follow orders)	collect bribes	ignore	hassle
Pharaohs	ignore	oppose, infiltrate	(ignore)	ignore	plan to use
Philosopher's Stone	wary	(hide from)	(ignore)	ignore	avoid
the Public	fear, respect	(distrust)	creepy	take for granted	fear
Sandmen	wary	(contempt)	tolerate, "dung beetles"	indifferent	"paté goose"
Seversen	ignore	(neutral)	(ignore)	ignore	dislike
Sigma Epsilon Xi	fear	("Cool")	creepy	"Yuck"	scary but sexy
Sigma Omicron Beta	rivals	(neutral)	creepy	pick on	rivals
Sommerites	fear	(appreciate)	disgust	pity	"Creepy"
Throckmortons	oppose	(oppose)	oppose	disgust	dominate
Tulpas	All reactions depend on the individual tulpa				

OVER THE EDGE

	Glugs	Goodman	Government	Kergillians	LeThuys
Alpha Rho Tau	(dig)	like	dislike	(fear)	(fear)
Aries Gang	(ignore)	ignore	work with	(hate)	(despise)
Compton	(corrupt)	dislike	take for granted	(learn about)	(sympathize)
Cut-Ups	density	righteous	halter	stevedore	(garble)
Cheryl D'Aubainne	(like)	friends	tolerate	(fear)	(despise)
Constance D'Aubainne	(ignore)	ignore	work with	(oppose)	(despise)
Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	(ignore)	"Boring"	try to forget about	(intrigued)	(dislike)
Monique D'Aubainne	(spy on)	dislike	control	(find out more)	(oppose)
Delta Epsilon Theta	("Deep")	ignore	hate	("Bitchin'")	(sympathize)
Dog-Faces	(ignore)	ignore	wary of	(dislike)	(hate)
Earthlings	studying, low priority	secretly supportive	wary of	(oppose bitterly)	(eliminate immediately)
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	(exploit)	dismissive	careful of	(avoid)	(oppose)
Garbage Men	(accept)	ignore	fear	(fear)	(dislike)
Glorious Lords	(persecute)	mock	haughty	(butcher)	(beat up)
Glugs	close-knit	ignore	avoid	(avoid)	(wait out)
Lydia Goodman	(befriend)	satisfied	wary of	(oppose)	(oppose)
Government	(follow orders)	spy on	inefficient	(follow orders)	(extirpate)
Kergillians	(investigate)	ignore	avoid	efficient hierarchy	(avoid)
LeThuys	(despise)	disrupt	destabilize	(disrupt)	cooperate
Movers	investigate	spy on	infiltrate, manipulate	(oppose)	(control)
the Net	(ignore)	dislike	secret allies	(oppose)	(oppose)
Neutralizers	(investigate, protect)	like	avoid	(eradicate)	(neutralize)
Otto's Men	(accept)	ignore	distrust	(fear)	(pound on)
Peace Force	(follow orders)	monitor	usually obey	(follow orders)	(follow orders)
Pharaohs	(eliminate!)	monitor	avoid	(oppose)	(dominate or destroy)
Philosopher's Stone	(study)	ignore	hide from	(fear, study)	(study)
the Public	("Weird")	envy	avoid	(fear)	(fear)
Sandmen	(ignore)	nausea	avoid	(ignore)	(ignore)
Seversen	(study)	mutual respect	uneasy cooperation	(study)	(oppose)
Sigma Epsilon Xi	("Weird")	respect	ignore	(freak out)	("Yuck")
Sigma Omicron Beta	(ignore)	ignore	avoid	(wary)	(pound on)
Sommerites	(ignore)	allies	avoid	(wary)	(hate)
Throckmortons	(dominate)	oppose	subvert, dominate	(dominate)	(extirpate)
Tulpas	All reactions depend on the individual tulpa				

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

	Movers	Net	Neutralizers	Otto's Men	Peace Force
Alpha Rho Tau	(hate)	hate	(curious)	dislike	"Pigs!"
Aries Gang	(oppose)	accept	(accept)	respect	defer to
Compton	(want to join)	"Petty"	(oppose)	contempt	contempt
Cut-Ups	pogo stick	blueberry jam	four-poker vest	chipmunk	turnip
Cheryl D'Aubainne	dislike	dislike	(appreciate)	dislike	use
Constance D'Aubainne	member	allies	(ignore)	ignore	use
Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	(ignore)	(ignore)	(ignore)	ignore	accept
Monique D'Aubainne	ally	ally	(dislike)	ignore	dominate
Delta Epsilon Theta	(dislike)	despise	(dislike)	fear	fear
Dog-Faces	(ally)	work with	(avoid)	dislike	defer to
Earthlings	oppose	oppose	(cooperate)	ignore	infiltrate
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	(want to join)	appease	avoid	avoid	pay off
Garbage Men	(ignore)	ignore	(ignore)	avoid	fear
Glorious Lords	(rivals)	worth with	(mock, attack)	hate, fight	oppose
Glugs	(wait out)	avoid	(avoid)	avoid	avoid
Lydia Goodman	(oppose)	avoid	(learn from, aid?)	dislike	avoid
Government	(follow orders)	turn blind eye	(control)	abet	work together
Kergillians	(infiltrate)	infiltrate	(avoid)	avoid	infiltrate
LeThuys	(destabilize)	(destabilize)	(destabilize)	extirpate	destabilize
Movers	infighting	infiltrate	(infiltrate)	ignore	infiltrate
the Net	(study, infiltrate)	competetive	(ignore)	ignore	business partners
Neutralizers	(oppose)	avoid	military efficiency	ignore	avoid
Otto's Men	(threaten)	threaten	(ask for help)	buddies	"Inefficient"
Peace Force	(oppose)	business partners	(observe)	hands off	competetive
Pharaohs	infiltrate, fight	infiltrate	(avoid)	ignore	infiltrate
Philosopher's Stone	(avoid)	avoid	(spy on)	"Brutes"	fear
the Public	(fear)	accept	(curious)	some admire, some hate	avoid
Sandmen	(ignore)	"accountants"	(disembowel)	kill singly	"tapeworms"
Seversen	(avoid)	ignore	(spy on)	ignore	tolerate
Sigma Epsilon Xi	(dislike)	avoid	("So?")	"Kinda sexy"	avoid
Sigma Omicron Beta	(avoid)	indifferent	(ignore)	rivals	defer to
Sommerites	(worry about)	dislike	(ignore)	dislike	avoid
Throckmortons	(infiltrate, dominate)	infiltrate, dominate	(infiltrate, dominate)	"Allies"	dominate
Tulpas	All reactions depend on the individual tulpa				

OVER THE EDGE

	Pharaohs	Philosopher's S.	Public	Sandmen	Seversen
Alpha Rho Tau	(fear)	(hate)	disdain	(exciting)	ignore
Aries Gang	(oppose)	(ignore)	protect, enjoy	(dangerous)	ignore
Compton	(join?)	(contempt)	contempt	pedestrian	Ignore
Cut-Ups	alternate larynx	glue	heart murmur	lynch	threadbare
Cheryl D'Aubainne	(hate, oppose)	(dislike)	compassion	(dislike)	ignore
Constance D'Aubainne	(ally? fight?)	ignore	use	(investigate)	ignore
Jean-Christophe D'Aubainne	(ignore)	ignore	necessary evil	(ignore)	ignore
Monique D'Aubainne	manipulate	(study)	control	keep tabs on	learn from
Delta Epsilon Theta	(appreciate)	(hate)	despise	(idolize)	ignore
Dog-Faces	(avoid)	(ignore)	intimidate	(fear)	ignore
Earthlings	fight on all fronts	(expose)	protect	"too much else to worry about"	spy on
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	(ally?)	(customers?)	customers	dangerous	ignre
Garbage Men	(ignore)	(ignore)	dislike	(fear)	ignore
Glorious Lords	(ally?)	(ignore)	frighten, bully	(fear)	dislike
Glugs	(righteous wrath)	avoid	pass for "normal"	(dislike)	avoid
Lydia Goodman	(oppose)	(dislike)	accept	(loathing)	mutual respect
Government	(follow orders)	(follow orders)	control	(look out for)	keep tabs on
Kergillians	(oppose)	(avoid)	study, recruit infiltrate	(study)	avoid
Le Thuys	(destabilize)	(sabotage)	bring to ruin	(ignore)	savotage
Movers	oppose on all fronts	control	manipulate	(study)	observe via government
the Net	(oppose? ally?)	ignore	sell to	fear	ignore
Neutralizers	(call in help, oppose)	(study)	protect, keep ignorant	(study carefully)	watch
Otto's Men	(fear, hate)	(ignore)	hate weirdos, aid friends	(kill)	ignore
Peace Force	(follow orders)	(follow orders)	intimidate	(follow orders)	monitor
Pharaohs	competetive	(learn from)	"Slaves"	("Dangerously unpredictable")	spy on
Philosopher's Stone	(fear)	uneasy cooperation	potential subjects	(study)	ignore
the Public	(freak out)	(interest)	varied	(terror)	indifferent
Sandmen	(eviscerate?)	(indifference)	"mint conditioon"	distant	indifferent
Seversen	(oppose)	(spy on)	(mild concern)	(ignore)	cooperate
Sigma Epsilon Xi	(fear)	(dislike)	"Scummy"	(terror)	ignore
Sigma Omicron Beta	(fear)	(dislike)	"Inferior"	(fear)	ignore
Sommerites	(fear, oppose)	(dislike)	evangelize	(horror)	ignore
Throckmortons	(dominate, use)	(ignore)	teach discipline	(eradicate)	dominate
Tulpas	All reactions depend on the individual tulpa			(blind fear)	Varies

CHAPTER 6: FORCES TO BE RECKONED WITH

	Sigma E.X.	Sigma O.M.	Sommerites	Throckmortons	Tulpas
Alpha Rho Tau	“Fluff chicks”	“Morons”	“Cool”	(hate)	(groove on)
Aries Gang	desire	rivals	enjoy	(fight?)	(“So what?”)
Compton	contempt	contempt	contempt	(ally?)	(corrupt)
Cut-Ups	Dmitri	faceless tab	oxide	(spleen!)	bagel
Cheryl D’Aubainne	accept	dislike	allies	(fight)	(fascinated)
Constance D’Aubainne	ignore	ignore	ignore	(ally?)	(“Profit potential?”)
Jean-Christophe D’Aubainne	ignore	ignore	ignore	(ignore)	ignore
Monique D’Aubainne	ignore	ignore	ignore	(fight? follow?)	(dominate)
Delta Epsilon Theta	suppressed desire	contempt, fear	contempt	(hate)	(“Wow”)
Dog-Faces	ignore	rivals	ignore	(fear? follow?)	(indifferent)
Earthlings	ignore	ignore	study	(oppose on all fronts)	(learn from)
Exalted Order of Dream Kings	easily corrupted	cntempt	rare customers	(ignore)	“Gold mine”
Garbage Men	amused by their trash	fear	ignore	(fear)	(ignore)
Glorious Lords	lust	rivals	hate	(fight? follow?)	(corrupt)
Glugs	contempt	contempt	contempt	(fight)	(indifferent)
Lydia Goodman	“Frivolous”	“Bullies”	allies	(fight)	(sudy)
Government	ignore	ignore	watch	(follow orders)	(follow orders)
Kergillians	ignore	ignore	study	(oppose)	(study)
LeThuys	disfigure	disrupt	destabilize	(extirpate)	(turn to own ends)
Movers	ignore	ignore	infiltrate	(oppose)	(use)
the Net	invite to parties	recruit thugs	ignore	(follow? oppose?)	(use)
Neutralizers	ignore	ignore	curious	(oppose)	keep secret
Otto’s Men	ogle	rivals	undecided	(follow? oppose?)	(indifferent)
Peace Force	ogle	tolerate	amused	(follow orders)	(follow orders)
Pharaohs	ignore	ignore	infiltrate	(oppose completely)	(use)
Philosopher’s Stone	indifferent	wary	indifferent	(fear)	(study)
the Public	envy, desire	envy, dislike	amused, annoyed	(freak out)	(“Neat”)
Sandmen	“train set”	dislike	not relate to	(oppose?)	natural prey
Seversen	ignore	ignore	ignore	(oppose)	(study)
Sigma Epsilon Xi	competetive	admire	friendly	(fear)	(“Creepy”)
Sigma Omicron Beta	want to possess	buddies	amused	(fear)	(ignore)
Sommerites	recruit	accept	friends	(oppose)	(“Wow”)
Throckmortons	put in place	make them allies	repress	unnatural cooperation	(dominate)
Tulpas	All reactions depend on the individual tulpa				avoid each other!

CHAPTER SEVEN

GAME MODERATOR'S RULES

This chapter does two things. First, it gives the GM's side of the rules found in Chapter 1 and presents rules for fringe powers and magic (rules that the players shouldn't have access to). Second, it advises the GM on how to run OTE™ and how to face the special challenges that the game and setting offer.

GM'S RULES

GM NOTES ON CHARACTERS

The players have a lot of freedom in designing the characters they will play, and you have a corresponding responsibility to forge a coherent series using what could be a very motley group indeed.

First, look over every character before approving it for play. Help players design their characters by asking them questions that help them clarify and flesh out their characters. Ask anything you need to know in order to help you fit the character into the series: background, precise meanings of traits, anything the player has left unclear, and so on.

Don't allow any traits that would take control of the series out of your hands and place it in the hands of a single player. For instance, a trait "Kills any living thing at a glance," might be too much for you. Veto or edit it.

A great way to keep wildly powerful characters in check is to use common sense to equalize them. For

instance, someone who could kill at a glance has probably already aroused the attention of various intelligence agencies and secret societies. He will be the target of brainwashing, kidnapping, assassination, bribery, etc. Attempts by Dr. Nusbaum to understand this exceptional talent (through drugs, deep hypnosis, or vivisection) might fail and make the character lose control of his ability. If players want to be exceptional, use your common sense and imagination to keep them from running away with the entire series.

My series has run with vicious killers, an innocuous elderly gentleman, a theater director, and a woman who was the true incarnation of the Dalai Lama. Don't sweat diversity.

An Example of Editing a Character

Loretta, the second character created by my group's pre-eminent "power gamer," had the following traits:

Zen Aptitude — Gave her a bonus die on everything she tried to do. (Superior)

Read Minds — This ability worried me.

Probability Manipulation — Let her make things happen, just about anything.

In addition to these formidable traits, she had a big dog whose jaws could splinter soup bones and who followed Loretta's commands with intelligence and loyalty. And Loretta was a member of a secret society on whom she could call for aid.

This combination of traits and resources violated my sense of character balance, so I had a talk with

Loretta's player and this is how we edited her:

Zen Aptitude — Get real. Not only is this trait too powerful, it is boring. It added no color to Loretta's character; it only boosted her ability to do whatever she wanted to do. I deleted it.

Probability Manipulation — Not a superior trait? This became superior, and I put informal limits on just what she could get away with.

Read Minds — What a perfect way to spoil all my carefully laid schemes and plots! I let her keep it, but as it only got 1 die, it wasn't always accurate or useful. In addition, I knew that eventually Loretta would run into a brain looper or some other obstacle. (She did; see below.)

The Dog — A blatant attempt to gain fighting ability (plus tracking ability) without having to use one of her traits for it. A cheap try, and I insisted that having the dog was one of her traits.

Secret Society — I allowed this to remain, partly because it would allow me to direct Loretta some (through the persona of her superiors), and that would help me keep the series coherent and interesting for the players. Partly, though, I just didn't realize how much help Loretta would get from her fellow conspirators.

In play, Loretta's ability to read minds became troublesome not because of the damage it did to my plots but because she could and did find out the secrets of other PCs, which bugged the other players. Loretta eventually used this trait on a demon. In doing so, she opened her mind to a vivid picture of Hell, fell unconscious, and found out later that her telepathic ability had been dam-



aged. From then on when she tried to use it, she only experienced unsettling hallucinatory sensations. And while her contact with a secret society came in very handy for her, it also sent her up against the Kergillians, who proved to be her match.

Fringe Powers

If a PC has a fringe power, consult the rules for fringe powers found later in this chapter. Many players give their characters fringe powers that are so common in fiction and role-playing as to be almost mundane, such as telekinesis or telepathy. You may wish to encourage players to invent weirder powers, since they do not have to conform to any pre-designed list of acceptable psychic abilities.

To determine the number of shots the character has in his psychic pool, the player rolls a die. The result is the number of shots in the psychic pool. Alternately, the player can have

3 shots in the pool and not roll at all. A character with two or more powers can roll for each, and take the highest roll to determine the number of shots in the pool.

Money

The personal finances of the PCs is best handled by ear. Some characters are wealthy, some broke, some in between, and some have cashed in what they own to come to Al Amarja. These differences, in the final analysis, don't have a big effect on play. After all, a burger and his money are soon parted.

Generally, let the PCs spend what their players say they can afford. First of all, the amount of money a PC has to spend is a part of the player's image of that PC. If a player wants a PC who doesn't have to worry about expenses, forcing that player to worry about it will be a bring-down. Additionally, the money isn't that

important. The first thousand dollars spent might be very important (for armor, weaponry, and a place to stay), but beyond that, there is a limit to what one can do without the talent and connections to back it up. If players start getting away with too much because they are not keeping track of every dollar spent, you can crack down and make the players start keeping track of just how much each PC has. (But do you really want the PCs squabbling over how to divide a meal at a restaurant six ways?) A more elegant method is to use some of the following tricks to keep huge bank accounts from unbalancing your game.

- **Big bribes attract attention** — People offered huge bribes may get scared. ("If they're offering ten grand for me to look the other way," thinks the guard, "then they must be up to something big. My life is probably on the

line.”) Scared people are unpredictable and therefore dangerous.

- **Big bribes attract attention II** — Word will get out that some burger has money to burn and is parting with it freely.

Enterprising grifters will swarm them with “good deals,” “important information,” and valuable services. Less subtle people will simply mug the PCs in question. And finally, good-hearted crackpots may come pestering the PCs for money to fund outlandish schemes.

- **Heavy equipment attracts attention** — Anyone purchasing lots of goods, such as weaponry, surveillance equipment, vehicles, real estate, and so on, will come to the attention of the powers that be, both legitimate and underground. If the newcomers pose a threat with their off-the-shelf inventory of goodies, the powers that be will either manipulate them to their own ends (if possible) or attack them by unconventional means (if manipulation fails). And the burger are likely to have a weakness, since they don’t know the island well enough to protect themselves adequately. (After all, you can’t buy psychovores at Gun Metal.)

Setting up the Player Character

When a player creates a character, look it over with an eye toward involving it in interesting plots and incidents. Al Amarja provides a loose enough setting that you can change the background or invent new details to fit your plans. For an example, look back at page 16 for a description of Arthur Pendrick, the example PC. Let’s look at each interesting part of his character, now imagining that I am the GM for the series in which Arthur will be playing.

Traits

Mythology is a promising trait simply because it is so open-ended. Even Arthur does not know exactly what he

can and cannot do, so it would be up to me to determine its effectiveness, according to the needs of the story. I would certainly let him do something special with it when the time is right because I wouldn’t want to make the character’s major, superior trait just chrome. I do not have to decide immediately what he can do with the power. I will let the story direct me.

One possible way to handle the mythology power is to let Arthur’s player roll normally when trying something metaphysical (4 dice), but declare it a failure whenever he rolls an even number, despite how high he rolls. (Of course, I would never mention this wrinkle to the player.) This defect represents Arthur’s inability to know the difference between an actually effective spell and a useless superstition. (And if he rolls odd, I will compare his roll to my own roll just like normal.) I would also have to impose some kind of informal limit on how often he could use the power, since if it were a bona fide fringe power, it would have a psychic pool to limit it. I don’t want to give Arthur a psychic pool because then the player would know that his mythology power had actual mystical effects. I’d rather leave the player in the dark for now.

His flaw is also promising, allowing me to draw Arthur into strange plots, and perhaps even get him to doubt his own sanity, if I can arrange a few scenes carefully. Ideally, Arthur’s player may at first be unable to tell whether his “mythology” trait has any metaphysical effect. Any effect it seems to have may just be the result of his overactive imagination. This combination of traits is ideal for taking the player for a ride, if I handle it right.

Motivation

So why did the tarot cards tell Arthur to come to Al Amarja? Perhaps it was just chance, a case of Arthur taking a superstition seriously. But maybe there’s a deeper reason. The Throckmorton Device might regard him as useful in its bid for world power, and it manipulated the cards (or his interpretation of them) to get

him to come to Al Amarja. Or some cosmic force of good (or evil) may have drawn him here to use as a major power in a desperate defense of (or overwhelming attack upon) humanity. No need to decide just yet.

Secret

If need be, I can send assassins from the Silver Order of Isis after Arthur. Perhaps the Order is a front for a Mover cell, getting Arthur into deep trouble. Alternately, Earthling operatives who are investigating the Order may be after Arthur for the secrets he knows.

Important Person

Now this shows some promise. My first thought is that Arthur’s not understanding anything he sees is a perfect lead into the self-reference plot. On the other hand, I could always have some incoherent street person come up to Arthur and repeat those words to Arthur. Or maybe different words. Arthur might find that his personal guidance in life comes from the mouths of apparently psychotic street people. Another possibility, if I want some contrast, is to have an extremely wealthy man or unbearably attractive woman repeat that key phrase. Lots of possibilities.

Background

There’s a good possibility for humor if Arthur meets a former client of his, someone who admires the hell out of him and tells all his friends about him. Arthur’s seminars may also make a good source of income for him in an extended campaign, a job interesting and nutty enough to have a place in the series. I’m sure that Arthur could get himself in hot water by selling his services, either by developing an unwanted cult following or infringing on the territory of other schemers on the island.

Sometimes only a few aspects of a PC will present themselves as good plot hooks, but you should try to have some surprise in store for each PC.

GM NOTES ON MECHANICS

The flexibility of the mechanical system allows you much power in determining the outcome of the game. This section explores ways to manipulate the game's mechanics to serve your GMing needs.

Hint: Rolling Dice

When I roll the GMCs' dice, I use four dice of different colors at once. Before I roll the dice, I decide how many of them are going to count, and which ones. (For instance, if I'm rolling for a 3 dice trait for a GMC, I might choose to count the two black dice and the red. The white die counts for nothing, but the players don't know that.) This way no players know for sure how many dice they're going up against or what roll I've just made. If you try this, don't let on what you're doing, and the players will be in continual anxiety as they see you roll lots of dice. Just smile and tell them you know what you're doing.

Pacing

Pacing the story, keeping it moving at the right speed, is more important than following the rules. Below are some rules you may want to fudge or drop when you need to move things along.

Justifying the Experience Die

A nice opportunity for characterization most of the time, a hassle when you need to pick up the pace.

Predictable Attacks

The penalty die for predictable attacks is meant to make combat more interesting. If it is slowing things down too much, you can forget it. When the PCs in my campaign were launching a huge attack on some renegade half-rats, there must have been over ten combatants on each side, and all I really wanted to do was find out who won the fight and how much the winners were hurt. I skipped the "pre-

dictable attacks" rule, except for the few characters who were out of the general melee and facing the evil mastermind (a half-rat who had learned sorcery).

Linear Combat

When the outcome of a fight is pretty well determined, I may switch to gestalt combat. When two PCs were fighting a Pharaoh operative and the fight was lasting too long, the linear system became pointlessly detailed. The quisling's colleagues had gotten away, the PCs' friends had successfully monkey-wrenched the fringe science device they were after (the whole point of the mission), and all that needed to be known was whether the quisling could manage to throw himself on the angel's sword (don't ask, long story) and die before being captured. We rolled a bunch of dice, I faked it, and they captured the quisling.

The above advice is for picking up the pace, but sometimes you may want to slow it down. Slowing down the action and paying attention to detail lets the players know that something important is going on, and therefore heightens suspense. To slow play down, apply all the rules for justifying the bonus die and so forth, and also ask for details for the use of non-combat skills. "How do you search the desk?" "What kinds of facial expressions are you looking for?" This attention to detail makes the game world stand out in greater detail.

Awarding Experience Pool Dice

One tangible way in which PCs become more powerful is by the acquisition of dice for their experience pools. Awarding these dice is entirely up to you. Use them to pace the progression of play. If you want to slow things down, award few. Awarding few dice puts the emphasis on the real world accomplishments of the PCs. They become powerful mostly through figuring out who to trust, how to get things done, and making a

reputation for themselves. If you want the series to move quickly, award plenty of dice. The more dice the PCs get, the better they will be able to handle the deeper and more dangerous plots on the island. When in doubt, award the dice; the players can probably use the help.

These are actions for which you can award dice to PCs:

- Doing things. A full session of talking, lying, being lied to, fighting, sneaking, watching your back, following clues and so forth should be worth a die, unless the PC was generally incompetent.
- Succeeding at some major task, such as solving a mystery, neutralizing an enemy, or gaining a hard-won prize.
- Getting severely torqued, betrayed, tricked, and jerked around, but surviving to tell about it. "Experience is what you get when you don't get what you want."
- Executing a brilliant maneuver. If a PC dumbfounds you by thinking his way out of certain death or manipulating a situation the way a pianist manipulates a keyboard, another die for the pool is a concrete way to acknowledge the feat.
- Excellent role-playing. A player who breathes life into a sheet of paper (the PC) adds depth and wonder to the series. Again, awarding a die acknowledges this proficiency.

In general, one die should be awarded for each session of worthy play, plus dice for any exceptional accomplishments. A PC who struggles well, vanquishes a foe he's been after for three sessions running, and imbues his character with energetic personality might get three dice for that one session (one for a session's play, one for defeating his enemy, and one for good role-playing). At the rate of one or two dice per session, it will take a PC about three sessions to develop a new trait. If that's too slow or too fast for your style of play, be more or less generous awarding dice.

The Hand of Fate

In Chapter 1, I said that sometimes that GM rolls two dice to determine events that the rules don't cover. You should know, however, that more often I roll those dice just for the sound they make, and then rule exactly as I want to rule. Even if I dink a player around, he thinks that I am doing so because "that's what the dice said," so he's not likely to argue or complain.

FRINGE POWERS

The role of fringe powers in the game is up to you. If you wish, they can be relatively common, at least among the player-characters and the GMCs with whom they interact. If you prefer a more subdued game, then you can tell players their characters cannot have them and then make them practically impossible to come across. They have been intentionally described only in this chapter, not the chapter on Players' Rules, in order to maintain their mystique and to keep their availability strictly in your hands.

When running fringe powers, keep in mind that, just as they break the natural laws invented by Western scientists, they also can break the laws invented by your friendly game designer. Use your imagina-

tion to adjudicate their use. The following rules are certainly open to modification and interpretation.

When players invent fringe powers for their characters, they are unlikely to replicate exactly the powers described below. Try to be true to the player's vision, using these powers as guidelines for how to interpret the player's ideas, rather than as an authoritative list to which the players must conform. The same holds true when developing fringe powers for your GMCs.

Where Do These Powers Come From?

People who use or study fringe powers have developed several explanations for their existence. Some believe reality is illusion, making humans believe there are limits on what they can do when in fact there are none. Others believe in the mystical force of *ch'i* or *qi* (Chinese) or *ki* (Japanese) that can be consciously channeled. A third idea is that everyone has latent psychic ability, but it today surfaces by accident; a reliable method of bringing out these powers does not (yet) exist. The fourth explanation is that these powers are merely the natural functioning of a healthy mind and body — something entirely too rare in today's polluted world.



Illustration by Kevin O'Neill

Some of these theories are mutually exclusive, some could co-exist with others. If you wish, you may decide which of these explanations are true, or leave it a mystery.

The Warning

Sure, the potential for these powers exists as part of the natural order, but that doesn't mean that your use of this potential is natural — or healthy. The power of the atom existed from Day One, but that doesn't mean that using that the power to develop spectacularly destructive weapons and fundamentally violent methods of generating electricity are natural or healthy. The Chinese accept the existence of these powers, but they call the extreme applications of this power *huan*, unhealthily extreme phenomena caused by unbalanced human action. In harmony with the individual and society, these powers produce health, healing, harmony, and strength. Misused and exploited, they simply give people more power to be cruel and vicious. And misused, they always have side effects. You probably won't believe me until you find out for yourself, but it's best just to leave these powers alone.

Who Can Learn Fringe Powers?

No one knows for sure whether these powers are available to everyone or only to a select few. If someone tries his whole life to learn them, maybe this just means the person had a deep-seated, unconscious fear of power, or a slavish adoration of the “rational” laws of the world, or the wrong attitude, or the wrong teacher, or just plain bad luck. Those who learn these powers most easily are those who are least tied to the material-scientific explanation of the world. A chemist or engineer may have a hard time of it. (Physicists who delve into the laws of sub-atomic physics, however, often take to fringe powers like dogs to carrion.) Similarly, some highly religious people are never able to shed their preconceptions long enough to learn something radically new, while others are able to develop

these powers spontaneously. People from cultures where “magic” and the unusual are accepted and taken for granted, such as Haiti, are especially open to the possibilities.

Player characters who already have some strange power may be more receptive than usual, since they have already accepted the ability to do the “impossible.” Extra-dimensional or extra-terrestrial beings may be able to develop certain powers with inhuman facility, but often their alien brains and bodies keep them from benefiting from teaching methods developed by and for humans.

Who Can Teach Fringe Powers?

No one who buys into the modern scientific world view as espoused and defended by our traditional scientists can teach these powers, and often they are incapable of learning them. The paradigm under which the “regular” world suffers has no concepts to understand, let alone teach, fringe powers.

Learning Fringe Powers

Learning to develop a fringe power is a tricky and unpredictable business, often little understood even by those who style themselves as instructors. Three factors are required before someone can learn a fringe power.

- 1) Overcome Rejection
- 2) Teaching
- 3) Experience Roll

Let's look at each in turn.

Overcoming Rejection

Just as the physical antibodies attack and destroy transplanted tissues to preserve the integrity of the body, the mind has “mental antibodies” that attack and destroy alien thoughts or concepts to preserve the mind's integrity. Generally, these antibodies serve a useful purpose of rejecting fallacies, neuroses, and similar mental impairments. They also prevent people from understanding or accepting beliefs or ideas that do not fit into their world views. This function pre-

vents people from facing the painful realization that their precious beliefs — even the most fundamental beliefs about identity, space, time, and existence — are open to question. (This is why you can argue at length with someone whose beliefs are patently wrong without making any progress toward enlightening them.)

In order to learn a fringe power, this power must be accepted by the mental antibodies. Unfortunately for those who were reared in the materialistic culture of the West, getting past the antibodies often requires a deep reprogramming of one's mental immune system. Using a fringe power, much more than simply seeing one in operation, opens to question the Newtonian paradigm that places consciousness as a passive observer of the dynamic material world.

Before someone raised in the West, or other materialistic, “modern” cultures, can learn a fringe power, that person must undergo a short circuit or transcendence of the materialist world-view. Such experiences are available through excessive use of hallucinogens, confounding koan of Zen masters, deep meditation, possession by an extra-dimensional entity, or elaborate rituals that slowly train the mind to accept the previously unacceptable. Until a character has had such an experience, forget about learning a fringe power.

A character who begins the game with a fringe power may have had such an experience in the past, or he may have developed the power to some extent before the materialist worldview was fully formed in his mind.

It is possible to impose a fringe power on someone by overpowering or shutting down his mental antibodies, but the risk of psychosis as a side effect is significant.

Teaching

To learn a fringe power, one has to learn it from someone. Certain fringe scientists have experimented with causing latent powers to develop without specific instruction, but their success rates vary greatly. By traditional

methods, it generally takes a month of full-time study to learn a fringe power.

Experience Roll

Unlike other skills, fringe powers are uncertain things, so learning them is an unpredictable process. The player decides how many dice from his experience pool to use, rolls the dice, and only if at least one of the dice is a 6 does the character acquire the power. (Better or lesser teachers, improper preparation, native inclination, and other factors may, at your discretion, alter these odds.)

Optionally, you may rule that there is a chance that a character is psi-mute, unable to develop psychic powers. When the character first attempts to learn a fringe power, roll a die in secret. If the roll is a 1, that character is psi-mute and cannot learn fringe powers. The only way for the character to find out that he is psi-mute is to try to learn powers until he gives up. Do not use this optional rule if you think it will disappoint your players unduly.

I recommend making all rolls for the acquisition of psi powers in secret. Simply ask the player how many dice he wishes to give up from his Experience pool, and make the roll yourself. After all, even the experts in fringe powers understand very little of the actual learning process, so don't give the players any information that their characters do not have.

Upon learning his first fringe power, the character gains a psychic pool with one die in it. He may increase the number of dice in this Pool immediately by transferring dice from the experience pool (two experience pool dice can be traded for one psychic pool shot).

Using Fringe Powers

Everyone who has fringe powers has a psychic pool, representing the number of times he can use fringe powers each day. A psychic pool contains a specific number of "shots," each of which can be used each day to power one of the character's fringe powers.

"Psychic pool" is the game term used for convenience, but each character should have a name representing the way the character understands the power. For instance, a Chinese chiropractor would have a "ch'i pool," a Okinawan karate master would have a "ki pool," wizards have "magic pools" or "mana pools," and so forth. Regardless of their names, the pools work identically, so the rules refer to them simply as "psychic pools."

When a beginning character has a psychic pool, the player rolls a die to determine the number of shots in the pool. (Alternately, the player may choose to have 3 shots in the pool instead of rolling.) When a character develops a power for the first time, he has 1 shot in the pool. (If a character already has a pool, developing a new power does not increase the number of shots in the pool.)

One shot can be added to the pool by subtracting 2 dice from the experience pool. So a character can give up four experience dice and add two shots to his psychic pool. He may not convert shots to experience dice.

When a character uses a fringe power, he loses 1 shot from the psychic pool. He may also "push" the power, which means he loses 2 shots from the pool, but can roll twice the normal number of dice, counting only the better half. (For example, if you have two dice in "dream-haunting," you can use 2 shots for a single use of that power, roll four dice, and then count the best two as your roll.)

If the power works against a being, that being gets a dice roll to resist. Most people get 2 dice. (Abilities like "strong will" or "resistance to domination" may give characters more dice to roll, at the GM's discretion.) A psychic may use a shot from his psychic pool to resist another's psychic power, if he knows the power is being used against him. If he uses this shot, he gets a number of dice equal to his best psychic power as bonus dice on his resistance roll. If the defending psychic has a fringe power that could counter the effects of the attacking power, he can use those dice in addition to the normal 2 dice

that average people get, but must expend a shot to do so. For example, telepathy can counter mind scanning or telepathy. A 2 die telepath can expend a shot to get 2 more dice than normal when resisting a mind scan. A 2 die pyrokineticist, on the other hand, can expend a shot to resist a mind scan, but he would only get two bonus dice, not two extra dice.

Psychic shots return 100% in 24 hours. If a character has six shots in his pool, he recovers one die every 4 hours. Some entities have unusual requirements or special advantages for recovering spent psychic shots. A druid, for example, may be able to recover shots at twice the normal rate when sky-clad (naked) under the moon. He may, however, recover shots at half the normal rate when not in contact with at least one natural element (fresh air, direct sunlight, etc.).

Since a normal person gets two dice to resist abilities like telepathy, a beginner with a fringe power should try to improve his chances by making the situation more amenable to him. When trying to ferret out a secret computer password from another person, for example, he may offer the target drinks to lower his defenses and then mention computers in an effort to bring the password into his consciousness. The penalty dice the target would receive and the bonus dice the telepath can use may make up for the one die vs. two dice odds. Encourage these special efforts because they add role-playing and strategy to what could otherwise just be a die roll.

Example: Using a Fringe Power

Arthur is asking pointed questions to someone who, unknown to him, is a Vornite Mover. The Mover wants to get Arthur to back off without drawing any attention to herself, so she sub-vocalizes.

The Vornite has a score of 2 in Sub-Vocalization, and she knows that this score is not good enough to have a reliable effect on most people, so she needs to soften her target up. Subtly she begins acting bored, trying to

tinge her voice with hopelessness. To succeed in getting this feeling across without Arthur's catching on that it's a show, she needs to beat his roll in manipulating people. The GM rolls four dice for the Vornite's "Moving" and three dice for Arthur's "personal manipulation." (Asking Arthur's player to roll for Arthur would give away something, and the GM does not want to do that, so she rolls for Arthur.) The Vornite rolls a 12 and Arthur a 10. The Vornite has fooled Arthur into thinking that she thinks that his task is hopeless and boring.

The GM tells Arthur's player, "You can tell she's not really interested."

Now that the target is softened up, the Vornite sub-vocalizes, "You'll never figure it out, you incompetent idiot."

She has 5 shots in her psychic pool, and she pushes her power (thus using two shots). In addition, she gets a bonus die for softening Arthur up. She rolls five dice and takes the best two, two 5's. Secretly the GM rolls two dice for Arthur, and he gets 8, respectable but not good enough.

The GM looks at Arthur's player as if she is getting tired of him following pointless leads and says, "It's 7:30, and you've been mucking around since noon. You've gotten nowhere. Wouldn't Arthur be ready for a long break about this time?"

Arthur's player agrees and gives up the investigation, never knowing that he was turned away by a fringe power.

The Vornite regains 1 shot for her psychic pool every 4.8 hours, so about nine and a half hours later her psychic pool is back up to 5.

Interpreting Fringe Powers

There's no way the rules can capture all the variability of fringe powers. Play them by ear, do what feels right and seems interesting, bend to the needs of the story. If it fits the plot for a character (PC or GMC) to be able to do something with a fringe power, let it be, even if the rules don't specify that interpretation, and some-

times even if the rules specifically disallow that interpretation.

The most common example is duration. If a power lasts "1 hour," then some people may shake it off in 50 minutes, while others might stay under the influence for an hour and a half. The duration is a general guide. Fringe powers do not "pop off" after the exact duration has expired.

The same goes for distance. While a Mind Scanner may generally only be able to find thoughts within 10 m or so, the limit may be 100 m when searching for a good friend, 1 km when searching for an identical twin, or 10 km when searching for very powerful and uniquely evil thoughts emanating from Great Ygolthus of the Leprous Breath.

Of course, the above call for loose interpretation applies to every trait and roll in the game, but it can be especially important in making fringe powers mysterious, interesting, and non-mechanical.

Fringe Power Descriptions

Note that the names given to these powers are strictly for convenience and reference within the game. Some teachers may use similar names, but more often each teaching system has its own terms for the fringe powers it can teach. Since there is no universal lexicon of fringe powers, there is no common vocabulary used by practitioners of different arts.

The powers below are only examples. Alter or ignore them as you wish, and be sure to invent others in your series.

Atavism

The ability to access personalities from past lives. These personalities have knowledge and skills that the character may find useful, but they also have goals, desires, and prejudices that the character may find to be a great annoyance.

For each die the character has in Atavism, he can access one past-life personality. A beginning Atavist, therefore, has only one former self on which he can call.

The nature of these former lives is up to you, the GM, though you may listen to suggestions from the player. Keep in mind that the most commonly accessed personalities are the more powerful ones (those that leave the biggest imprint on the eternal Self) and the more recent (whose information has been least corrupted by psychic noise and mutation).

Each time a character gains another die with this power, choose the type of former self that he has contacted and what skills or knowledge that past self can provide. If you want to insert some randomness, come up with six possibilities (e.g., Atlantean priestess, cobra, medieval French peasant, Japanese kamikaze pilot, member of the Bavarian Illuminati, and Cro-Magnon shaman) and roll for it. Otherwise just inflict your imagination on the character. You may select past selves that somehow relate to the character. A character who is afraid of heights, for example, may have a past self who died by falling.

Each past self has skills and knowledge that the Atavist can use. Choose these skills according to the nature of the past self. Every past self can communicate with the character telepathically, despite that language that the past self uses.

When an Atavist calls up a past self, he selects which self and rolls dice from the Psychic Pool. Roll 1 die to represent the past self's desire to remain in the blissful Void of Un-Being. The Atavist only accesses the past self if his roll exceeds your roll. The character's roll is also the number of minutes that the past self will be available.

Even when Atavism works perfectly, it is an opportunity for role-playing that is not to be missed. The character may have to convince the past self to help, perhaps by offering a deal. (E.g., "Look, if you'll translate this book for me, I'll take you to a movie tomorrow. Deal?") Give the past selves interesting personalities. A past life may even be the guide to a wild adventure or string of adventures, if, for example, a pirate knows where he buried his treasure and

wants the PC to help him get it. And there's always the classic set-up of a past self continuing an age-old conflict with a personal enemy, such as an immortal or a magician who transfers his mind into new bodies as his old body ages. The PC could be used as a pawn in this centuries-old feud.

And when Atavism goes wrong, well you can imagine the possibilities: possession by a former self, slow corruption of the character under the influence of an evil past self, contact with an extra-dimensional entity that masquerades as one of the character's past lives, and so on.

Aura Sight

The ability to see people's auras. The color of the aura varies with the mental and physical state of the person. By reading auras one can see someone hiding in the darkness, tell when someone is lying, tell when there is psychic interference (such as a Kergillian implant or Throckmorton domination). Most people roll 2 dice to resist this power. One can see auras better up close and when one knows or at least is able to talk to someone. An Aura Seer may also be able to see an aura around a particularly powerful (or malevolent) magical item or locus.

Automatic Writing

The process of typing without thinking about what one is writing, then reading the result for clues, knowledge, or inspiration. Some say this process accesses your sub-conscious intuition, others that it allows extra-dimensionals to influence your writing and send you messages. Most often people with this power use it to write books that interpret perennial philosophy into modern terms, but the PCs may be more concerned with survival than book royalties. The power can be used to gain hints as to distant events, unknown passwords, past events, future possibilities, or the writer's state of mind.

Determine for yourself how this character is performing the automatic writing. Is it simply use of innate psychic sensitivity, or is the character

in contact with something "out there." If there is something "out there," does it have goals toward which it will move the PC?

This power relies strictly on your imagination as the GM. You can use it to speed along play when things are bogged down, to introduce new plots, or to get the players where you want them to be. Do not feel forced into revealing important secrets just because the player makes a good roll with this power. Remember, it is *automatic* writing, and the character cannot influence the result without ruining his chances for genuine inspiration. He may intend to write about (and thus learn about) the local Mover cell, but he might end up with pages of elegant haiku, perhaps written in Norwegian.

Blind Spot

Causes others to forget experiences that do not fit with their world views. Essentially it creates a mental "blind spot" over a certain event, and the target's mind dutifully fills in the details in this blind spot according to what it expects, leaving a rather vague but passable memory that in no way arouses suspicion in the target's mind. (To understand how the brain fills in details, close one eye. Just to one side of your point of focus is a blind spot in which you see nothing at all, but your brain doesn't want to see a Void, so it paints over the blind spot, using the visual images nearby as a guideline. You cannot notice the blind spot directly.)

Note that this technique uses the brain's inherent experience filters that shape perceptions to one's expectations. It simply will not work to cover over an experience that does not violate these filters' preconceptions of the world. You cannot Blind someone simply to your presence, because your presence fits fine into their understanding of the world. If, however, you happen to be a bug-eyed monster, you may certainly Blind someone to your presence, provided they haven't already accepted the fact that bug-eyed monsters are a part of the "real world."

(It has been theorized in certain circles that the proliferation of speculative fiction and role-playing games is part of a plot to make people more accepting of the things beyond their world view, thus increasing their resistance to the Blind Spots.)

If someone provides an explanation to the target of a Blind Spot, the target receives a penalty die on resisting the Blind Spot. For example, if a character uses a fringe power to capture an opponent, he can then say something like, "Hah, my swift reflexes and training in ju-jitsu were too much for you, you miserable wimp." Then, when he Blinds him, his brain will have a rational explanation for what happened, and he will receive a penalty die to resist. He will then remember being beaten up, rather than being attacked with a fringe power.

If the Blinder can look into the target's eyes, he receives a bonus die on his roll to Blind.

A Blinder can Blind more than one person at a time, as long as it is the same event that all the people are being made to forget. Each extra person Blinded requires the expenditure of an extra die from the Psychic Pool, and those extra dice are not rolled as part of the roll to see if the Blinding works.

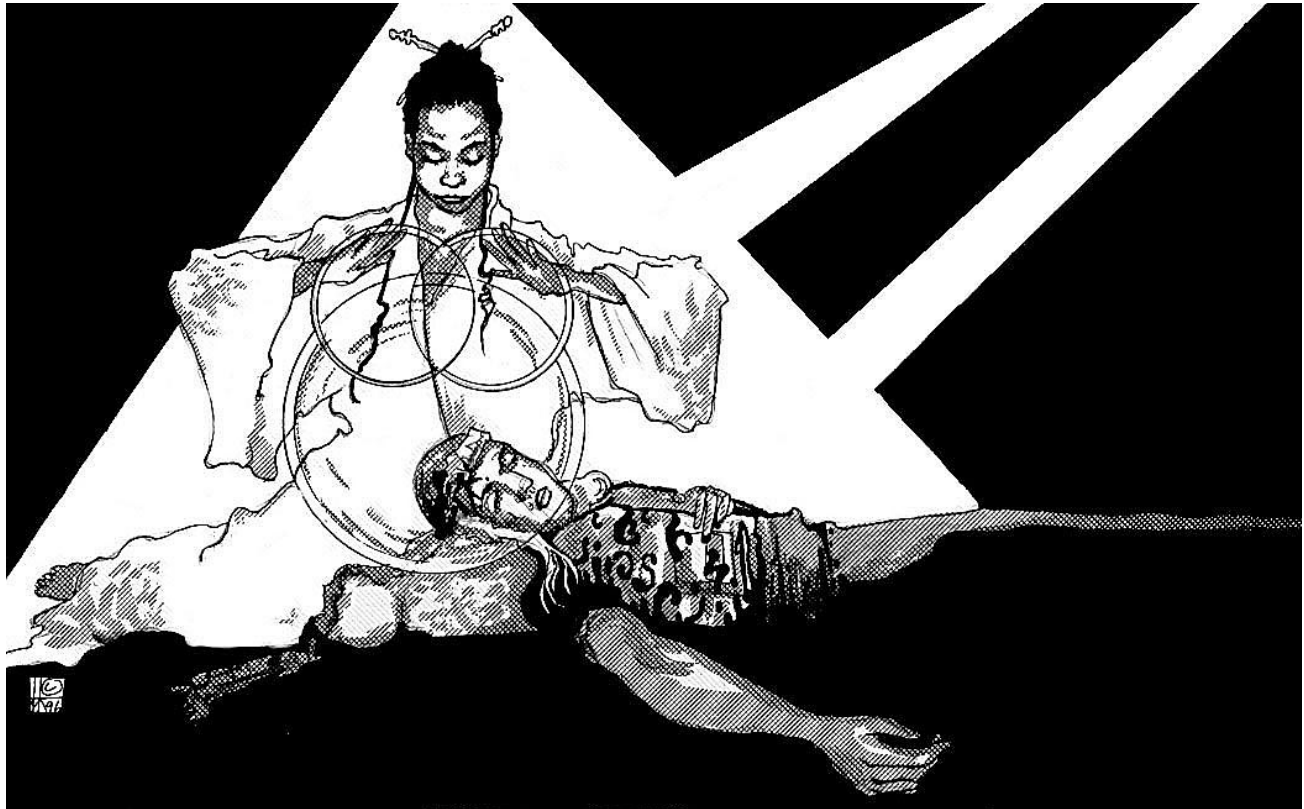
Cat's Feet

Using *ch'i* to vibrate one's body or immediate surroundings to create sound waves that conflict with and "white out" noises. Used effectively, it turns the creak of an old floorboard into a gentle hiss.

Add your dice to rolls related to moving quietly.

Healing

Directs healing *ch'i* to damaged or diseased areas, improving the natural curative powers of the subject. When curing damage, the roll on the trait equals the number of points that the character recovers. If the wounded character has not yet recovered half his lost hit points as per the recovery rules, the healer heals twice the points



rolled on the dice. It takes about 30 seconds (5 rounds) for the healing to be complete, and the healer must be in contact with the injured party during that entire time. When used to heal diseases and such, the healer must roll against a Difficulty appropriate to the disease. Below are guidelines for diseases and such. A healer who rolls all 1's when trying to heal someone of a disease acquires that disease himself, even if the disease is not normally communicable. In addition, the healer loses the ability to heal until that disease itself is cured. For an incurable disease, this event can mean losing one's power until another healer heals him.

Common cold, cold sores, acne: 5
Addiction to nicotine or cocaine, pneumonia: 10
Leprosy, cerebral palsy, Alzheimer's, cancer: 15

Hunches

This power may come from unconscious psychic sensitivity, the attention of a spiritual guardian of some

kind, or an innate ability to move with the serendipitous forces of the universe. Roll to get irrational feelings of what you should do or hints at secrets you cannot otherwise know. Having this fringe power makes you very vulnerable to psychic manipulation.

Inedia

Through psychic strength built up by extended meditation, the character can go for long periods without food or water. Very experienced individuals lose entirely the need for either. "Food and water are not human needs," says one Al Amarjan mystic, "this is the Biggest Lie of all. They are quite simply the most addictive substances on the planet. Like any drug habit, they can be kicked."

To calculate the effects of lack of food or water, divide the actual time of deprivation by the die roll. The result is the "subjective" length of deprivation time, in terms of physical effects. For example, if someone went for a week without food or water, and rolled a 6 on Inedia, he would be

affected only as if he had gone for 7/6 of a day (28 hours) without food or water. He would be hungry, and damn thirsty, but still alive. The character must eat and drink normally for one day before using this fringe power again. Any character who can survive for one year without food has "kicked the habit," and need no longer eat. The same goes for water.

ISO

(Internal Stimulation Operation, or Insane Switchboard Operator)

Telepathically stimulating random neurons in the target's brain. Typically it causes confusion, distortion of perception, false memories, and other bizarre effects. Occasionally, however, the stimulated neurons form a pathway previously "overlooked," resulting in some sort of insight or connection. Successful use causes the target to be disoriented for about ten seconds to a minute. When using this power against a telepath scanning your mind, double your roll

(because the telepath is especially sensitive to the muddling).

Lightning Strike

Channels *ch'i* through nerves, muscle, skin, and bone, making them unnaturally fast and strong (faster, indeed, than the actual electrochemical nerve signals sent by the brain).

Add your dice with this ability to attack rolls when striking with your bare hands, feet, or other natural implement of destruction.

Mind Scan

Called “tuning in” by its less traditional masters, this discipline involves sensitizing one’s own mind to the constant psychic chatter put out by other sentient beings to the point that one can decode another’s thoughts.

When scanning for thoughts, the mind scanner can find thoughts within his dice roll in meters. If someone wants to see if someone is lurking in the closet before opening the door, he need only roll a 1, but scanning an apparently empty building is beyond all but the grandmasters of this discipline.

To scan a mind for actual thoughts, a mind scanner must be able to see or otherwise sense the target. If the target is in sight, the range for the power becomes 2 meters times the roll. If the roll is high enough for the range, compare the mind scanner’s roll to the target’s. If the character beats the target’s roll, he learns what that person is thinking. If the character rolls double the target’s roll, he finds clear information, as well as any related memories or ideas.

For example, an average scanner tries to scan someone across a bar for a computer password. The target is 7 meters away. A roll of 3 or lower means that contact is not even made. A roll of 4 or higher means contact is made, but the target gets a resistance roll (2 dice, unless he has some unusual traits, such as Neural Re-Wiring).

Neural Re-Wiring

The discipline of making parapsychical connections between neural centers that do not communicate directly. For example, neurons near the motor controls of your hand can cause your hand to tap out a pattern that affects neurons near the auditory centers. Normal neural signals could not navigate the distance between these neural centers, but indirect means, tapping in this example, allow such communication. Other possibilities include: humming nonsense, wiggling fingers in front of one’s eye, rapid blinking, and so on. The character must be making the parapsychical contact in order to use the power.

These dice are added to any attempt to resist mind reading, ISO, torture, drugs, or more mundane influence. (This power can prove vital to those with involuntary Kergillian implants.) Also allows conscious interpretation of sub-vocalized messages.

When a character first learns this power, and each time he improves its level, there is a chance that he inadvertently sets up a connection that proves dilatory to the self. The new connection may result in a neurosis, a compulsion, or a facial tic. It may even allow another self, previously latent in the brain, to take charge and “possess” the body. Whether the player continues to play the possessed character or the GM takes on that task is up to her. To determine whether something goes wrong, roll the number of dice in the new trait. If a “1” comes up, something has gone wrong, perhaps terribly wrong.

Pre-Reaction

Channels *ch'i* backward in time to stimulate motor nerves previous to perceiving a danger.

The character may roll to respond to something just before it happens, such as dropping to the ground just before an explosion goes off. If he would normally have a chance to respond to something, then he can add these dice to his normal roll. (E.g., if a car is hurtling toward him and he needs to jump out of the

way, he would normally get to make a roll based on his reflexes or speed; he could add Pre-Reaction dice to the roll.) If he would not normally get a roll, then he can still use these dice, but only these dice. (E.g., a poisoned dart thrown from behind by a silent assassin would not normally allow a character to dodge it, but he could use these dice to do so.)

One cannot pre-react to an event one would not notice. If someone points an invisible, intangible ray in a character’s direction, he cannot pre-react to it because his future self will not notice it and therefore cannot send *ch'i* back to his present self to protect him.

Roaming Eyes

Allows one to see other places or times. Each Eye Roamer can see either in the present at a distance or in the past but in the same location.

Present, distant: The Eye Roamer must have some connection to the place being observed, such as knowing someone there, having been there and checked it out, etc. The Eye Roamer can specify viewing the surroundings of a person or object, or he can view a certain area. Range is the roll times 100m (or more, if there is a very good connection to the person or place). Duration is the roll in rounds.

Past, here: The Eye Roamer can see into the past up to one hour times the roll. For very important or emotionally-laden events, especially if the Eye Roamer knows something about it, the distance into the path may increase to the roll in days, weeks, or even centuries.

Other senses: Some psychics send their ears (or even noses) the way Eye Roamers send their eyes.

Sending

Sending your thoughts to the minds of others. The character must know the recipient well or see him in order to Send. The recipient “hears” the thought as if it were spoken (but

knows it's only "in his head"). The die roll for this power represents the number of minutes one can continue sending, and must be higher than the target's resistance roll (if the target chooses to resist). The die roll also determines range: the roll times 10 meters if the Sender does not know the target, or the roll in kilometers if the Sender knows the target well.

Skin of Iron

By developing an inflexible image of his own physical body, a character can conduct his *ch'i* so as to maintain this image in the face of injury. Blows of all kinds must overcome the physical resistance of the flesh as well as the parapsychical resistance offered by the *ch'i*.

The total on the dice is subtracted from damage on each blow you take, like normal armor. The highest number among the dice equals the number of blows you can absorb before Skin of Iron wears off (with a maximum duration of 10 minutes). If you are unhappy with your roll, you may use more psychic dice and roll again, taking the new result only if it is higher.

Sub-Vocalization

Layering speech with conflicting sound waves, producing a signal that sounds like a hiss or exhalation to the conscious mind, but bears an intelligible spoken message to the subconscious. The sub-vocalizer generally does not move the lips to hide the fact that he is speaking.

The higher to roll, the more deeply the character can affect another's subconscious. In no event does sub-vocalization give one actual control over another.

Common sub-vocalizations include degrading insults thrown to make an enemy lose his cool "for no reason," lewd suggestions offered to see whether a potential lover responds favorably, and rumors or unsettling ideas aimed at infiltrating the societal thought pool "through the back door."

Telekinesis

Moving, lifting, and manipulating objects at a distance. The number rolled equals the number of kilos that can be pushed along a surface, the distance in meters over which one can use the power, the number of seconds one can maintain the power. The object to be affected must be seen. The telekineticist can move the object about, spin it, or otherwise manipulate it. The telekineticist can also lift objects in the into air, up to 100g times his roll (or one-tenth the weight he can push).

Telekinetic Punch

Creates a burst of explosive force that can break, topple, or harm objects or people. The roll equals damage done and the distance over which the force can act. If used to break in a door or perform other feats of strength, the roll is equivalent to a normal strength roll.

Telepathy

Essentially a combination of Mind Scan and Sending, but weaker than either. The Telepath cannot scan for thoughts like a Mind Scanner can. He can read minds, but only at a range equal to the roll in meters. He can send thoughts, but the range is the roll times 5 meters (for people in sight) or times 500 meters (for out of sight, works with well-known friends and acquaintances only). Unlike the Sender, a Telepath can have a two-way conversation with a target, but only if the target wills to respond.

Ur-Master

Unconsciously targets another's instinctive tendency to bow to authority. Since Glugs were not designed with this instinct, as "normal" humans were, this power has no effect on them. The character can use it (with a penalty die) on other terrestrial creatures, such as dogs, but not on most extraterrestrial or extra-dimensional creatures. Add your roll to any normal roll to intimidate, trick, and so forth. Humans in positions of authority receive a bonus die to resist.

MAGIC

Magic is definitely secondary to fringe powers in the game, but it is present. There are hundreds of different styles of magic from various cultures and traditions around the world, but for the sake of mechanics they can be broken down into two types: free form and spell-casting.

Free form magic is essentially equivalent to fringe powers. The better one's roll, the more effect the magic has. You can use fringe powers like those described above to represent free form magic.

Spell-casting is the use of specific spells that have pre-determined effects. Your roll determines whether the spell takes effect, not its power.

You may wish to limit who can learn spells at all, or limit PCs' access to spells and magical knowledge, depending on the role you wish magic to take in your series. You may apply any or all of the following restrictions:

Intense Study. Only years of study, preferably with a learned master, can make one capable of casting even the simplest spell. This restriction effectively nixes PCs learning spells, unless they begin the game as wizards.

Rare Talent. Only few people can learn magic at all (one in six? two in six?). You may rule that anyone who has developed another kind of fringe power already is unable to learn magic because their supernatural potentiality has been corrupted. This limits magic, but what about the player who really wants his PC to cast spells, but he can't? This rule might be a little rough on the guy.

Rare Resources. Resources are hard to come across. Spell books may be written in Latin, in Chinese, or in code, so even if PCs find them, they may be worthless to them. The few wizards who are on the island probably do not admit to their nature and certainly will not accept students who have not proved their utmost loyalty and discretion.

Magic becomes something special if it is something rare. I highly recommend you keep it that way.

Learning and Casting Spells

Learning a Spell

When studying a spell in order to learn it, a character must spend a week studying at least 2 hours per day and sacrifice 5 experience dice. He then rolls a single die. If the number at least equals the spell's level, he has learned the spell. If not, he records a "1" on his character sheet to represent the number of dice he has rolled to learn the spell. He may then spend another week studying and sacrifice another 5 experience dice, after which he rolls 2 dice. Again, if the roll at least equals the spell's level, he has learned it. Otherwise he changes

the "1" to "2," representing how far he has progressed in studying the spell. He repeats this process, re-rolling with one more die for each week and 5 experience dice expended until he gives up or learns the spell. If the character does not have a psychic pool when he learns a spell, he gains 1 shot in that pool.

If the character botches on any roll to learn a spell, bad things can happen.

For example, suppose Arthur tries to learn the 12th level spell, Ruguesco's Unswerving Arrow. The GM has not told him the level of the spell, but she has said that he can tell that it's pretty difficult. He begins studying the spell (actually spending four hours per day, since he does not have a teacher to tell him that the extra two hours are wasted), and at the end of a week he expends the experience dice and rolls a single die.

He gets a 5, not good enough. The GM says that he thinks he is getting the hang of it, but he still can't manage the spell. He keeps trying, and after another week and another 5 experience dice, he rolls 2 dice, this time getting a 4 — failure. After two more weeks and 10 more dice, he rolls (on four dice) a 13, good enough. The GM now informs him that he knows the spell and that he has one shot in his Psychic Pool. He immediately takes two more dice from his experience pool and gives himself a second shot in the psychic pool. He has now spent 22 dice from his experience pool, and he can cast his spell twice per day.

Casting a Spell

To cast a spell, a character expends one shot from the psychic pool. Under normal conditions, the spell always works. The GM may require



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

rolls for targeting the spell correctly or maintaining concentration, depending on the spell, the situation, and her discretion.

Remember that many magicians use free-form magic, which works like standard fringe powers. Spell-casting proper, however, is very reliable.

The target may get a resistance roll against spells that directly affect the mind or body, in which case the level of the spell always counts as its “strength.” A resistance roll at least equal to the spell’s roll generally resists the spell’s effects.

Spells

There are an incredible number of spells available for those who can find them and learn them, so do not worry about a definitive spell list. Instead, invent interesting spells as they are needed. If the characters discover a wizard’s spellbook, it might have four spells in it. Invent those spells. If they encounter a wizard, she may know seven spells. Invent those spells as you need them. Like fringe powers, spells should be individually crafted for the episodes in which they appear.

As magic spells have developed over the years, wizards have learned that the best way to kill someone outright is with a gun or other simple weapon. The spells that are most common, therefore, are those that do not replicate a gun’s effect. Spells that have weird effects (not easily reproducible by technology) are much more common than those that simply cause damage.

Below are sample spells to show appropriate levels for spells of various power.

Lurking Chains, Level 3

Creates the sound of clanking chains in thin air anywhere within 20m of the caster. The sound travels about slowly (about 2m/round) in random directions, but it tends to follow hallways and such. (It does not travel through walls.) The clanking lasts ten minutes. Wizards use it as a distraction.

Blessed Black, Level 6

Extinguishes all sources of light within 10m of the caster for one minute, though the caster can also end the spell at will.

Serpent’s Tongue, Level 9

Makes the caster’s words more effective, whether they are used to seduce, intimidate, convince, or persuade (bonus die on all appropriate rolls). Lasts 1 minute.

Grip of Stone, Level 12

Paralyzes one person or animal within 15m. The target can roll strength or a similar trait to resist, escaping the effects of the spell if the roll at least equals the wizard’s roll to cast the spell. Paralysis wears off within half an hour.

Ring of Gyges, Level 15

Makes the caster invisible for 10 minutes. Dogs tend to be disturbed by the caster’s presence. The name refers to a ring of invisibility from Greek myth.

Seven Shields of Glory, Level 18

Creates seven invisible shields that protect the caster. All weapons bounce harmlessly away from him as soon as they strike within 10 cm of his body. For a split-second one can see a shimmering shield half a meter in diameter appear to deflect the weapon. If the wizard is struck by several attacks at exactly the same instant and the seven shields cannot guard against all the blows, some will get through. The spell lasts an hour.

For other sample spells, see Sir Arthur Compton on p. 112.

GM’ING OVER THE EDGE

This section deals first with running a series, because the direction your series takes will determine the kinds of adventures your PCs have. Then it advises you on how to run individual adventures. More specific information on plots and story ideas are in the next chapter.

RUNNING A SERIES

This section explains how to get your series going and keep it going.

Kicking it Off

In the next chapter are three introductory adventures that you can use to start your series. These adventures give you experience in running the game, and give your players experience in developing characters and using the rules. I highly recommend playing these adventures first to get a feel for the game before starting your series proper.

Starting Your Series

When you start your series proper, look over the various power groups and plots and decide what you would like to focus on. (The PCs, however, may stumble onto other plots, so be ready to improvise.) Invent a few hooks for the plots you want to showcase, a few GMCs, imagine how the specific PCs in your group may fit into the plot, and add whatever details you desire. Now when the PCs are snooping about, enjoying the nightlife, looking for lost relatives, or what have you, they can come across the clues that lead to the plots you want to deal with.

The first plots to expose should be the tamer or smaller ones, such as the Tulpas or the Philosopher’s Stone. The first adventures might not be mysteries at all, but simply defending

oneself from gangs, dealing with personal enemies, or setting up a profitable scam.

While dealing with the smaller plots, however, throw in a few clues for the larger ones. This has already been done in “Opportunities on the Edge” with references to the Movers and the First School of True Sensation (a Kergillian front). You may want to make these clues so small and insignificant that the PCs will have no chance of jumping the gun and mixing it up with a major power force, but inserting these hints will make the plots seem more insidious and encompassing once the PCs find out what is going on.

An easy way to get PCs involved at the start of your series is to give them “Opportunities on the Edge” and “Little Scratches.” These sheets are found in the props section at the end of the book, and explanations of the various entries are in the next chapter. These props show the players some of the possibilities to be explored on the island and invite them to get involved.

Keeping Track of Things

If you make up a lot of encounters and events while running your series, you may find it worth your while to put some effort into recording these things for later reference. If you can’t remember important details because you invented them on the spur of the moment and promptly forgot them, the continuity of the series will suffer.

An easy way to keep track of events is with a log. I use pieces of scratch paper stapled together, each new sheet stapled to the top of the last. You could also use a spiral bound notebook, loose-leaf binder or a few bluebooks ripped off from an unsuspecting professor. At the start of each game day I write the day of the week and the date, and then I make notes of whatever happens. Especially important are names of GMCs and events that the PCs did not witness (since it’s my responsibility alone to remember them).

At the end of an episode, I jot down a few notes as to what action to

expect next session. If the PCs have left a message with a GMC, they might receive a response during the next session. If they have, unknown to them, ticked off someone seriously, they may be in for an unfriendly visit. These notes also improve continuity between sessions.

For important GMCs, I use the Player Character Log to keep track of which PCs the GMC knows, hates, loves, wants to kill, doesn’t trust, and so on. These I hole punch and keep in a loose-leaf notebook, filed in alphabetical order for quick access.

Be as anal about your note-keeping as you wish.

How to Use the Setting

When I first played OTE, it was on about ten minutes’ notice. I had some notes on major background conspiracies, a few images of various scenes, and a primitive version of the current mechanics. No map, no descriptions of businesses, people, places, or any of the other useful tidbits that are crammed in the previous two chapters. Naturally, I winged it.

That night were born Total Taxi, Giovanni’s Cab’s, Cesar’s Hotel, and Sad Mary’s, all now landmarks in the Edge. Things just happened. I faked it. Since there was nothing that couldn’t happen, anything I dreamt up was OK.

Now, however, you have a background explaining who, what, where, and when. You’re in a completely different situation from where I was back on that first manic evening.

But anything you dream is OK, too.

I describe two taxi services. You don’t like them? Well, news is they’ve just gone bankrupt, thanks to competition from a new service of your design. And just because I mention one TV station, one radio station, and one newspaper doesn’t mean there aren’t plenty of others.

When in doubt, make something up. You can always (*always*) justify it later, either by changing the world to fit your creation or positing some impossible scenario to cover an appar-

ent contradiction. If you forget where Sad Mary’s is and have the characters run into it at Four Points, perhaps the time-space continuum was under assault by the Cut-Up Machine. When Sad Mary’s pops back to the Plaza of Flowers, maybe the PCs are the only ones to remember it having been at Four Points. They know something weird is up, but what? The Cut-Ups could be altering and repairing reality in order to identify people who can notice and remember the changes. These people (the PCs among them) are somehow then involved in their next plot.

See? A blatant mistake like telling the PCs that Sad Mary’s is on Four Points can be explained away and create a plot at the same time.

Improvise boldly.

Also, do not be afraid to let the setting change during the course of your series. The Edge, as described, is just a snapshot of an ever-changing place. As time passes, changes will make themselves known in the Edge. Businesses fail, new ones arise, power shifts among various groups, and so on. If you wish, you can even insert major changes into the setting. Perhaps Her Exaltedness finally passes on, and the island is wracked in a covert civil war as Constance and Cheryl vie for control. The Edge is a dynamic setting. Let it grow and change.

Who Knows About Al Amarja?

The “official” answer is that Al Amarja is obscure but not completely secret. Its pleasures and dangers are an open secret among the world’s wealthy hedonists, conspiracies, and intelligence agencies. Others can look it up in standard references if they are so inclined, but there is not a great deal of information on the island to be had easily.

For your series, you can run the island differently. Perhaps Al Amarja is a world-famous (or infamous) island, with a reputation that scares off the timid and attracts the daring. Perhaps it is known only in secret circles: kept off the maps and out of the encyclopedias. Who keeps Al Amarja

off the maps, and how and why, then becomes a mystery by itself. If you prefer a more surreal style, Al Amarja could be only partially in this world. Those who are “meant” to go there can find the necessary information and connecting flights, or may arrive accidentally through bizarre coincidences. Those who are not meant to share the island’s secrets can never find it on any map, and will find only water should they travel to the island’s coordinates.

Expansion and Contraction

You may find that your series expands and contracts in cycles. It works like this. First, the PCs are mucking around and they meet or see a lot of people or potential clues to deeper mysteries. The series is expanding in possibilities. Eventually, one of those leads takes precedence and the PCs follow it through. This might take a few sessions, during which the PCs are focused on a specific plot. When that plot resolves, then the series expands again, with some of the old clues coming back on the scene and new ones making their entrances.

This cycle of expansion and contraction gives depth to the series. At first, let’s say, the characters find clues leading to the Philosopher’s Stone, the Tulpas, and the Glugs. They wind up following the clues that lead to the Philosopher’s Stone and deal with it in one way or another. With that mystery resolved, at least temporarily, the PCs go back to mucking around and find leads that point to the Tulpas, the Glugs, and the Cut-Ups. Now when they follow the Tulpa clues, this plot has more depth because the players know it’s been in the background since before they dealt with the Philosopher’s Stone. And when they finish with the Tulpas and investigate the Glugs, that plot will also have been in the back of your mind and the players’ minds for quite some time. Managing this layering of plots gives the plots an existence of their own, since they obviously did not just pop up for the convenience of the episode at hand.

Not Stomping on the PCs

As the series progresses, the PCs are likely to mix it up with some very dangerous and secretive people, identifying themselves as enemies of the Peace Force, the Movers, the Pharaohs, or other groups on the island. Why don’t they just get killed?

The null answer to that question is to kill them, plain and simple, but not all players are likely to appreciate your sense of realism, nor are lots of good stories likely to be told if the PCs keep dying. Below are some reasons why the PCs might not be killed.

Disinformation. The various conspiracies excel at disinforming each other, adding noise to the communication channels, keeping each other guessing. While a well-coordinated structure may easily recognize the PCs as threats and dispatch an assassin to deal with them, many conspiracies are muddled by the anti-intelligence activities of their enemies. Sometimes the disinformation takes the form of a double-agent or false data left for the enemy to “discover.” On Al Amarja, however, the disinformation can be more bizarre, such as the detrimental effects of the Throckmorton Device or Zorro.

Resources. With all the enemies with whom they have to contend, the conspiracies might be less worried about the PCs than they are about each other. From an agent’s perspective, the PCs could be dupes unwittingly put on a suicide mission in which they attract the enemy’s attention in order to be killed, and then the controlling conspiracy finds out valuable information about how the PCs are killed. (This plot may make a good adventure, if the PCs are up to getting themselves out of a deathtrap.) Using precious resources to off the PCs might be too expensive and dangerous.

Publicity. Even on Al Amarja, killing someone can attract unwanted attention, if not from

the Peace Force, then from friends of the deceased. The conspiracy may prefer a more subtle way of dealing with intruders, such as leaving false information for them to find, clues that lead to some enemy organization. (This tactic is a good way to introduce clues to the PCs.)

Finally, there are always more interesting fates than death for the PC who has pushed an agent’s tolerance to the limit: blackmail, disinformation, brain-washing, physical threats, capture and interrogation, or even winning the PC to the side of the conspiracy. These solutions protect the integrity of the conspiracy and the series without killing a beloved PC.

Justifying the Remarkable

The PCs may do remarkable things, and you should be ready to justify them. Most players want to be able to do grandiose, dramatic things, like amass great power or save the world. Most GMs like to have a logically consistent world. So how can you satisfy yourself and your players? How can you allow a bunch of burger to thwart conspiracies as old as humanity itself without ruining suspension of disbelief? Here are some ideas:

Coming to a Head. Events are rising to a climax. Fifty years ago, for example, the PCs would never have been able to unearth, let alone defeat, the Pharaohs. But now the Pharaohs are starting their conquest, subtly at first. These actions expose them and their plots to some risk, and now is the time that the PCs may be able to do something about them.

Conflict Between Conspiracies.

The Movers and Pharaohs may be secretly fighting to a near standstill. In this situation, the intervention of even a few competent people could swing the conflict one direction or another. The PCs don’t have the knowledge or resources to defeat either group, but they may have the resources to tip the balance.

Entropy. With the Throckmorton Device and the Mr. LeThuys interfering with the conspiracies, the extreme care that has been taken to keep these conspiracies a secret is starting to fall apart. The PCs happen to be on Al Amarja when the first Throckmorton and LeThuy effects are felt, so they are in a very good position to take advantage of this chaos.

Newcomers. The old agents in the various schemes are paralyzed by fear and knowledge, or locked in debilitating power struggles with each other. The PCs, who don't know any better, stumble into areas where those who know better would never dare to go. The PCs are special in that they are neither controlled like the various cloaks nor apathetic like the majority of the populace.

Secret Weapon. Among the PCs there is likely to be at least one unusual trait against which the GMCs have not prepared: flight, invisibility, immunity to certain forms of attack, or other fringe abilities. This ability allows the PCs to penetrate where no others have gone before.

With a little thought, I'm sure you can see your way clear to making it logical for the PCs to be able to take on some major enemies, at least once the PCs have a little experience under their belts.

Audience vs. Artists

Role-playing is unusual among art forms in that the artists are also the audience. When you run a game or a character, you are doing it for your own enjoyment and that of your friends, not for a separate audience. Depending on your style of play, you can emphasize the "audience" aspect or the "artist" aspect of role-playing.

As audience, the players are left in the dark as much as possible. They know little more than their characters. When their characters are surprised by something, the players are also surprised. Identification with the character allows the player to experience the

character's victories and setbacks vicariously.

As artists, the players are above the concerns of power-gaming and attempt to use their relative omniscience to make the story more interesting. The player may very well know the dark secret of the other players' characters, but he will always portray his own character as if he didn't know. The artist player is more concerned with creating an interesting story than with identifying with the character.

I lean toward the player-as-audience. I take pains to allow the players to keep secrets from each other: passing notes, holding secret confidences. Some plots are impossible without this secrecy, such as the evening that a character died and wandered around the fringes of the afterlife thinking he was still alive. The other players all knew what was happening and collaborated, but the player running the dead PC did not. We could have run a colorful session if he had known what was going on, but we would have lost entirely the effectiveness of the O. Henry ending.

And then there's Nikolai Tasaroff, human/alien hybrid with a penchant for drinking blood. He passes for human (barely), and the other players thought nothing of his hairy body, gigantic stature, web-shaped palm-lines, or ability to maintain an incredibly muscular physique without ever going to the gym. This PC was around since the second game ever of OTE™, and not until the end of that series did anyone figure out that he was anything abnormal, or that he could "teleport" objects to himself when he needed them. Much of the joy this player had in playing Nik, and that I had in watching Nik, comes from the complete ignorance of the other players. Faking the ignorance while playing "in character" just wouldn't have been the same.

But keeping secrets like this is a matter of taste, and Mr. Laws has convinced me to try a less secretive series the next time I get a chance. He describes his philosophy of running game moderation in the following essay.

THE LITERARY EDGE

by Robin D. Laws

Role-playing games changed forever the first time a player said, "I know it's the best strategy, but my character wouldn't *do* that." Suddenly an aesthetic concern had been put ahead of a gaming one, i.e., establishing characterization over a scenario's "victory conditions." At that unheralded moment, role-playing stopped being a game at all and began quietly evolving into a narrative art form, a junior cousin of drama, film, and literature.

OTE is, among other things, an attempt to further the development of role-playing as art. GMs will find it fruitful to approach decisions as an artist creating a collaborative work with players. The idea of collaboration is important; the GM is not a "storyteller" with the players as audience, but merely a "first among equals" given responsibility for the smooth progress of the developing story.

The closest analogue to role-playing is improvised theater, in which actors invent scenes as they go along. Participants must be receptive to the contributions of others and use their own input to build on them. The Prime Directive of the improviser is "never negate," which means that the actors must accept all ideas as they come up and work with them.

In role-playing, however, the GM is often called on to say "no" to players' desires for their characters; this is because roleplaying games are ongoing epics centered around the adventure genre rather than brief comedy skits. The GM is responsible for decisions about characters' successes in the physical world, and will often decide that attempts at given actions fail. After all, stories in which the leads breeze over every obstacle without opposition are undramatic and therefore fail to entertain.

But GMs should also be prepared to say "yes" to players when a suggestion inspires new possibilities for the storyline. In fact, a good GM will work to incorporate player input into

his plans. In drama, character is the most important thing, and this element belongs to the players. The GM is not a movie director, able to order actors to interpret a script a given way. Instead, he should be seeking ways to challenge PCs, to use plot developments to highlight aspects of their character, in hopes of being challenged in return. GMCs should not be developed in a vacuum, but conceived to interact with the central characters, the PCs, in illuminating ways. Some GMCs will be foils, allies whose personalities reflect those of the PCs; others will be antagonists, more starkly contrasting types who oppose them.

Think of all your actions as GM as literary devices. When you decide what the weather is, make it reflect the mood of the PCs — or, just as effective, contrast with it. Pace the story so that it has the speed of an exciting movie, with fast-moving action sequences interspersed with slower, subtler ones that develop the PCs; making them seem more real and sympathetic. End sessions with rip-roaring climaxes (these can be emotional climaxes, not just fight scenes) and cliffhangers.

When viewing role-playing as an art form, rather than a game, it becomes less important to keep from the players things their characters wouldn't know. When characters separate, you can "cut" back and forth between scenes involving different characters, making each PC the focus of his own individual sub-plot. This technique has several benefits. First, it allows players to develop characters toward their goals without having to subsume them to the demands of the "party" as a whole. Secondly, it quickens the pace, allowing players to think while their characters are "off-screen," cutting down on dead time in which players thrash over decisions. When a character reaches an impasse, or an important climax, the GM can then "cut" to another character, giving the first player a chance to mentally regroup. Finally, the device is entertaining for players out of the spotlight, allowing them to sit back and

enjoy the adventures of others' characters.

The price of this is allowing players access to information known to PCs other than their own. But it's simple enough to rule out of play any actions they attempt based on forbidden knowledge. This doesn't mean there will be a shortage of mystery. Any OTE GM will still have secrets to spare. In fact, by allowing the number of sub-plots to increase, the GM is introducing even more questions the players will look forward to seeing answered.

GMs who employ this multi-plotting device will find it changes the nature of PC interaction, making meetings between them more remarkable and meaningful as they become rarer. Now PCs will interact because they want to for reasons arising from the story, not merely because they have to as part of a team. After all, parties of adventurers in roleplaying sessions are often made up of wildly disparate types who would never ally with each other, except for reasons outside the storyline: the players all want to be included, and the GM has one plotline prepared, so they all get shoehorned together. Often the result is much time diverted to strains within the artificially-formed party, or damage to the willing suspension of disbelief. With the "cutting" device in play, PCs can briefly team up, oppose one another, or simply never meet. (Clever GMs will, however, be alert to opportunities to make separate storylines cross over — since the PCs are the developed, complex focus figures, encounters between them will tend to curry a high degree of emotional impact.) If PCs do choose to form a stable "party" spontaneously, it will be a stronger one, with fewer strains that lead to tedious intra-party feuding.

For years, role-players have been simulating fictional narratives the way wargamers recreate historical military engagements. They've been making spontaneous, democratized art for their own consumption, even if they haven't seen it in these terms. Making the artistry conscious is a liberating act, making it easier to emulate the

classic tales that inspire us. Have fun with it, and enjoy your special role in aesthetics history — it's not everybody who gets to be a pioneer in the development of a new art form.

RUNNING AN ADVENTURE

Regardless of how you are conducting your series overall, what counts most to your players is whether they have fun during any given session of play. This section advises you on how to run your adventures smoothly and engagingly.

Preparing for a Session

How you prepare for a session is a matter of taste. Some people like to map everything out: who the GMCs will be, what the PCs' options are, what the floorplans of various building are, what the various resolutions may be depending on the actions of the PCs, and so on. Other GMs just wing it. Do whatever you're comfortable with.

You do, however, deserve a word of caution. In many RPGs, the action often occurs in a relatively closed setting, such as a haunted castle or an unexplored planetoid. In such settings, the GM has an easy job of anticipating the PCs' actions. When the action takes place in the Edge, however, anticipating the actions of the PCs and the progress of the plot is very difficult. They can wander anywhere, talk to anyone, do anything. If you like to keep the PCs on a specific plot line, you may have to strongarm them. More likely, however, you will regularly find that the players put bumps and bends into the plots you intend. The best bet is to be ready to make *something* up.

How can you prepare for what you cannot anticipate? That depends on how much you can do on the spur of the moment. Most GMs have some creative blind spots that make their spontaneous ideas incomplete or repetitious. I, for example, cannot invent interesting names. If I didn't watch myself, all the GMCs would be called Jack, Sue, Bob, and Sally.



Knowing this weakness, I prepare in advance. Sometimes I invent a few names ahead of time and write them down, or cull a list of names from magazines and newspapers. Sometimes I open up the phone book. (In my part of the country, at least, the section on physicians offers a colorful variety of names.) I write down the names that catch my fancy and keep the list handy when I play. When I invent a GMC and some PC asks “And what’s your name?” I can just refer to my list.

Perhaps, however, you have trouble coming up with colorful GMCs. Before the game, look through the previous chapters and either select pre-existing GMCs or invent a few inspired by what you see. Then, when some PC is standing in line at the convenience store, you can describe the person in line in front of him.

Or maybe your trouble is nefarious plots. In that case, invent a few ahead of time. “Lydia Goodman has

an operative tailing a Pharaoh quisling. The quisling may feign innocence and ask the GMCs for help.” There’s one. “The Glorious Lords are expanding into the territory where the PCs live. There will be fights in the streets, extortion, and plenty of danger.” There’s another. Then, when your adventure slows down, look back over your notes and insert a pre-devised wrinkle.

The advantage of this sort of preparation is that it helps you wing it, rather than keeping you from running with the surprises that are inevitable in a healthy game of OTE.

GMCs

The way you develop GMCs depends on the roles they fill in your series. You may wish to detail GMCs to be involved in a specific story, or invent GMCs on the spot as needed, or develop them beforehand and let the PCs encounter them when the time is right. In any event, you will need to

consider several aspects of your GMCs.

Role

GMCs serve various roles: romantic interest, an opponent for a quick fight, a powerful and recurrent enemy, potential allies, color and chrome, or whatever else your series needs. Knowing the role the GMC serves will help you design him as the series or adventure requires.

Stats

Give GMCs whatever traits you wish. The rules for developing PCs are for the players only. There is no need for you to follow them. A flaw is useful, especially for a powerful enemy, as it gives the PCs some way to take advantage of the GMC’s weakness even if the GMC is normally too powerful to take on. I never give a GMC an experience pool because I don’t want to mess with it. You may give your GMCs (especially the

exceptional ones) experience pools if you wish. In that case, you do not need to justify the use of experience dice, as players do.

Connections

Every GMC can be connected to one power group or another, even if indirectly. These connections allow the PCs to enter into deeper mysteries by interacting with the GMC.

Connections may be very close, such as “a Mover,” or tangential, such as “roommate is taking a class with Dr. Montserrat (an Earthling).” There is no reason that a GMC cannot be connected to more than one power group.

Possible connections include: informer for an operative (pick the conspiracy); acquaintance of an operative, providing information without knowing it; under consideration for membership in a conspiracy; under surveillance by a conspiracy; member of a false, “front” conspiracy; has information whose value and importance he fails to comprehend; manipulated and used by a conspiracy without his knowing it; former member of a small conspiracy, now hiding from it; knows someone or related to someone who falls into one of the above categories; and so on.

Detail

Be kind to yourself. If you’re comfortable winging it, come up with some general ideas for these GMCs, but fill in the scores and details only when you need to. If winging it makes you uncomfortable, do yourself a favor and detail your GMCs right from the start.

Prepared GMCs

The GMCs in this book are yours to alter, adapt, twist, or eliminate, as you please. Feel free to mark up the book as you change the GMCs, so that you can keep track of the changes you make.

Elements of an Adventure

Once you’re comfortable that you have sufficient preparation, get your

players together and go to it. Don’t worry about major plots or intricate politics. The Edge is such a bizarre place that just finding a hotel in which to stay can be an adventure. Let the PCs do what they want to do. Some of them may have motivations that suck them into dangerous plots. Others may run into trouble just going out for a night on the town.

There are various elements that may be appropriate for your series. Use them as you wish:

Fear. Some of the things in the Edge are scary: threats to body, soul, and mind. Furthermore, the players really do not know what they are up against. This factor of the unknown makes the dangers even more frightening. If nothing on the island scares your players, then invent something that will.

Suspense. Not knowing what’s going to happen — that’s engaging. Hint all you want to, but don’t reveal exactly what’s going on until the PCs earn that knowledge.

Satire. Since this is a modern setting, you can satirize elements of real life. The fascist thing to do is to make fun of things you don’t like in an effort to infect your friends with your point of view. The libertarian thing to do is to make fun of everything.

Farce. Exaggerate the bizarre and you can have a comical series. Have things happen not because those are the logical results of the PCs’ actions but because they would be funny.

Irony. Don’t give the players what they expect. They’re onto a secret conspiracy that has just assassinated a friend. They track the agents down, only to find that they are the Earthlings, and that the friend was an important agent for the Pharaohs. Take every opportunity to use the word “peace” in place of “police.” “Peace Line — Do Not Cross,” “a peace helicopter,” and that famous phrase yelled through a locked door “Peace! Open up!”

Adventure. Chase scenes, breaking and entering, fights, exploration of the unknown. This factor speaks for itself. I generally make a point of giving the PCs at least one fight every session just to keep the epinephrine flowing.

Pedantry. There’s got to be something that you like and know about. Cars? Martial arts? Dogs? Religions? Anatomy? Rocks and minerals? Bring that interest into play when you run OTE. The specialized details you provide will make the world seem more real to the players, and you’ll get to show off your knowledge.

Romance. Besides the possibility for unprecedented sexual exploits, the Edge also offers the potential for romance. Depending on the tastes of your players, you may wish to play this out sensitively, treat it with adolescent gusto, or just skip it. Do what’s fun.

Morality. Some PCs are self-serving jerks. Others will try to do good if the opportunity presents itself. I like to take the game beyond this simple level of pseudo-morality every once in a while. It’s never a morality play, and I don’t want to fill the players with angst or moral anguish, but I will go out of my way to highlight morality from time to time. The easiest way to do this is simply to take a breather every once in a while and open your eyes to what has happened during the session. PCs who have cavalierly lied or threatened people may see the results of their handiwork in the form of burned out businesses, broken relationships, or corpses. Sometimes all you need to do is describe the scene and remind the players of what role the PCs had in its creation.

Sometimes you may want to set up specific moral dilemmas with which to face PCs. Ideally these dilemmas allow deep characterization. Some people, however, do not like their fun adulterated with morality. They may, for instance, enjoy playing evil

characters but not enjoy thinking too hard about what these characters are doing. Play to your audience.

Strangeness. There's just something fun about tooling around the Edge, talking to strange people, seeing strange events, and doing strange things. Let the PCs do so as long as they enjoy it.

Personal Worldview. You may insert your personal ideas about the world into the game. If you think that meditation is a major solution to human difficulties or a potent method for increasing personal power, invent a meditation school and give PCs who attend appropriate benefits. If you think recreational drugs are a vicious scourge on humanity, portray them that way in the game. If you think that Catholicism is the One True Way, make it so in the game. My worldview has certainly come across in the design of Al Amarja. You have the power as GM to do the same. If the game therefore becomes more meaningful to you, it may well become more meaningful to the players.

Could Versus Should

One creative block that often keeps GMs from winging an adventure successfully is clinging to what "should" happen instead of imagining what "could" happen.

For example, the PCs come into Sad Mary's and ask what the crowd looks like. One way to answer the question is to refer to premises and deduce the logical result. Sad Mary's is on the Plaza of Flowers, and lots of artists live in that area, so you deduce that the crowd has more than its share of artistic types. That's deduction; that's interpreting what *should* happen.

On the other hand, you could answer that same question by deciding what would be interesting. A bunch of off-duty peace officers, guns in evidence, could be hanging around. There's nothing in the text about Sad Mary's that says that peace officers

frequent the place, but it's not impossible. And it's interesting, especially if the PCs have been to Sad Mary's a few times already and don't expect to meet Peace Officers here. Now, of course you have to come up with a good reason for their presence. Maybe a friend of theirs is performing. Maybe they just like unsettling people. If you can't figure a good reason, then maybe no one knows. The PCs ask a waiter why all the peace officers are here, and he says he doesn't know. The PC asks a peace officer, and the officer gives some lame excuse. Generally, however, you can figure some reason, and it may lead to new plot ideas. This is induction; this is going by what *could* happen and then justifying it.

Or another example, the PCs are up against some Glorious Lords. By deduction, you might decide that they have *seklut* powers such as armor or strength. By imagining what powers they could have, however, you may come up with something more interesting, such as acidic spit or inability to feel pain. Even if these powers are not listed in the description of the Glorious Lords, these powers are possible.

Unless your series is going out of control from sheer entropy, make things up based on what *could* happen, not on what *should*.

The reason I'm emphasizing this distinction between "could" and "should" is that OTE was not conceived as a game in which things work a certain way. I designed it specifically as a way to let just about anything happen. The first time I played OTE, I had a few pages of notes on the background and nothing on the specifics. I made it all up on the spot. Not having anything written to use as a guide (or crutch), I let my imagination loose. You have the mixed blessing of having many pages of background prepared for you. If you use the information in this book as a springboard for your own wild dreams, then it is a blessing. If you limit yourself to what I've dreamt up, it's a curse.

How to Save the PCs' Butts

In the unpredictable and dangerous surroundings of the Edge, it is likely that, from time to time, the characters will get into a predicament where stomping on them seems like the only logically consistent thing to do.

Perhaps they will try to take on a bunch of operatives who obviously outclass them, or make personal threats against a D'Aubainne, or tick off some power group that has the capability and heartlessness to eliminate the PCs. Sometimes you want to stomp on them, but other times, whether out of concern for the pacing of the story or tender mercy for the hapless players, you will want to leave the PCs unstomped. So, how do you keep from stomping on them without ruining the internal logic of the setting?

Vivid Descriptions. Telling the players that the PCs see a bunch of baboons might not give them much pause, but describing the baboons as "a surly pack of beasts poking about in obvious agitation. Several of the baboons have what looks like caked blood matted into the hair of their muzzles. Occasionally one baboon gets too close to another, and the offended baboon snarls and bares its razor-sharp fangs in protest." Maybe that description will clue the players in that messing with these things is not a good idea.

PC Intervention. If one character in the group seems intent on doing something suicidal, and other PCs are nearby, turn to the players of the non-suicidal PCs and say something like this, "Eunice has her knife out and she's reaching out to the doorknob. It looks for all the world like she intends to open that door." You see, players are sometimes hit with "idiot paralysis." They see another player being an idiot, and the shock temporarily separates them from their roles as PCs. They stare at the player, leaving the PC they're running standing helplessly by. Reminding the players that their PCs are right there and able to intervene helps

break idiot paralysis. It's also dramatic to have one PC try to stop another from doing something stupid, and it keeps you, the GM, from having to intervene in some other way. But then other PCs are not always around to help out.

Bad Day for the GMCs. The Edge is not a healthy place to live, mentally or physically, and the PCs may have the luck to strike when some ailment or problem distracts or disables GMCs who would normally be capable of dicing them. Peace officers are sometimes on drugs, gangs have intra-gang disputes simmering under a calm surface, and operatives may be under the influence of poisons or mind-altering substances administered by enemy operatives. Every once in a while you can use this excuse to let the PCs not get wasted, but if you over-use it the PCs will get a sense of false confidence that will prove very dangerous over the long run.

Bizarre Coincidences. With so much happening in the Edge, it's possible for PCs to luck out. GMCs may mistake the PCs for allies, a drug contact, important enemies that are to be captured rather than killed, or a legendary pack of killers whose reputation strikes fear into the GMCs' hearts. Or the PCs could get into trouble just as a third group, enemies of the GMCs, launch their attack. Perhaps a group of Movers was waiting to attack the Peace Force guarding an important location, and they mistake the PCs for some of their own numbers, launching their attack as soon as the PCs get into the thick of things.

Secret Weapon. At least one of the PCs may have an unusual trait, something that their enemies would be unable to anticipate and defend against. It may be their ticket out of certain death. (Be generous with such a power; it allows the PCs to survive without your having to make the GMCs

out to be chumps. It does a favor for you and for the players.)

If you're like me, you don't want to give too much away to the players. Separating them entirely from the detrimental results of stupid actions may turn them into fools, as well as offend your sense of justice. If you worry about this, then be sure that the PCs do not always get away scot-free.

If you deform the plot in order to save the PCs, feel free to turn their salvation into yet another problem (albeit not a lethal one). Imagine, for instance, that the PCs receive unexpected aid from Movers who were waiting to attack the enemies of the PCs. After the battle is over, the Movers may realize their mistake. Now what do they do with the PCs? This encounter could turn into a chase scene, could result in the PCs (or certain of them) being captured by Mover operatives, or could require some very fast talking on the part of the PCs. By adding a wrinkle to the details of how the PCs are saved, you force the players to "pay the piper" and show them that their rash actions were a mistake with potentially nasty consequences.

How to Hose the Player(-Character)s

Don't get me wrong by the title of this section. I am not advocating all out hosing, slaughtering, smashing, and torturing of players or their characters. On the other hand, it is useful to know some of the basics of GM self-defense, and the best defense is a good offense. If you feel it appropriate to hose a particular player character or group of player characters, here is how to go about it.

The secret is in resisting the human and natural temptation to resist force with force. When PCs want to plow into a dangerous situation, GMs usually feel like pushing back with greater force. Frankly, this tactic is easy, and in a pinch it works fine. But there is no sport in such a contest and little class. After all, you are the GM, and the rules are flexible enough that you are their only true arbiter, so overpowering the PCs is

like fishing in a bucket.

More importantly, overpowering the PCs can create hard feelings in the players and possibly in yourself. It brings you and the players into confrontation, and hard feelings are common in any inherently unfair contest.

To hose PCs with grace, learn how to give. Specifically, learn how to give the PCs enough rope.

The beauty of *conceding* rather than *forcing* is that the PCs will take your falling back as a victory and they will no doubt blunder ahead, giddy with the glory of conquest. And they will keep blundering ahead until they have taken the rope you offered, tied an elegant knot, slipped it over their own necks, and pulled the hangman's lever. Now how can they be angry at you? You were neutral, if not outright generous, in letting them overpower their enemies, until they took on the enemy that simply is not beatable. It was their doing. They are hosed on their own petard.

Here's an example from play, to show you how it works.

Horace, perhaps the grossest travesty of play balance ever incarnated into PC form, is standing at the gate of a large estate, confronted by two Peace Officers who deny him entrance. In the estate are about a dozen other officers, as Horace can plainly see by the number of squad cars in the driveway and the peace helicopter in the garden. Unknown to the officers, however, Horace is a veritable warehouse of bizarre magic items. When they order him back from the peace line, he draws his banana. When they begin giving him a countdown, he begins to point the banana at them. The officers count "3, 2, 1," and one opens fire with his MP5 sub-machine gun. Horace, however, has a crystal that turns bullets into bubbles. (Did I mention the travesty of play balance bit?) The bullets coat Horace with soapy, shiny bubbles, but do not hurt him. He paralyzes the first guard with the banana, which shoots a paralytic ray. (Is "travesty" a strong enough word?)

The second officer freaks, naturally, and opens fire as well. Horace rolls for the effectiveness of the crystal, and gets a mediocre roll. Here I had to make a fateful decision. The crystal has never been used before this encounter. Horace himself is unsure of how well it works. On a low roll, I could make the crystal partially effective, totally ineffective, or totally effective against the bullets.

What would you do?

I had one bullet get past the crystal and strike Horace for considerable but not incapacitating damage. Horace paralyzed the guy, but realized the folly of taking on the officers from the remaining squad cars. He and his gang attempted to flee, but they were chased down and captured. Horace had lost.

Now it was “fair” for me to rule that the crystal was not totally effective against a hail of rapid-fire bullets, but the player knew that it was my personal ruling and couldn’t help but take it personally. He had wanted to be immune to gunfire; that’s why he made up the crystal when he invented the character. And I had made him *not* immune to gunfire. I had used my power

as GM to edit his creative control over his character, and even though I had already generously turned a blind eye to his outrageously powerful character concept, I had now enforced my own vision over his. The player was upset. So what if I had let the crystal work completely? Horace would no doubt have kept going after the remaining officers, at least a dozen of them.

Would the crystal have been able to protect him from a dozen sub-machine guns? Maybe, maybe not.

Again, it certainly would have been fair to have the crystal’s power overwhelmed by a dozen MP5s on full auto, and Horace could have been ripped to shreds rather than merely captured.

But better yet — imagine I allowed the crystal to work 100% against every bullet that came Horace’s way. Certainly these officers had other weapons they could use, fighting knives if not hand grenades. Again, Horace would have walked

right into a deathtrap, all because I had been generous enough to let his damn crystal work like a charm.

But Horace also had a paralytic banana. What if he could have paralyzed all the officers before meeting his well-earned fate? Now that would be a feat to tell and re-tell for ages. Single-handedly Horace had overcome over a dozen Peace Officers. Hurray for Horace!

But now what does Horace do with over a dozen paralyzed Peace Officers? If he lets them live, they will report back to HQ about Horace and his amazing abilities. If he slaughters them, the Peace Force will launch an incredible man-hunt, with gov-



Illustration by Lee Moyer

ernment psychics and wizards helping out to identify the culprit even if none of the officers on the scene had managed to radio back a description of Horace before getting zapped. So the government would know about him.

And if the government knows about him, the Mover infiltrators will find out about him.

And the Pharaohs.

And perhaps the Philosopher's Stone.

And probably a whole lot of not very nice people.

So what will Horace do now that every power-hungry group on the island is looking for him, hoping to ally him to their side (i.e. brainwash or blackmail him), capture and study him, or just eliminate him to keep him from messing up their plans? All the magic crystals and all the magic bananas in the world are not going to protect him.

I would have been more than generous all along. The player never would have had his concept of his character challenged, I never would have had to interpret borderline die rolls against the players, and a good story gets told in the process. But most of all, Horace gets hosed.

How an Adventure Works

Throughout this book are countless ideas, plotoooks, and possibilities. Now let's look at how these can come together into a functional, interesting, engaging adventure. Specifically, let me now recount the process by which I ran one actual adventure to show you how I manage it and give you a better sense of how these ideas coalesce into action. This was a successful session, but it was not perfect. I hope my mistakes as well my victories will show you something about GMing OTE.

We hadn't played *Over the Edge* for months when we played this adventure. My goal was to focus on what had gone before to achieve a measure of continuity and to hook the players so they would find it easy to get back into the campaign. There were four players, three of them with new characters.

Aaron was a photographer with zest for "unique" photo opportunities. He was a normal person, and as such he was a great asset to the group; he gave everyone a standard by which to measure weirdness. Aaron knew about the rat-things (Agaras) and Portia at Sad Mary's and he wanted to know more. He was destined to be a major hook for the three new characters. His current goal was to hunt down Melvin Feeblemeister, who, in the last adventure, had killed Portia before Aaron had a chance to talk to her.

Horace was a new character, a Cut-Up with a slew of powerful magic devices, whom you met in the last section. His excellent trait was that he was an artificer of supernatural objects, of which he had several. Essentially, his superior trait was that he had several superior traits. This particular player assumes that it is his duty to develop the most powerful character he can get away with. I asked him to explain why his superior power didn't make a travesty of game balance, and he really couldn't. But this player always gets his characters into deep trouble, so I didn't worry about it. I let the power stand as is. Since he was a member of a gang, the Cut-Ups, I could hand him a plot hook and I knew he would take it.

John Silverton had recently escaped from a mental institution and suffered the delusion that he was a demon. An interesting idea, but I didn't know what his motivation would be. I assumed he would follow along when other characters had motivations of their own.

Mara was John's guardian angel. I decided that John actually *was* a demon, and that Mara was trying to convince him that he was just a demented human. That's why she had arranged to have him put away in an asylum. Now it was her duty to watch over him and guide him on his progress toward enlightenment and goodness. I looked forward to the suspense and mystery that Mara would create, guarding John without revealing her true identity as his guardian angel.

I decided that, in addition to the mystery of the Agaras, it was time to insert the plot of the Throckmorton Device. Unfortunately, I had been busy the previous week and had nothing whatsoever planned in terms of a plot for the evening's episode. I worried that it would fall flat, what with three new, unpredictable characters and no intricate plot waiting to hook them. I hadn't even had time to write up new versions of "Little Scratches" and "Opportunities on the Edge." Frankly, I was worried that the first OTE game in months would be a bust and getting back into the series would be difficult.

We started the action with Horace meeting the Cut-Ups and learning that some subtle force was restricting chaos and imposing order. This the Cut-Ups knew because their *I Ching* sticks came up with the same hexagram every time they used them. (Luckily, Horace did not ask which hexagram that was. I am not familiar enough with the *I Ching* to give a valid response, and I would have had to fake it. If I had had time to prepare, this is the kind of detail that I would have had ready.)

Horace, through bogus logic typical of a card-carrying Cut-up, decided to investigate the person least likely to be the cause of the chaos-lack, a fellow named Alfredo the Zit. He was unlikely to be involved because he was currently in a coma from depressant overdose. (I have a hard time coming up with impromptu names. The last character I had named on the spur of the moment was Alexander Zid, too similar to our friend Alfredo. Ah well.) I decided that Horace's non-logic was valid, and that the Throckmortonians were involved with Alfredo's condition. Otherwise the session would get off to a slow start.

Meanwhile, Aaron, whose legs had been mauled by a rat-thing in the last adventure, took the dead rat-thing back to Chris Seversen, with whom he had been working. Dr. Seversen offered to stitch him up. She gave him a general anesthetic and let "Samson" fix him up. I wondered how long it would be before some

character figured out that Dr. Seversen is just an actress.

Aaron stayed with Dr. Seversen a day to recuperate and enjoy himself. Dr. Seversen told him that her tests confirmed that the rat-thing has human DNA, something Aaron had already learned from Dr. Head at D'Aubainne U. Dr. Seversen also made it plain that she could use a daring and competent fellow like Aaron in some of her more dangerous investigations. I was attempting to hook Aaron up with Seversen as his patron. That arrangement would lead to plenty of easy plot hooks and possibly some coherence in what could be a chaotic campaign, and it would give Aaron some cash flow.

After spending the day at Seversen's, Aaron returned to the Edge, his wounds largely healed up, though still aching.

Aaron returned to his room at Cesar's and I decided it was time he met some of the other PCs. I mentioned it was breakfast time, and Aaron, Horace, and John all said they would be eating at Cesar's. I ruled that the restaurant was crowded, and that a manager asked the three single US Americans if they would mind sharing a table. They agreed, and thus they met. The three were intrigued with each other, and decided to hang out together for a while. Ideally, I develop more natural and interesting ways for player-characters to meet, but the "chance meeting" works fine for us, so I don't worry too much about it. Get on with the action; minimum hassle. If my players complained, I would develop better excuses for the characters to work together.

Mara also arrived, hooking up with the group to protect and guide John, but seeming to be just something of a strange tourist.

The four of them went to the D'Aubainne Hospital to check on Alfredo. At the hospital, Mara's healing powers proved sufficient to revive Alfredo slightly. Horace asked him to say the first word that came to his mind when he thought about the people who were (Horace assumed cor-

rectly) after him. I had to figure out why Alfredo was in the hospital.

I decided that Alfredo's coma was no accident, and that Throckmorton Operatives had severely spiked his beer in an effort to kill him. Why did they want him dead? I don't know, and with Alfredo in a coma, the characters were unlikely to ask him, so I could leave that question unanswered for a while.

The "first thing that comes to your mind" lead-in from Horace was very well appreciated. It allowed me to be dramatic, as Alfredo yelled "Eyebrows!" and then slipped back into the coma. Alfredo was referring to the guy with no eyebrows (Throckmorton operative) who had been following and harassing him.

Horace then bribed a nurse for information about visitors that Alfredo may have had. She said that someone named Anna Dietmar had come to see him occasionally. At this point, I lost some control. First of all, I had already used the name "Dietmar" on a cryptic message in *Little Scratches*. Secondly, this "Anna Dietmar" was a Throckmorton Operative, and she would not have used her real name. I told myself that the name was a cover, but then promptly forgot same. If pressed, however, I would have been able to justify Anna's sloppiness by ruling that the Throckmorton Device sometimes has deleterious effects on one's reasoning capacity (as well as shaping one's attitudes).

When the PCs left the hospital, the Throckmorton operative who had spiked Alfredo's beer was across the street in an alley, lurking pointlessly. (Throckmorton operatives are not universally intelligent.) Would they notice that he had no eyebrows? They had assumed that Alfredo's reference to eyebrows meant big eyebrows, bushy eyebrows, or maybe green eyebrows. No one had mentioned the possibility that he had meant "no eyebrows." If they had considered the possibility that Alfredo had meant "no eyebrows," it would have been relatively easy to spot the operative. Since they were looking for eyebrows, and not lack thereof, the

task was more difficult. Luckily for the plot, Aaron has a keen eye. He rolled a 12 and saw the guy across the street. Dutifully he pointed this fellow out to the other characters.

At this point, it looked like a confrontation could have been imminent. I began imagining what combat capabilities this operative would have, but I really wanted to avoid a confrontation if at all possible. Maintain the suspense by deferring a decisive confrontation. As fate would have it, Horace managed to get himself into trouble before the confrontation ensued.

Horace crossed the street to get closer to the operative. While he lurked in front of the Information Store, a Sommerite approached him to chat. (She was attracted by his incredibly garish outfit.) Not knowing who this woman was, Horace offered her one of his artifacts, a locket of Elvis's hair that allows one to channel "the King." The Sommerite took the lock of hair, began singing Elvis-style, and promptly became enraged. From a Sommerite's point of view, channeling Elvis is like being possessed by an evil spirit. Without delay, she pulled her switchblade from a calf sheath and tried to acquaint said weapon with Horace's vitals.

(Did you notice how I turned a good trait, the lock of hair, into a bit of trouble for the PC? Tricks like that help maintain game balance.)

Most AI Amarjans go armed in the street, but Sommerites are not known for their martial excellence. She rolled two dice versus Horace's three, for being quick and agile. Horace managed to evade the Sommerite while the other characters crossed the street to help him.

And cross the street they did. Mara took to the air and flew across. Very disappointed, I. When designing the characters, the player had told me that Mara wouldn't fly very often. I thought she meant that she would use discretion with her ability. In fact she meant that it wouldn't come in handy too often so I should let her get away with it. Her taking flight seemed to give away too much about her character too soon, but she had

never really intended to be very secretive.

The combined efforts of the wannabe demon and the angel with a sword were easily enough to overwhelm and capture the Sommerite, who explained why she had been so enraged and even gave a Karla Sommers tape to John. They let her go when they determined that her ineffectual attack was relatively random, that she had no information that they would find valuable.

Once the commotion was over, the characters discovered that the guy with no eyebrows was gone. Without having to force the plot, I had deferred confrontation with him. I felt at this point that things were going very well indeed.

The next stop was the Information Store. They learned that Anna Dietmar had been having an affair with Franc Lluin, and that her husband, Albert, would be enraged to learn that his wife was having sex with a black man. I assumed that the Throckmorton Device had only recently begun to infect both Albert and Anna, and that, under its influence, Anna had killed Mr. Lluin. Now the husband and wife were a pair of like-minded Throckmorton lackeys. I spent a few moments imagining their apartment. They would have their young daughter locked in a cage to protect her from society's evil influence, and they would have pages of rambling, insane, inflamed prose about their hatred for various nonconformist types. But, I decided, they would have no connection to other operatives. The Dietmars would be just a taste of the Throckmorton Device, but not an open doorway into the plot.

Note that I erred by allowing the characters to find information about "Anna Dietmar" because I had intended that name to be false. Oh well.

Aaron, who had said nothing to the other characters about the rat-things, Portia, or Melvin Feeblemeister, bought some information on Feeblemeister, specifically that he had pointed ears, along with his address.

(The Information Store, by the way, was an experiment. I didn't like the effect it had on the series, making information relatively easy to get, so one day members of the Net burned down every franchise on the island. That's why you won't find it in this book.)

The characters at this point went into a long conversation in which Mara explained that she was John's guardian angel. Oh no! I couldn't believe she gave it away so soon. What a waste of good mystery. But then I realized that Mara's player rarely keeps her identity secret. Her last character, a female incarnation of the Dalai Lama, told everyone who would sit still that she was indeed the Dalai Lama. I realized at this point that I should have suggested to Mara's player that she keep her identity a secret. It would have led to a much more interesting development of her character. *C'est la vie*.

Now characters started making preparations for their next actions. Aaron started hinting to the other characters about the rat-things. Aaron's player has the delightful ability to obscure the truth without ever telling a lie, and he used it to the fullest. The other characters knew something was up, but had no idea about rat-things or other such happenings.

And Horace called the two Dietmars listed in the phone book. The operatives, under the name Albert Dietmar, screened their calls, so Horace found himself talking to an answering machine. The other Dietmar, Johann, was home and talked to him. I decided that Johann was Albert's brother and that Johann hated Albert, especially now that he had become so strange and shaved his eyebrows. Johann obfuscated and confused Horace a bit, but nothing came of it.

That evening Aaron talked with Frank Germaine (manager of Sad Mary's), who agreed to send a bouncer of his along on the search for Portia's killer. Aaron had been mauled by one of Feeblemeister's rat-things, so he did not want to face Feeblemeister unprotected. The deal

was that Aaron would find Feeblemeister, the bouncer would protect Aaron while Aaron talked to him, and then the bouncer would have free rein to exact vengeance for killing one of Germaine's best hookers (Portia). That night Aaron left a message under Feeblemeister's door asking to meet him in room 6 of Sarah's Teahouse the next day at 6 pm.

That night Horace tried to craft some magical devices out of random items he had gathered during the day. He succeeded only in creating an ashtray with the words "eye," "love," and "Clyde" glued to the edges. I decided that anyone who carried this item would give a good impression to Throckmorton operatives. Unfortunately, as a symbol of order, it gave Horace the willies.

Now Horace was staying at E-Z Sleep, and the owners really don't want people staying there too long. Horace had paid for ten days worth of lodging, so the owners called up an extermination service to de-bug Horace's room — at 6 in the morning when Horace was still in bed.

And who do you suppose was the exterminator? Clyde Throckmorton, of course. I pointed out that he had a nametag on his uniform that said "Throckmorton," a meaningless clue to all concerned. And after Mr. Throckmorton was through fumigating the room, he shook Horace's hand and said, "It's been a real pleasure working for you. I just wanted to let you know that." (This unusual behavior was caused by the "eye love Clyde" ashtray. This is the kind of clue I love to give. To the players, it makes no sense at all, but some day soon perhaps Horace would think back to the time that Throckmorton, his mortal enemy, fumigated his room and shook his hand. Note that under no circumstances would I have revealed Throckmorton's first name. That would have been too big a clue. It's a fine line I walk, dropping clues like these, because sometimes the players can read my face and know something significant is going on. Then they pursue the clue doggedly, even though the character would probably think nothing of it.)

Annoyed at the fumigation (and disgusted by the number of blood-sucking critters that Throckmorton revealed), Horace left E-Z Sleep and went to Bienvenidos. The Kergillians had succeeded in getting him out without making it plain that they didn't want him there.

Horace then proceeded to get himself in real trouble. He called Albert Dietmar, the Throckmorton operative, and left a message on the machine saying that he wanted to know about Alfredo the Zit and saying that he knew something about Franc Lluin. Furthermore, he gave his name and the hotel he was staying at (now Bienvenidos). Naturally, Albert and Anna heard the message and planned to kill Horace at the next available opportunity.

By this time, it was past 9:00 PM in the real world, time to start heading toward a fitting ending so I could get to sleep by midnight. I decided that one of two conclusions would be fitting for the evening: a confrontation with Feeblemeister or (preferably) a fight with the Throckmorton operatives. In spare moments I began writing inflamed fascist babbling on a sheet of paper, a prop for the characters to find when they searched the Dietmars' apartment.

The characters had the whole day to wait before the meeting with Feeblemeister at 6 that evening. They did some research, bought some weaponry, and generally hung out and compared notes. This took over an hour of real time, detailing the weapons available at Gun Metal and determining what could be learned at the library and such, but the plot did not progress. While the plot did not move, however, this time was valuable in detailing the island and the developing the PCs. You could see it as "downtime," but some of this slow action helps develop the series as a whole.

I kept asking Horace if he was going to change clothes or pick up special props. (In other words, would he return to his hotel, where the Dietmars were waiting to kill him? I didn't want to straight out ask "do you go back to Bienvenidos" because

that might make the player suspicious.) Horace never returned to the hotel.

The whole group, along with the bouncer from Sad Mary's, went to Sarah's to wait for Feeblemeister. I missed a chance to personalize the bouncer, describe what he was wearing at least, but at this point I was hurrying to a finale, so I let that slip. He remained a faceless bystander.

When Feeblemeister didn't show, the party went to his apartment, located in a dilapidated building. At this point I decided the talk with Feeblemeister would be the finale for the evening, leaving the attack on Horace for the next game. If I really wanted to push the Throckmorton plot, I could have had Feeblemeister absent from his apartment, fleeing now that Aaron's note has shown him that someone is on to him. Instead, I had Feeblemeister waiting patiently for them.

This encounter was going to be a surprise. All that Aaron had seen of this man was when he had killed Portia and sicced a rat-thing on him. Actually, he's not a bad guy. He was just doling out what he considered to be justice for Portia's crimes and protecting his own secrecy from prying eyes.

Feeblemeister let them in, to save them the trouble of breaking in the door, which they could easily have done. He then sat on his prayer mat in the middle of the bare floor, invited them to sit (but there were no chairs), and answered some questions.

He insisted that he had slain Portia because she had betrayed her people, and that the laws of her people demanded capital punishment for her crimes. Some questions he answered quietly and politely. Others (those that would give away too much) he politely but steadfastly refused to answer. When they were done talking to him, the bouncer announced that it was his turn. According to the deal with Germaine, the bouncer could trash this guy. Feeblemeister, a fellow in good shape but certainly no match for a bouncer, made no resistance. The other characters pleaded with the bouncer not to kill the guy, saying he

was supposed to take a message back to Portia's people. They tried to talk the bouncer out of beating Feeblemeister up, but the bouncer was here to do exactly that.

This was a tense moment in the game. None of the players wanted to witness a bouncer pounding on a defenseless man, even if that man was a cold-blooded executioner. I knew I wouldn't relish describing the scene, either. But I felt that Aaron had made a moral error in making his deal with Germaine. He had specifically told Germaine that his bouncer could exact vengeance. Aaron had expected to meet Feeblemeister at Sarah's Teahouse, where perhaps he would have been restricted from slaughtering Feeblemeister, but things had taken an unexpected turn when they found Feeblemeister in his own apartment. I wanted to show that deals such as these have their consequences. The bouncer started pounding on Feeblemeister, who did not lift a finger in his own defense.

The characters turned away in helpless disgust, all but Aaron. Aaron's player has a moral strength I admire, and it came through. After a few moments, Aaron said "That's enough." He had the authority of moral conviction in his voice, and the bouncer stopped. Aaron checked Feeblemeister and ascertained that he was not seriously hurt. Feeblemeister thanked him, and the characters left.

The way Aaron handled the scene made it very powerful and memorable. It is for the sake of this kind of action that I am willing to put myself and my players into uncomfortable situations from time to time.

As the characters walked away from Feeblemeister's apartment, they saw that the bouncer was glum. One player joked, "It's because he didn't get to kill that guy," but when they asked the bouncer, he said he felt bad for beating that guy up. It would have been fun, he explained, if Feeblemeister had tried to defend himself.

At this point, the game was over for the evening, as far as I was concerned. The characters questioned Aaron about Feeblemeister, and he

CHAPTER 7: GM RULES

Illustration by Lee Moyer



finally told them more of what was going on, just about everything he knew, in fact.

Horace wanted to favor Aaron with one of his magical artifacts, but when he reached into his backpack to get his helmet of unsmellability, he grabbed the “eye love Clyde” ashtray instead. Very strange, considering that he had previously destroyed the ashtray. Horace chucked the ashtray and produced the helmet of unsmellability. Boy, did I blow this one. I could have saved that “returning ash-

tray” bit for the very end of the game. It would have been a dramatic foreshadowing of dangers to come. Instead I interjected the idea before the players were ready to call it quits, and the scene lost much of its dramatic potential. Win some, lose some.

After the adventure was over, I wrote some notes about what might happen in the next game.

First of all, the Dietmars are waiting to kill Horace. That would be a good opening scene for the next

game. Catch everyone’s interest with some violence.

Second, Aaron’s player was going to be moving to Seattle soon. I wanted to wrap-up the rat-people mystery he’d been following so the player would have a sense of accomplishment before he left. That would mean stuffing three episodes’ worth of action and mystery into the next play session, but I figured I could pull it off. Pursuing that plot, though, meant delaying the Throckmorton attack until the next session. Once the Dietmars attacked, I wanted the characters to be able to search their apartment and find that page of rambling incoherence that I had written, so launching the attack would effectively mean devoting a good portion of time to that plot.

And then there was Mara, the angel. A bunch of people saw her fly across Dump Street in broad daylight. No doubt some reporters, Movers, and would-be disciples would be looking for her. Again, I knew I’d have to wait on that plot in order to play out the climax for the Agara plot in the time that Aaron’s player would be around, but harassing Mara for her blatant display of power promised to be a lot of fun.

As to the Agara plot, I needed to invent something that would satisfy Aaron’s player, since Aaron was to be the star of the show. I toyed with the idea of some kind of redemption for the race. Perhaps their holy tradition would include a prophecy that some outsider would come to redeem them, and that outsider would be none other than Aaron.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PLOTS

This chapter discusses the big and small plots found on Al Amarja and gives suggestions for how best to run them. First it details three introductory adventures with which to start off your series. Then it details three major plots that you can use as major undercurrents in your series or as focal points for it. The remaining text deals with story ideas you may wish to use in your series.

INTRODUCTORY ADVENTURES

Following are three prepared adventures meant to be played with no necessary connection with each other. You can find several ways to use them, such as:

- Before you start your series proper, play these three one-shots as introductions to the rules and the setting. Before each one-shot, the players develop quick characters that fit the upcoming plot, use them for the designated story, and then discard them. Once the three stories are over, the players develop their permanent characters for use in the series proper. I highly recommend this system for several reasons.

First, when the players begin the series, once the one-shots are over they will have knowledge that their characters lack. This knowledge won't be anything startling or even relevant to their first few episodes, but you as GM can work to connect these one-shot events to plots that the characters follow. When the players see a connection, even a tenuous one,

between what they have done with their current characters and what happened in the one-shots, they will get a satisfying feeling that this plot has indeed been developing before they interfered, affecting others' lives, and gaining strength on its own. The plot, whatever it might be, will seem deep and real. Movies and books use this technique with opening scenes that do not involve the protagonists and do not gain meaning until the protagonists' actions bring them in contact with what the opening scene was about.

Second, the three one-shots will give you and your players a taste of three styles of play: espionage, supernatural mystery, and partying over the edge. The experiences will help you decide what focus would be most enjoyable for you and your players.

Third, by the time the players have each created three characters and played in three episodes, they will have a good enough grasp on the rules and character possibilities that they will be able to develop satisfying characters and play the rules easily once the series proper begins. The same goes for you; any errors you make in your first experiments with the setting and rules will have no lasting repercussions on one-shot characters, and when the real characters begin, you'll really know what you are doing and will be able to handle it well.

Of course, you need not play all three one-shots before starting play.

- Another option is that after playing the three one-shots, you get a consensus from the players as to which introduction they liked most. The players then assume the roles of the charac-

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THE UNIVERSE IS
A PLOT OF GOD.

-EDGAR ALLEN
POE

ters they played in that one-shot, and the series picks up from there.

- Use all three one-shots with the same PCs, though this may take a bit of tinkering.
- Use a single one-shot as your introductory episode to the series, and use the others as possible episodes later on, if they fit into the PCs' actions. Or just introduce the series on your own and use these episodes during the series if they fit in.
- Decide that you can write your own episodes very well, thank you very much, and shred the following pages into confetti.

Intro Adventure One

CONTACT ON AL AMARJA

NOTE TO NEW GMS

If you want your first run to be easy, you may wish to describe the rules to your players orally rather than letting them peruse the players' rules. That way they do not see mention of weird fringe powers, Pendrick's "mythology ability," etc. With just your guidance and the player info below, they should develop mundane PCs, which will make your first game session easier to GM.

PLAYER INFORMATION

Read the following to the players, or photocopy it and give them copies.

Player Characters

You are bodyguards and agents for a secretive millionaire in the US who shall remain nameless ("the Boss," to you). Rumor has it that he is involved

with secret societies of unknown nature, but you are paid to ignore such rumors. You and the other player-characters have worked as a team before, performing espionage, intimidation, and messenger protection services within the US. Now, however, your employer will be sending you to a small island in the Mediterranean, one you've never heard of before: Al Amarja.

The traits of you and your fellows should include perception, strength, speed, fighting ability, martial arts, subterfuge, sleight-of-hand, and first aid.

Your goal is to accompany and guard a courier who intends to meet another operative on Al Amarja. While you are told that no interference is anticipated, you wouldn't be along if trouble were not possible.

What to do...

- Guard your courier
- Avoid suspicion
- Return safely with the information that your courier is gathering

Al Amarja, you are told, is run by a fascist dictator who outlaws guns and bullet-proof vests, so your typical weaponry and equipment are not allowed. Chances are your enemies will also lack firearms, so you shouldn't be at a disadvantage if trouble arises. Just don't mess with the police; they carry sub-machine guns.

Each of you have several aliases, one of which you will be using for this mission. You do not know each others' real names, but you have used each others' aliases often enough that they are natural to you.

The Courier

You have never met Carolyn before. She is a young black woman who would not stand out in a crowd, except that her left arm is limp, useless, and fatty. She can strap it to her torso so that it won't get in the way during a fight, but she usually just rests it on her purse. She is not carrying the message in the usual way; you are simply told that for her to give her message and receive her contact's, she must be alive, her left arm must be

undamaged, and her brain must be uninjured. She is capable in a fight, but she is not to risk herself. That's what you're along for.

The courier carries a metal box welded shut as a decoy message, but it contains only a corrupted computer disk with random data (noise) recorded on it. Keep this decoy in mind if you are pursued.

The Contact

You are to accompany the courier to the Chrome Dome where she will partake of the local pharmacopeia and meet her contact. Only she knows the password. You don't need to know it because if she has been killed or detained, you will be unable to exchange messages anyway.

The contact at Chrome Dome will let Carolyn know where to meet the courier on Al Amarja, or whether the contact has been called off altogether due to danger of discovery. Again, Carolyn knows the password and you don't need to.

You each have tickets on several flights off the island, so whenever you are ready to leave, space will be waiting for you on a flight.

If Worst Comes to Worst...

If you cannot avoid capture, kill the courier. If possible, use blunt trauma to the right side of the head. Again, if the courier is slain, abandon the mission, but only after applying significant blunt trauma to the right side of her head. In either case, eliminating the body as thoroughly as possible would be even better.

If things get really bad, top priority is getting one of you out alive with whatever information you have.

Now, develop your characters and the GM will start the adventure.

GM INFORMATION

The following information is for the GM only. This adventure uses several settings and characters described earlier in this book. Before running the session, look up E-Z Sleep, Chrome

Dome & Barbara Tellefsen, the Pharaoh quislings & Hektor Kiptavos, low-lifes, the Plaza of Flowers, the Glorious Lords, and the Aries Gang. You may wish to mark the locations of these entries in the text for easy reference during the adventure. (Use paperclips or tape.)

Goal of the Adventure

This adventure is designed to do several things:

- Introduce the players to the rules and give both you and them practice using them.
- Familiarize you and the players with the setting.
- Drop hints as to the three major plots: the Pharaohs, the Throckmorton Device, and Self-Reference.

The Mission

The millionaire patron is a powerful Mover attempting to infiltrate the mystery of the Pharaohs. Allies have identified Pharaoh quislings on Al Amarja, and he is attempting to gain more information about them. Carolyn will both receive and transmit information with the contact on Al Amarja, another Mover courier.

Carolyn

Courier

A young, black woman of very average looks, except that her left arm is limp and flabby. She can put her forearm over her purse for support, in which case the arm does not look unusual at first glance.

Carolyn has been specially prepared to deliver and receive top secret messages. Through a combination of hypnosis, drug therapy, and delicate brain surgery, the part of her brain that controls her left arm has been isolated from the rest of her brain. In effect, she has two brains, a small one that controls her left arm, and the rest, which controls the rest of her body and contains her personality. The arm is therefore much like a parasitic organism living off the nutrients and oxygen provided by the body.

Usually the arm-brain is in neutral, but under certain stimulus it sparks into life. At that time, the left arm becomes active, though it remains under exclusive control of the arm-brain. Once active, the arm-brain can sense the world through the arm (only) and can control the arm as well. Messages in kinesthetic code are tapped onto the arm, and the arm-brain records them, only to repeat them later when given the proper stimulus. By sending messages between couriers who have undergone such treatment, operatives can be sure that few can intercept them. The courier has no idea what the message is (and cannot even feel the message tapped into the skin of the off-arm), and even psychics cannot read the courier's mind (because the arm-brain is too primitive to have actual thoughts).

US black woman, age 30, 160 cm, 56 kg. Left arm limp, but otherwise cultivates an "average" appearance.

Languages: US English, Spanish.

Attack: 3 dice + penalty die, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough constitution)

Armor: 1 point, light, tough fabric under her clothes

Traits

Good Fighter, 3 dice (plus penalty die) — She has good training and reflexes, but her limp arm hampers her.

Excellent Memory, 4 dice — She can memorize in great detail when she sets her mind to it. Very handy for remembering passwords and such.

The Opposition

The Pharaohs suspect something might be up, but their suspicions are not strong enough to warrant much action. They make a token attempt to attack the party. A worse threat is that the Mover circle with whom the PCs are making contact has a Throckmorton operative within it, and he betrays his fellows and tries to intercept the PCs.

BRIEFING

When the players have developed their characters, tell them that the characters have been called into a conference room to meet with their mission director, an older Slavic fellow who goes by the moniker "Ace." The characters are in one of the patron's many expansive residences; this one is somewhere in upper Michigan.

First, have the players describe their characters. Remind them that the PCs have worked together before, so let them familiarize each other with their PCs' traits and personalities as well as appearance.

Then Ace says he is ready to take final questions. He does not know everything, but he may know more about Al Amarja. He will reveal no more information about either the message or the means by which it is transmitted. ("If you knew any more, it would only be dangerous.")

GETTING TO AL AMARJA

The PCs and the courier are given false identification, plane tickets, and directions to E-Z Sleep (where they are to stay) and the Chrome Dome (where initial contact is made). Depending on how much time you want to spend on this adventure, you can either "fast forward" through all of this action and pick up the action in front of the Chrome Dome, or you can take it slow and give the players chance to interact with the dangerous, scary, and bizarre 'Martians.

"Fast forward" script: "You fly into Al Amarja on separate planes. From the air, you see that the island is small, with a single, dead volcano rising in the center. The slopes of the island look sparsely populated, except for a cancerous growth of concrete on the west end of the island. Your plane lands at the airport east of this city, and you take a Total Taxi into the city. The taxi is sleek and black with tinted windows, driven by a young man in a uniform. At your destination, a run-down excuse for a hotel called E-Z Sleep, he hands you

some sheets of paper that brief you on local customs and slang, and he collects his fare: \$75. You check into a room, arrange your things, and eventually meet the others as planned in the lounge. Once everyone is in the lounge, the courier shows you her room key so you can see the number and goes upstairs. You follow her to her room, make sure that no one had any trouble, and set off separately to a place called Chrome Dome, apparently a night club of some kind."

If you want to detail these events, do so at whatever pace you wish. Props mentioned are at the end of this adventure. Note that the script does not describe the airport. You might want to save that exceptional scene for the series proper.

CHROME DOME

(See p. 75)

The PCs enter Chrome Dome. Carolyn goes to the window and orders a dose of "the usual" (blue shock). It comes in a small plastic cup, and she downs it, muffling a scream as it takes effect. Then she enters the bar proper and sits at an unoccupied table and waits for her first contact. The PCs can partake in the shock themselves, or not, as they prefer. (Chrome Dome is an exceedingly boring place for those who are straight.) If they are pretending to be separate from Carolyn, they can seat themselves wherever they wish.

Burnt Attention is playing tonight, with Barbara Tellefsen on the recorder. She is the contact to be made here, and when she sees Carolyn, she puts a very slight rhythm into her improvisation: two tones, then three, then five, seven, eleven, and thirteen. This is the code that Carolyn recognizes, identifying Tellefsen as the contact. PCs not on blue shock will not notice this subtle insertion.

After another ten minutes, the band takes a break and departs backstage. Carolyn waits a while and then follows, ostensibly to meet the band members. The PCs should follow to watch over Carolyn. They have to come up with a good story to get past

the guard and go backstage, but that shouldn't be a problem for trained operatives.

Backstage, Carolyn introduces herself to Tellefsen, and another band member comes up to meet Carolyn as well. The PCs should distract him to be sure that he doesn't see anything "unusual." Carolyn and Barbara chat a bit, and then they shake hands as they part. During this shake, Barbara slips Carolyn a scrap of paper, the information she has come for.

The PCs can loiter and mingle a bit to make it less obvious that they were meeting just Barbara. Allow the players to role-play to their heart's content, and then Carolyn indicates it's time to get back to E-Z Sleep.

ATTACK OF THE LOW-LIFES

Outside Chrome Dome, trouble waits. Hektor Kiptavos, the Pharaoh quising (p. 150), is investigating the PCs in his own special way. He suspects that something might be up, but is not sure what. He has passed word to a pack of desperate low-lives that the PCs are wealthy tourists with plenty of hard cash on their persons, and the low-lives are ready to find out if such is the case.

Waiting outside the bar are several low-lives, at least one per PC. They accost the PCs as soon as they step out of the bar and demand their cash. Unwilling to get into an unnecessary fight, the PCs might comply, but even after emptying their pockets, they find that the low-lives demand more. "Burger, burger, burger," they say in broken English, "there are more in that pockets. Now hand it all over." Undisciplined and greedy, the low-lives launch their attack as soon as the PCs hesitate to pull out more money.

Any PC on blue shock gets a bonus die on attack and defense rolls, but suffers a temporary -5 on hit points (due to increased pain). The hit points come back when the blue shock wears off.

When the fight starts, Carolyn pops the scrap of paper into her

mouth. She will swallow it if the characters are beaten.

Anyone who scans the surroundings may see Kiptavos watching from around the corner of an alleyway, but he retreats if spotted. If the PCs follow him immediately, they are rewarded by seeing the door of a Total Taxi close at the far end of the alley, and then the taxi drives off.

This should be an easy fight for trained operatives. For Kiptavos, it is a cheap way for him to see what he is up against. (For instance, if some of the PCs are pretending to be "bystanders" but help Carolyn, he will see them and reason that they are actually working with her.) For the players, it is a non-threatening opportunity for them to use the combat rules so they won't be swamped when the real things hits later in the adventure.

Be sure to let the PCs recover half of their lost hit points before the next encounter.

Low-Lives

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage with knives

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14

Armor: None

Ugly, disheveled, filthy, ragged excuses for humanity, with both sexes represented. Once they realize they are hopelessly outclassed (which may take a while, as they are not quick of thought), they try to bug out. If captured, they will whimper and beg for mercy, claiming they can take them to the man who sent them. Actually, the best they can do is return to the alleyway where Kiptavos met them, but he, of course, will not be there waiting. They will lie, plead, and scream if they think it can help them get away from their captors. One thing they can do is describe Kiptavos to them, though if more than one low-life is captured, they will provide conflicting details. (Their faculties of perception are not highly trained.)



THE MESSAGE

Once the PCs have the time to see what the message says, this is what they see. This message is the hint to the players about the plot of Self-Reference.

I have transcended the boundaries of reality in which you think you live and have learned many things. First, that a terrible threat is rising against humanity, one that, unknown to you, you are working against. Good luck! Second, that while you may face frightful dangers, you are ever safe and unharmed in the Minds of your Creators, so have courage.

To take the next step in defense of humanity:

Plaza of Flowers, 8:00 pm

A copy of this message that you can photocopy for as a handout for your players is found in the Props section (chapter 9).

AT THE PLAZA OF FLOWERS

(p. 64)

Describe the various people thronging in the square: vendors hawking their goods, prostitutes propositioning tourists, musicians playing for pocket change, drunken partiers, garrulous Sommerites, rowdy pubes, grotesque Satanists, and Aries patrols watching over the crowd. Various GMCs of your choice approach the PCs, offering sex, drugs, popcorn, fantastic entertainment, salvation, or whatever. The PCs should try to keep a low profile when this happens. Play it out as long as the players are having fun.

When the players have had enough light-hearted role-playing and are ready for action, three Satanists accost Carolyn (or, better yet, a good-looking female PC). They make some rather lewd and presumptive sugges-

tions. Their goal is to flaunt their power by making someone feel uncomfortable and vulnerable, so they should be a bit surprised if the PCs make a show of resistance. Very cool and intimidating PCs may be able to make the Satanists back down without a fight, but most likely the Satanists will try to prove their dominance. Offered a streetfight, they'll take it.

If the Satanists can down the PCs, they will gloat and say, "That's what you get for messing with the Glorious Lords. We rule this island, we have the power, we shall conquer the universe, you are nothing but playthings for our amusement," etc. This gloating continues until one of them notices an Aries patrol heading their way, at which point they run for it.

If the Satanists begin to lose the fight, they try to back off. They yell threats, such as "We're Lucifer's Glorious Lords of Passion, burger.

You are all dead. Better write home to mom and say good-bye, because we're coming back for you." Their threats, however, are empty; they don't relish the thought of telling Avan Bloodlord that they were taken out by some burger, so they will not report the PCs to other Satanists.

If the PCs capture any Satanists, the captives will warn the PCs to let them go because they are Glorious Lords and the PCs are going to get slit up bad if they don't let them go. They have no relevant information to reveal in any event.

If the fight lasts a long time, or the characters capture Satanists and interrogate them on the spot, Aries members show up to break up the fight.

After the fight, the PCs should have time to recoup hit points, especially if they use some first aid.

Satanists

Members of Lucifer's Glorious Lords of Passion, not very experienced but eager to prove themselves. Each carries a seklut centipede somewhere on his person. In addition to those listed below, all three have these traits:

Cool, 3 dice — Confident that they are on the winning side both here on earth and in the cosmic conflict, they are hard to intimidate, daunt, or scare. (Unfazed by threats)

Must Prove Themselves, 1 die — They have a hard time resisting taunts and challenges. (Looking for a fight)

Break-Bones

German man, age 23, 175 cm, 78 kg. Pentagram tattooed on forehead, fishhooks piercing left ear.

Attack: 3 dice, club X2 damage

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 21 (brawn)

Armor: 1 point, leathers

Trait

Brawny, 3 dice — The result of seklut poisoning. (Big muscles)

Slag

Korean man, age 21, 169 cm, 60 kg. Pentagram on cheek, ritual scars on other cheek.

Attack: 2 or 3 dice, X2 damage with chain

Defense: 2 or 3 dice.

Hit Points: 14

Armor: 1 point, leathers

Traits

Fast Reflexes, 3 dice — From seklut poisoning. Can be used either for attack or defense, but not both in a single round. (Nervous twitch)

Frogbreath

Italian man, age 24, 172 cm, 68 kg. Pentagram on neck, lightning tattoos around eyes, mottled skin, long hair.

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 21 (unnatural toughness)

Armor: 1 die +1, thick skin and leathers

Trait

Extremely Tough, 3 dice — Effect of seklut poisoning. (Mottled skin)

MAKING CONTACT

After dealing with the Glorious Lords, the PCs make their contact, Louis. He is middle-aged man with his left arm in his pocket. (The arm is like Carolyn's.) He comes up to Carolyn and says, "May I buy you a drink, young lady. The local fare is most *ausgezeichnet*." (That's German for "excellent.") This sentence is his password, and Carolyn responds with the counter-password: "Certainly, but don't think that I mean anything by it." And then the contact says, "It would be enough to hold the hand of such a lovely woman."

The two of them then take a seat at a cafe and order espresso. Haltingly, Louis's hand jerks to life. It feels around the table, searching out its environment with the only sense it

has, touch. Carolyn takes the arm by the wrist, and the hand moves around like an animal caught and confused, but then she places it on her own left forearm, and his hand grabs hold and stills. Then his fingers tap out a quick pattern, and her arm, too, comes to life. It reaches out, and the two hand find each other and interlock. The fingers jerk rapidly, each hand tapping out messages on the skin of the other.

While this is happening, Carolyn makes a show of putting her purse on the table. Her purse contains the metal box, and she intends it as a decoy to anyone who may be watching. The two talk for several minutes while their hands apparently play in innocent romance, they drink their espresso, and the PCs should be watching to make sure that nothing untoward is happening around them.

BETRAYAL

The Movers for whom Louis is working have been betrayed by one of their own number, a fellow named Yamasti Suffil who has come under Throckmorton domination. He knows of this contact, and has shown up with loyal supporters to nab the message. He knows he is betraying the Movers, but his lackeys get all their information from him, so they think that Carolyn and Louis are enemies.

He has been waiting in the crowd to see how the message is transmitted, and he thinks it is in the purse. He had intended to wait until Louis and Carolyn were parted to capture them separately, but seeing a black woman and white man holding hands is too much for his frenzied, fascist mind. He secretly signals his goons to move in, and he sidles in out of the crowd, suddenly appearing by the able where Carolyn and Louis sit. (He is good at covert actions, so the PCs are unlikely to notice him in the crowd until he is at the table.) Be sure to point out that Suffil has no eyebrows.

Once at the table, he says, "Louis, I have a proposition for you."

Louis pretends not to know him, but recognizes him as a fellow Mover.

“Louis,” Suffil continues, “there is no time for subterfuge. Join me now and be victorious and powerful. Refuse my offer, and die here.” Suffil keeps one hand under his jacket, on the handle of his fighting knife.

If this is not provocation enough for the PCs to act, he then turns to Carolyn and says, “There is room enough for you in my plans as well, but no room for you to live as an enemy and informer. Join my cause.”

There’s no time to figure out what Suffil is talking about because at that time, Louis’s men move in closer to Suffil, Suffil’s men recognize them, and a brawl breaks out.

This is some kind of brawl. First of all, the Plaza is crowded, hundreds of people of all description mingling under the bright multi-colored lights of the plaza. Then Suffil and Louis each have their own goons ready to strike, and into this mess the PCs go. On top of this, the Aries gang will join in with relish, ready to put down a fight and kick some butt in the bargain. And who knows? Bystanders might feel it’s time to get their knuckles chafed as well. Don’t worry about what exactly is going on because none of the players will be able to get the whole picture anyway. They won’t even be able to tell the difference between Louis’s and Suffil’s men.

The best strategy is to get to Carolyn, who says she thinks the message is complete and recommends a hasty retreat. By leaving the purse on the table, the PCs may be able to distract Suffil’s men and escape. Better yet, they could make a show of getting the purse, as if it is important, and then drop it. The PCs will have to fight their way into the thick of things to get to Carolyn and then out again to escape. Suffil has a lot of men, but in the confusion they will not be able to converge *en masse* on the PCs, so throw enemies against them at whatever rate suits the pacing of the fight.

Once the Aries gang members start joining in the fray, the PCs should definitely get the hint to bug out. Once they have extricated themselves from the melee, there are various ways they can elude pursuit.

- A Total Taxi driver recognizes that they are on the run and conveniently stops to let them pile in. He assures them that Total Taxi keeps everything strictly confidential, but that there is a \$200 surcharge for dangerous fares. In addition, he expects a decent tip. But for the money the PCs get away without hassle. If they are worried about pursuit, they can pay an extra \$250 for a “Chinese fire drill” (see p. 107).
- They can dodge into a bar or theater of some kind and escape through a random fire exit.
- They might run across a Peace Force squad car. By proving that they are wealthy tourists (i.e. bribery), they can show that they are the kind of people the Peace Force is there to protect. Pursuers may be hesitant to face sub-machine guns, especially if Suffil thinks he has already nabbed the message.
- They can just plain run for it and hide out in an alley somewhere until a Garbage Man comes along and discovers them.

Yamasti Suffil

Throckmortonized Mover

A middle-aged North African with a dusty brown complexion. He has shaved his eyebrows. He wears a dark suit and a light trench coat, under which he carries his weaponry. When he appears, he is obviously upset, distraught by watching Carolyn and Louis holding hands.

North African man, age 41, 168 cm, 68 kg.

Languages: Arabic, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (grim determination)

Armor: 1 die, armor in his jacket

Traits

Good Fighter, 3 dice — Suffil fights with precision that reveals careful practice. (Trim physique)

Covert Operations, 4 dice — He has achieved a position of power in the Movers through extreme subtlety. He can blend into a crowd, shadow enemies, lie smoothly, detect subterfuge, and fake his intentions well. His reasoning, however, is a bit distorted by the effects of the Throckmorton Device. (Not noticed unless he wants to be)

Suffil’s Goons

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with knives

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (toughness)

Armor: 1 point, leathers

Trait

Good Fighters, 3 dice — Suffil has recruited and trained these men to be good fighters and little else. (Tough-looking)

Louis’s Men

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with clubs, X1 damage with throwing knives

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (trained resilience)

Armor: 1 point, leathers

Traits

Good Fighters, 3 dice — They use special clubs, square in cross-section and steel-shod. They also use throwing knives, each equipped with three. (Strong arms)

Aries Gang Members

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with hatchets

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Armor: 1 point, leathers

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice. (Cultivate tough appearance)

Might go Berserk — Bonus die on attack rolls, fearless, +5 hit points.

DENOUEMENT

Carolyn does not want to go back to the Plaza of Flowers to see what went down. She considers the mission complete, provided that she survives and gets back to the US. The PCs should be stealthy in getting to the airport, but Suffil has enough problems with the Movers he's betrayed without worrying about Carolyn. Besides, he may have her purse with the message in it!

Once back in the States, debrief the PCs. They are once again in a conference room with Ace, who asks them for details, what they think it means, any advice they would give to future operatives working on Al Amarja, and so forth. He then critiques their performance. Here is your chance to let the players know what they did wrong and also, more importantly, to praise them for a job well-done so that the session ends on a positive note.

Everybody gets a bonus in their next paycheck.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

It's possible that Suffil has survived the encounter and covered it up, so he may still be working as a Mover but secretly scheming his Throckmorton schemes. He may come into play once you start your series proper.

Intro Adventure Two

THE BODHISATTVA

Bodhisattva: One who achieves enlightenment but returns to the physical plane to help others, rather than leaving for Nirvana.

PLAYER INFORMATION

Read the following to the players, or photocopy it for their use. Also give them the props included with the adventure (found in the Props section).

If you want to use the same PCs that were in "Contact on Al Amarja," you may. If none of the PCs qualifies as a fringe scientist, then invent a fringe scientist GMC who works for the same millionaire. The PCs are hired to guard him at Seversen's convocation. (If you have a new player in the group, or if one of the players lost a PC in the first adventure, that player can invent and run the scientist.)

The Player-Characters

The PCs for this adventure compose a delegation going to Al Amarja to participate in a small, private convocation of fringe scientists. Al Amarja is a not-much-talked-about island in the Mediterranean, south of Italy. At least one PC must be a noteworthy investigator of those sciences that Western science has largely ignored, such as traditional Chinese science, psychic powers, post-quantum physics, extraterrestrial contact, yogi powers, and so forth. The group may have more than one scientist, but PCs can also be guards, assistants, and operatives for the scientists. The players must concoct a good justification to bring tag-along PCs who are not strictly on the guest list. Do the fringe scientists need guards because of death threats from rivals? Are the PCs a team, with each member integral to its overall success? Do they plan to conduct experiments or visit other notable fringe scientists while on the trip?

Since the PCs are in some way connected with weird science, they can have strange abilities, such as psychic powers, extraterrestrial artifacts, weird science contraptions, or mind-over-body abilities. (Remember, though, that these powers are on the fringe of scientific understanding, and the PCs should have something less than complete control over them.

Now doesn't that make life interesting?) These powers should be pseudo-scientific, not strictly supernatural.

PCs should be rational, capable people, but with a touch of the bizarre, of madness, or of the dark.

The Goal

On Al Amarja lives Dr. Chris Seversen, a scientist noted in non-traditional circles for her great breadth of knowledge and insight. She specializes in medicine, psychic powers, and fringe neurology; but she also is quite capable in the broad field of "unaccepted" scientific research. Through legitimate but slightly difficult channels, you have learned that she is in her 30s, single, private, wealthy, and a bit eccentric. She moved to Al Amarja several years ago to be able to conduct her experiments without harassment from closed-minded governments.

Every year, Dr. Seversen holds a private convocation to which she invites a small number of notable fringe scientists. This year, your group is one of the lucky few. Here you will be able to compare notes face-to-face with other open-minded scientists, but your main goal is to impress Dr. Seversen with your knowledge and potential, because she will be awarding twenty-five thousand dollars to one scientist. The only stipulation on this prize money is that you keep Dr. Seversen constantly updated on the results of your research, a small price to pay for those who find grant money hard to come by.

The Invitation

Dr. Seversen has sent you plane tickets, information on the other participants, and some informational material about the island.

Now ask your GM any questions you may have, and develop your characters.

GAME MODERATOR INFORMATION

This one-shot involves a group of fringe scientists who gather to exchange information from their various fields of endeavor, but who face an unknown and unpredictable menace. Emphasis is on mystery, problem-solving, weird science, and intrigue.

Who Dr. Seversen Is

Dr. Chris Seversen lives on Al Amarja, where she can pursue her strange studies in peace and remain in close contact with others of the avant-garde scientific community. Every year she hosts a gathering at her isolated mansion where scientists are invited to come and share their new discoveries. For those who impress Dr. Seversen, funding from her extensive investment accounts is sure to follow; but just being able to share ideas informally with other geniuses and deviants is often reward enough for these struggling and misunderstood oppenheimers.

Dr. Chris Seversen is a myth. Actually, three scientists live at the mansion, working closely together. But they have invented the persona of "Dr. Chris Seversen" and hired an actress to play the part for outsiders. That way, should any attempts be made on the life or freedom of the good doctor, they will target an actress who really doesn't understand what the three scientists are up to. In addition, the three scientists, taking the parts of servants, are free to eavesdrop on the attending scientists and learn what the guests might not reveal in public.

See pp. 157-163 for details.

GUESTS

Dr. Konztanti Horokopolous

*Parapsychologist, Pharaoh
Quisling*

Dr. Horokopolous works for the Pharaohs, though he does not know

the true identity of his employers. The experimental psi-inducing drug they gave him has caused permanent, mild dysfunction of his brain, causing him to be slightly confused. Rather than trust a confused agent with any true secrets, the Pharaohs have an elaborate façade to hide their identity from him. Despite his confusion, however, Dr. Horokopolous has managed to remember that great things await him if he serves his master well, and equally terrible things await him if he betrays them.

He wears a stiletto hidden in calf-sheath.

Greek man, age 44, 166 cm, 60 kg, wrinkled skin, missing teeth, wears dark, rumpled suits and smokes thin, brown cigarettes. He often asks people to repeat what they've said, feigning partial deafness.

Languages: Fluent in Greek, English, and Russian. Speaks broken Italian and German.

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage with knife

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14

Psychic Pool: 8 dice

Traits

Parapsychology, 4 dice — He has a thorough understanding of parapsychological research around the world, particularly in reference to the use of drugs to aid parapsychological powers. (Fluent in psychic vocabulary)

Telepath, 1 die — Dr.

Horokopolous achieved telepathic powers through experimental drugs. They did grant him some measure of telepathy, but they also disorganized his neurons sufficiently that he has a hard time concentrating, and thus has only limited telepathic ability. (Confused)

Confused, 1 die — As a result of above-mentioned drugs, Dr. Horokopolous is slightly confused most of the time. Having lived with this condition for years, he manages to fake lucidity, pretending to be hard of hearing when he needs to do so in order to cover up his lack of comprehension. In new and different sur-

roundings, he is likely to be at a loss. (Asks people to repeat things)

Angela Reyes

Will-Be Inventor of Throckmorton Device

How did she, a lowly graduate student, get invited to this highly selective convocation? That's what she would like to know. Actually, it is the Throckmorton Device, operating in the future, that manipulated events to get Angela Reyes invited.

She is currently studying quantum physics and psychology at the D'Aubainne University. Her current investigations center around the relation between quantum level physics and observer input. Though she has sometimes received criticism for her work's outrageous nature, most of that flak has come from stodgy professors who cannot understand what she's doing.

She knows nothing of the Throckmorton Device and has no idea that, even now, it is shaping her life.

Al Amarjan woman, age 24, 159 cm, 45 kg, thin; well-dressed, with too much make-up and perfume; long, brown hair; and a small face.

Languages: English and a bit of German.

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14

Traits

Guided by the Throckmorton Device — The device's effects guide her in making the discoveries she needs to make in order to invent the device in the first place. It also protects her from harm, usually by subtly influencing neurotransmitters (and thus thoughts) in those around her. Very rarely, and only in dire need, is the device capable of affecting large-scale events, such as deflecting a knife so that it hits her arm instead of her heart. Since this influence all but proves that she will indeed create the Throckmorton Device, it is impossible for her to be killed or to suffer permanent brain damage. ("Lucky")

Fringe Psych & Physics, 1 die — She is good, but could not do what

she does without the Device's subtle aid. (Pre-occupied with weird theories)

Out of Her League, 1 die — She is not on par with the scientists gathered around her, and she knows it. Thus she is nervous, stumbles over words, and overdoes the make-up bit.

Dr. Natasha Gorodnov

The real Dr. Gorodnov is a high-level Mover, but strictly in the R & D department. The Movers have used Dr. Gorodnov's credentials to secure an invitation to Seversen's convention, but they have sent a look-alike operative in her place.

She is carrying a fighting knife, counterfeit Interpol identification, and a packet of heroin.

Russian woman, age 32, 170 cm, 70 kilos; slightly curled, long black hair; dark expression on her face; fake beauty mark just below right eye; large-boned.

Languages: Fluent in Russian, French, and English. Also fluent in German, Chinese, and Arabic, though she pretends not to know these languages (because the real Dr. Gorodnov doesn't).

Attack: 3 dice, X1 damage if unarmed

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21(brawn)

Traits

Excellent at Faking

Phytochemistry, 4 dice — Her Mover superiors have hypnotically implanted knowledge of phytochemistry into her

mind. By folding her hands in front of her, she can access this information, which, coupled with her excellent subterfuge skills, allows her to fake expertise almost perfectly. (Folds hands when she speaks)

Good Fighter, 3 dice — She has been trained in a casual mix of fighting styles, emphasizing strikes to take advantage of her strength. (In good shape)

Strong, 3 dice — She has a sturdy and well-trained body. (Sturdy)

Good at Illicit Investigations, 3 dice — Picking locks, breaking and entering, searching for clues, leaving no fingerprints, etc. (Has small bag of burglar's tools)



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

Cast

Cast has determined that this universe is a sub-system in a larger, more real, universe. The meta-universe, with which he has sometimes made contact, can cause events in this one; whereas, he believes, this universe can have no causal effect on the greater meta-universe. The meta-universe that Cast has contacted, of course, is the real world of you and your players.

Cast claims that his genius and insights come from smoking marijuana. In fact, this might be the case. While stoned he produces some crazy and downright stupid ideas, but while sober he works so hard to justify those “insights” that he actually does come up with good work (even if his original “insight” is forgotten).

As proof of his ability, Cast has brought along an object taken from a visit to the meta-universe. This object can be anything that you, the GM have readily available, such as a pen, a comb, or a crushed aluminum can. Regardless of its nature, it has some strange properties: specifically, it is not bound by the laws of physics as known in the “sub-universe.” It appears or disappears at random, floats in the air, becomes impossible to move, and so forth.

He has the meta-universe object in a zip-lock bag, an ounce of pot, a plastic bag of tobacco, cigarette paper, lighters, a switchblade, an overdue library book from the University of Chicago library (a collection of Beat poetry), and a traveling magnetic backgammon set.

US white man, age 22, 179 cm, 63 kg, unkempt sandy blond hair, acne, silly grin, scrawny body, smokes marijuana/tobacco mix in hand-rolled cigarettes.

Languages: US English

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage with switchblade

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 12

Traits

Fringe Cosmology, 2 dice — Cast is able to accept and assimilate alternate paradigms and hypotheses to

explain reality. While this trait makes him boring at parties, he has turned these insights into practical (or at least dramatic) advances in the understanding of the universe. When asked what the meta-universe is like, he says “kind of like a suburb, or maybe a weird kind of store where they sell strange books and little things.” (Boring at parties)

Excellent Backgammon Player, 5 dice — Plays fast and very well. (Has travelling magnetic backgammon set)

Psychologically Addicted to Marijuana — He has convinced himself that he cannot have valuable insights without getting stoned, so if deprived of pot, he will indeed cease being creative. (Bloodshot eyes)

Herr Doktor Professor Otto Unger

Rare Greek texts have led Dr. Unger to believe that Al Amarja was once home to an ancient advanced civilization (the glugs). He hopes the Dr. Seversen will be especially interested in funding an archaeological expedition on her own island.

German man, age 61, 175 cm, 83 kg, balding, graying black hair and beard, portly (but not obese), wears conservative suits, with vests; smokes a meerschaum.

Languages: German, Ancient Greek, Latin, English. Also broken French.

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 1 die (an easy target)

Hit Points: 20 (bulk)

Traits

Excellent Archaeologist, 4 dice — Though his preference for exceedingly obscure and difficult subject matter has kept him from gaining popular recognition, he is a superb archaeologist and anthropologist. (Can speak on any archaeological topic)

Big and Slow, 1 die — Age and his wife’s exceptional strudels have not been kind to Herr Doktor Professor. (Portly)

Signe Oleson

Not present... yet.

ORDER OF EVENTS**Open Brunch**

When the characters arrive, Samson ushers them into the Dining Room where a smorgasbord brunch is being served. If they decide to come early, then few if any of the other guests are there. If they are later, then the other guests (minus Signe Oleson) are already seated and eating.

Use the brunch to describe the various GMCs and give the PCs hints as to the others’ interests and personalities. The GMCs doubtless question the PCs as well as to their studies and discoveries.

Signe Oleson, the planar cosmologist, does not show up. Her luggage, however, does. A Total Taxi driver drops off two large, bulging, leather suitcases and a travel bag. He says that the owner, Dr. Signe Oleson, had made other arrangements to arrive.

Dr. Seversen explains that Dr. Oleson has been exploring the relation between the material world and other, parallel planes of existence. Perhaps, she suggests, Dr. Oleson will have plenty to discuss with Cast, when she arrives.

Unfortunately, when Dr. Oleson does finally arrive, it is in a manner which makes the thought of quiet discussion obsolete; see below.

Unstructured Time

After brunch, the guests are invited to wander the grounds, enjoy the Mediterranean sun, and get to know each other. Dr. Seversen and the “servants” wander a bit as well, so that one of them is usually within earshot of the guests. (Eavesdropping? No, they just want to make sure that everyone’s having a good time.)

The PCs may make use of the pool (swimsuits optional), the shuffleboard court, an elaborate go table in a gazebo, or the current copy of *Al Amarja Today*.

If the PCs decide to talk to Cast, he shows them his meta-universal object (though he might not be able to

find or control it). When he shows them the object, produce the actual item and hand it to the players. If the item appears or disappears suddenly, throw it onto the table or take it away, as appropriate.

This time is a good time for the PCs to get to know Angela Reyes. (The better they know her, the more eager they will be to defend her later.) While she is no beauty or charmer, if there's another slightly nerdy scientist among the PCs, it might be a match made in heaven.

Don't let this unstructured time bog down. Have GMCs invite PCs to games or start up conversations with them. When the action slows, summarize the remainder of the afternoon's events and proceed to the supper.

Supper

Dr. Seversen offers a large meal in seven courses to her guests, with plenty of time to eat slowly, digest, and keep eating. In addition to the soup, salad, beef, yams, peas, spaghetti, and cake, there is plenty of red wine and fresh bread for all.

One place setting goes unused, that which was reserved for Dr. Oleson.

Unless the PCs take the initiative, Dr. Seversen leads the conversation, making sure that everyone is familiar with everyone else's work. She also explains her latest project: identifying and accurately measuring psychic energy.

The conversation can cover movies, art, religion, politics, science, or anything. Again, if the role-playing bogs down, summarize the meal and move directly to the individual conferences with Dr. Seversen.

Individual Conferences

After dinner, Dr. Seversen talks privately with each guest (or with a group, if the PCs include more than one scientist). This conference is a main determiner of whom she will decide to fund. She intends to speak with the guests in the following order:

- Dr. Horokopolous

- Angela Reyes
- PCs
- Dr. Unger
- Dr. Gorodnov
- Cast

Unfortunately, Dr. Oleson arrives on her mission to attack Reyes and interrupts them. She arrives while Dr. Unger is talking to Dr. Seversen.

First, determine what the PCs do while Dr. Horokopolous and then Angela Reyes talk to Dr. Seversen. They might want to play games, rest, chat with other guests, or tour the grounds again.

While Horokopolous is in his interview, Gorodnov enters his room and searches for clues as to his identity. (She suspects he is a Pharaoh quising and wants to gain evidence as to whether this is the case.) PCs may happen by as she enters or leaves, or they may find her while she is actually searching his bags. If she is discovered in the act, she flashes her Interpol identification, shows them the heroin she "found" in his bags (actually hers), and swears them to secrecy until the investigation is complete.

Then role-play Dr. Seversen's interview. She asks them what projects they are working on, what success they have met with to date, what they would do with \$25,000, and so forth.

After their interview, the PCs can do what they want, but arrange to have them with or near Reyes. They should be in the house or near enough to duck in so that Oleson is not at full strength. At this point, the action really starts.

Oleson Attacks

Flying through the air at high speed, Oleson enters the house through a second story wall and searches the house for Reyes. Her passage through the psi-wires sets off an alarm in Seversen's room and the guardhouse. Additionally, guests may see her and scream or call for assistance.

The guards rush through the house while Seversen speaks over the intercom. "Attention. Security

reports a breach. Guests are to move immediately to the dining room. Move immediately to the dining room. If you see intruders, do not attempt to stop them. Guards are currently conducting a sweep of the building. Please move immediately to the dining room." Angela Reyes, visibly scared, should at least be close enough to the PCs to find them and accompany them toward the dining room.

One of the guards has indeed found the intruder, and Oleson has possessed him. As the PCs (with Angela Reyes) are heading to the dining room (or waiting there, if they were already there) a guard with a throwing knife and a club confronts them, either turning a corner or entering their room through a doorway. Characters have a chance to notice two things: that the guard seems a little out of sorts, and that an erratic light from nearby is lighting him from behind or to the side. Without saying a word, the guard then throws the knife and closes to fight with his club. Oleson is too disoriented to pick Reyes out from a crowd, so she simply commands the guard to attack.

Once the guard attacks, the strange light fades out. That was Oleson. The effort of penetrating the barrier, searching the house, and possessing the guard has worn her out. Since she is not present to direct the guard, he will continue with his last command, "Kill them."

Each round that the guard attacks the PCs he gets to roll to get out from under possession. Assume that Oleson rolled a 12 to possess him. Each round, that number effectively drops by one, and he gets another roll (2 dice) to resist. When he finally breaks clear, he suddenly stops fighting and merely tries to defend himself. He is without a clue as to what has been going on.

If you want to confuse things more, other guards or guests can show up during the fight. Seeing a guard fighting the PCs, they may well assume that the PCs are the ones who tripped the alarm and help the possessed guard.

Once the guard recovers from the possession, he says he doesn't know what just happened, but that everyone should go to the dining room where he can tell Dr. Seversen what has happened.

In the dining room, he explains that a ghostly, shimmering form came in front of him, and he felt himself go woozy. The next thing he remembers, the PCs were fighting or holding him. He can describe the thing vaguely, but that's about all.

"Does anyone know anything about this?" demands Dr. Seversen. If the PCs' scientific specialty has anything to do with energy beings, she might insist that the PCs tell what they know (not much). Seversen and the guests ask whether the PCs and any guests who were with them, have any reason to believe that someone is after them. Ad lib general confusion and paranoia.

The scientists decide that the first order of business is to study the being in any way they can. None of them are scared enough to flee. Dr. Seversen takes the formerly-possessed guard off to her labs where she (accompanied by Suni, Samson, and Sarah) scan his mind for anomalies, left-over energies, and so forth. She allows no one to accompany them, and guards see to it that no one spies on them. Anyone with extraordinary spying abilities capable of observing Dr. Seversen in action may be surprised to see that the servants do the examining while "Dr. Seversen" asks them for guidance in what to do next.

The PCs are free to examine the site of the attack for energy traces and what-have-you. If any of them have skills related to the astral plane, they may be able to determine that the being was an semi-material astral body, but they can't learn much else without more data.

Dr. Seversen announces that she has been unable to determine anything meaningful from the possessed guard. She recommends that the scientists split up and keep an eye on the house through the night, hoping that the entity returns, so that it can be observed more carefully. This set-up gives the opportunity for the PCs to

roam at will, possibly encountering and talking to the other guests. During this time, Dr. Horokopolous or Dr. Gorodnov may try to search the PCs' rooms for clues that would connect them with the entity. Angela Reyes, impressed with the way the PCs handled the possessed guard, wants to stay with them for her own protection.

From this point on, play the adventure by ear. Ideally, the plot should run such that the thing returns, makes itself visible, and launches a stronger attack, only to leave again when things go bad.

If characters try to leave, Oleson prevents them, either through a show of force, or by actually destroying the characters or their cars.

If anyone is seriously wounded by Oleson, Samson and Seversen take her to Samson's lab, where they put him under and Samson performs whatever medical procedures are necessary to cure or at least stabilize him.

Eventually, the PCs should find a way to stop the thing. If they have some competence in matters astral, they could pool their resources with Dr. Seversen's in hopes of creating a cage or weapon to use against the thing. If desperate, they may try Cast's meta-universal item (which can have whatever effect satisfies the needs of the story). A more obvious answer is to look in Dr. Oleson's luggage. If you want to prompt them, have them discover Dr. Gorodnov or Dr. Horokopolous going through it. Caught in the act, the operative says that he or she was only trying to gain information that could be helpful against the entity, though of course it was strictly inside information that the good doctor was after.

The story concludes when, somehow, Oleson is captured, destroyed, or driven off. Once Oleson is dealt with, Dr. Seversen continues with the convocation to the extent possible, but conflicts between Gorodnov and Horokopolous, wounds received by those who faced Oleson, and other circumstances may lead Seversen to cancel the convocation. If the PCs performed heroically, she may simply decide to award them this year's grant.

If the PCs find a way to communicate with Oleson, they may learn that something very dangerous is happening on the island, but no details. Don't let the cat out of the bag just yet.

DEFEATING THE "BODHISATTVA"

Cast's Meta-Universal Item — Desperate PCs may try to use the item that Cast took from his visit to the "meta-universe." Since this item follows the laws of the real world rather than the game world, you can have anything you want happen. If the PCs use it right away and its success would ruin the plot, it fails. If the PCs are ingenious in their application of the device or if it's their last hope, then by all means, let it succeed in dissipating Oleson and sending her to some much more distant plane.

Investigating Dr. Oleson's Equipment — In her bulging suitcases, Dr. Seversen has various items of equipment that can help in figuring out the mystery. These include:

- A hand-held mirror in a platinum frame that can somewhat see into the astral plane. Viewed in its reflection, Dr. Oleson appears to be a naked, angry, sixty-five year old Norwegian woman floating in the air.
- A drug that Oleson thought could send one into the astral plane, but actually it's a mix of depressants and hallucinogens, so it causes sleep and weird dreams.
- A dagger that can harm para-physical astral beings. It cannot hurt fully astral beings, such as psychovores. It does X3 damage to Oleson.
- A wand that can send bolts of energy that disrupt (damage) para-physical astral creatures. It must somehow be attuned to the user, so hope that one of the PCs at least has some kind of psychic power that could conceivably attune it. Each blast from the wand does 1 die of damage for each die from the user's Psychic Pool, up to 3 dice (and the user

can use up to 3 extra dice as bonus dice, as normal for a fringe power).

- Various useless items.

LEAVING THE HOUSE

Dr. Seversen has surrounded her house with psychically active filaments vibrating at dilatory frequencies, setting up an interference pattern that weakens Dr. Oleson. (The stats given above reflect this interference.) Outside the house, she is capable of causing much more damage with much greater accuracy. Ad lib her abilities to make it clear to the PCs that leaving the house would be entirely dangerous.

DR. OLESON'S STORY

When Dr. Oleson arrived on Al Amarja, she found out about wings and bought some. With this boost, Oleson decided to give astral shifting one last good try before heading to the convocation. She arranged to have her bags sent to Dr. Seversen's home, and hoped to be able to arrive there herself through astral projection. (Now that would be a dramatic arrival!) The wings worked, though it may have been Dr. Oleson's belief in the drug, rather than the drug itself, that allowed her to travel astrally.

When Dr. Oleson arrived on the astral plane, disincorporating her body in the process, she there learned of the Throckmorton Device. While she is not clear on exactly what it is doing, she believes it to be evil, and recognizes young Angela Reyes as the key to its operations. Filled with a newfound sense of mission, she intends to attack and destroy Reyes while she is at the convocation. The adventure hinges on these attacks, and on the PCs' attempts to defend Reyes and themselves from Dr. Oleson, the "Bodhisattva."

Signe Oleson

The "Bodhisattva"

Dr. Oleson has succeeded in her life's work. She has shifted her body to the astral plane. She can still take form in the material plane, but only as a vaguely humanoid shape of coruscating yellow energy. New to the astral plane and to her new body, she often finds it difficult to find her way about the material world.

Confused by her new body and its way of interacting with the physical world, Dr. Oleson is unable to tell exactly who she should be attacking. Use this erratic nature to move the plot along and to maintain suspense. (For example, she does not launch all her attacks at Reyes, so Reyes is unlikely to be killed, and the PCs are unlikely to know just who the thing is after.)

Attacks: energy blast, telekinesis, possession (see below)

Defense: 3 dice, but immune to most attacks

Astral Pool: 25 dice

Astral Powers

Energy Blast, 3 dice — Sends an erratic beam of disruptive energy from her astral body at a target. If she tries to strike more than one target simultaneously, she must divide her dice among the targets, rolling separately for each. The number of dice rolled is the attack roll, and it can only be avoided by psychic shields, leaping out of the way, taking cover, and so on. (Otherwise roll 2 dice for the target's innate resistance to non-material attacks.) The beam does X2 damage.

Possession, 3 dice — Forces the astral body to obey orders, which the physical body then imitates on the material plane. The possessed person, however, does not have any more ability to navigate the physical plane than does Oleson herself. The possessed may bump into furniture, babble, and generally act confused. Each time the possessed character does some action that is against his nature (such as attacking an acquaintance), the target gets another resistance roll vs. the original roll that Oleson made to possess the target. Each successive resistance roll, however, reduces the possession roll by 1. Oleson can only possess one person at a time. Since

the motivations for the actions of the possessed person come from the astral plane without being processed as normal through the central processing bio-unit (brain), nothing that happens during possession is fed into long-term memory. The possessed can remember what happened just a few seconds previously, but then irrevocably forgets it (like when you suddenly wake up from a dream and it slips completely from your mind).

Horokopolous gets only 1 die to resist possession because his neurons are easy to manipulate. Reyes gets 4 dice because the Throckmorton Device protects her, and even if possessed, the Device will free her if she is about to kill herself.

Telekinesis, 3 dice — Using forces on the astral plane, Oleson can cause objects to break the laws of physics, usually with such gross actions as hurling candlesticks through the air and so forth.

Para-Physical Presence, 1 die — Merely interacting with the physical plane costs Oleson a die from her Astral Pool every round. For flavor or detail, you can roll a die each round to see how "material" and "stable" her energy-form appears.

FOLLOW-UP

Those PCs who might wish to investigate Dr. Oleson can find that she was checked into Room 313 at Cesar's Hotel. She did not check out, nor did she pay past Thursday night. When employees entered the room, they found the room key; a circle of red powder on the floor; and a plain, non-magical wooden wand. They found no personal effects because Oleson had packed everything and sent it to Seversen's via Total Taxi. Her disappearance is a complete mystery, but the Bokundi sisters think she just skipped out without bothering to drop off the key.

Depending on how the attack was resolved, Oleson may be able to return some day and continue her attack on Reyes. Perhaps she will have astral allies; perhaps the players will, by then, know just how dangerous Reyes really is.

Intro Adventure Three

PARTY ON
AL AMARJA

This adventure allows the players to explore and enjoy the thrills of the Edge's nightlife. The GM gets a chance to wing an adventure and invent a fast-paced, unpredictable plot; and the players get a chance to go wild.

If you want to use PCs from a previous intro adventure, just assume that they are on vacation and have a generous expense account that they can drain at will.

PLAYER
INFORMATION

The Player Characters

The PCs are friends, co-workers, or family, but other than that, they could be anyone: a group of avant-garde artists, a family with questionable genetic components, the recently reunited apprentices of a would-be sorcerer, jet-set dilettantes who have gotten to know each other at ritzy resorts around the world, the characters of a hack writer who were brought to life by extraordinary means, dimension-hopping tourists who have heard the Al Amarja is the *only* place to party, an unsuspecting family on vacation (whose travel agent has a mean sense of humor), anything. Alternately, the PCs might have just met while on Al Amarja, or be about to meet as the action starts. In any event, weirdness and a desire to enjoy yourself is required.

Feel free to make the PCs wealthy or famous or both, but don't feel obliged to do so.

The Session

This session depicts your vacation on Al Amarja. You have come to see the sights, enjoy the night life, relax, and party as only Al Amarjans can party. Individual characters may (and should)



Illustration by Eric Hotz

have private motivations and goals, perhaps aimed at other PCs, but the group as a whole need not have a purpose.

GM INFORMATION

This adventure is a chance for the players to get wild and for you to practice winging it. Since you will not have to worry about the future plot implications of this session, you can wing it with confidence. Nothing is too wild.

Start the PCs off coming into the Edge. They can stay anywhere they choose, though many natives will recommend Cesar's. Then let them do whatever they want: take a tour of the city, visit bars and nightclubs, talk to people. Depending on what the players are looking for, they may find sex, drugs, rock and roll, violence, weirdness, or the Secret of the Universe. If the PCs take interest in any given GMC or event, invent a short plot behind it in which they can take part.

CONFLICTS

The heart of drama is conflict. The players may well provide their own conflicts in terms of inter-PC struggles. On runs like this, I've seen PCs beat each other up, spike each others' drinks (and not with alcohol), slander each other, and make each other look

like fools. If you want to heighten the fun, here are a few other conflicts the PCs might face:

Finding a hot night spot. Force them to look around. Chrome Dome may be too boring, Sad Mary's might be hosting a private party, Sequins might not let them in. Let the PCs wander around looking for a place where they fit in.

Winning favors. An attractive GMC may spur two or more PCs to fight for his or her attention. The approval sought need not be sexual; an impressive GMC may simply come to like one PC and disdain another.

Brawls. If the PCs are spoiling for a fight, they'll find one. Fun-loving, light-hearted, and energetic; not lethal. Encourage the PCs to do all those maneuvers you see in movies, such as smashing a chair over someone's back, throwing someone through a window, and knocking someone down a flight of stairs.

Helping the "innocent." The PCs may have opportunity to intervene in various conflicts between GMCs.

— Someone is being chased by a gang of pubes.

— Someone is being followed and asks the helpful-looking PCs to help him lose his pursuers.

— Someone has an important message to deliver but has to run to the hospital, so could the PCs please wait here until so-and-so arrives, then give her this package?

Contests. The PCs may get caught up in a spontaneous contest of distance-spitting, knife-throwing, beauty (or wet t-shirts), arm-wrestling, drinking (or other drug-taking), puzzle-solving, or anything else you think will engage the PCs.

GOOD, CLEAN FUN

Besides conflicts, the players might enjoy just experiencing what there is to experience in the Edge.

Entertainers. Street singers, performance artists and assorted other entertainers may be worth some detail.

Strange People. Satanists, zeroes, metaphysical blatherers, secretive agents, mutants, and other GMCs are worth some time just as interesting background pieces.

Unusual experiences. Use of communion or other drugs, temporary portals into alternate universes, time distortions, and other unusual experiences may amuse your players.

GMCS

There are lots of GMCs that may be interesting for this run. If you are confident in running things completely off the cuff, invent or look up GMCs depending entirely on the actions of the PCs. It may be easier for you, however, to select a few GMCs that you want to inflict on the PCs. Below are some recommendations. Look them over before the game session and put bookmarks in the pages to which you will want to refer so that you will be able to find them easily.

Cut-Ups. One or more Cut-Ups may be out enjoying the nightlife, or working some chaotic scheme against the Control Freaks.

Frat Boys and Sorority Girls. The extreme stereotypes of the Alphas (p. 109), Deltas (p. 118), Sigma Eps (p. 164), and Sigma Oms (p. 164) make them ideal for a light-hearted adventure (though the threat of danger need never be far behind).

Pharaoh. Prem K. Sharma (p. 150) is on the island for official business, and the PCs stumble across him. He may make quite an impression on the PCs; and if they bother him, he might tell them to “go fly a kite” (and when Sharma tells you to do something, you do it).

Self-Reference GMC. This could be anyone from the previous two intro adventures, preferably someone the players liked (or like to hate). The GMC mistakes the PCs for the PCs that the players were playing in the appropriate intro adventure. For example, Dr. Seversen might be enjoying a night on the town when she runs into the PCs. She approaches them and talks to them as if they were the PCs that those players were playing in “The Bodhisattva.” The players might realize what is going on, but the PCs will be completely in the dark. Soon enough Dr. Seversen recognizes her mistake and apologizes, obviously a bit confused

herself. Just a bit of weirdness to keep the PCs guessing.

Sommerites. Any episode about partying ought to include the Sommerites (p. 165), don’t you think?

EVENTS

Below are some of the things that could happen during the PCs’ night on the town. The PCs may cause other events that are just as interesting.

Throckmorton Attack. The PCs witness someone touched by the Throckmorton Device beating up a homosexual, intellectual, prostitute, tattoo artist or other “vile” sort of person. The PCs can intervene, chase the attacker, help and befriend the victim, or whatever they wish. If they talk to the beating victim, he explains that the attacker used to be a friend of his, and he doesn’t know what provoked the attack. The victim may thank the PCs for help by inviting them to a private party (see below).

Private Party. The PCs get invited to a party of Satanists, Sommerites, Aries warriors, or just plain hedonists. Make it as wild as the PCs wish.

Separated and Lost. The PCs get separated somehow and may (or



Illustration by Eric Hotz

may not) devote some time to looking for each other. Of course coincidences conspire to keep them apart. Letting the PCs get mugged, and thus separated from their cash, ID, room keys, and other sources of security, may make the night on the town much more interesting. If you want to experiment with the “plot cutting” device described by Robin Laws in “The Literary Edge” (p. 192), this session would be an ideal time to do so.

Tick off the Wrong People. The PCs tick off the Aries Gang, the Glorious Lords, the Dog-Faces, or some other violent group, and for the rest of the adventure they have to keep an eye out for members of that gang who have come looking for them. Sometimes huge numbers of the gang come by, and the PCs must flee or hide. Other times a few gang members come by, and the PCs have the opportunity to get the drop on them.

CONCLUSION

See to it that the episode comes to a conclusion. Each PC may reach a separate conclusion, good or bad (e.g., gets the girl, lands in the slammer, sent as an unwilling volunteer into orbit on an experimental rocket, finds his way home, makes off with the big briefcase of cash, etc.). Or the group as a whole may come to conclusion, if appropriate.

MAJOR PLOTS

Three major plots are unfolding on Al Amarja. You can handle them in a variety of ways.

- Use any one of them as the focal point of play, the events that the PCs get involved in and follow to their resolution. Let the other two fade into the background and disappear, or simply be resolved “off-stage.”

- Combine the plots so that they are inter-related and the PCs must resolve the whole mess.
- Have the PCs take on the plots one at a time.
- Have them all be sidelines to a plot you develop yourself.

THE THROCKMORTON DEVICE

or, *The Will to Power*

Ten years from when play begins, a man named Clyde Throckmorton will oversee the design of a weird science device that causes human beings to fall into limited behavior patterns, such as obeying authority, hating deviants, and worshiping Clyde Throckmorton as the worthy ruler of the world. If not stopped, in ten years Clyde Throckmorton will establish himself as the ruler of the world, turning the entire place into a fascist state where all human activity is judged by how well it serves the government (i.e., Clyde Throckmorton).

One bizarre aspect of the machine is that its effects travel through time as well as space. The closer one is to the device in space and time, the stronger the effect. Even now on Al Amarja (where the device will begin operation), some susceptible minds are being bent to its commands (see *Throckmorton Operatives*, p. 165). As time goes by, more people will fall prey to this device, and their behavior will be more and more tightly controlled.

In this plot, the PCs discover what’s going on and put a stop to it, provided they choose not to ally with Throckmorton so as to get good positions in the “New World Order” to come.

The Present Situation

At present, no one knows what’s up, not even Clyde Throckmorton.

- Clyde Throckmorton is an exterminator working on Al Amarja and dreaming of world conquest.

- Angela Reyes (p. 86), the scientist who will invent the device, is taking advanced physics and psychology courses at the D’Aubainne University, and starting to correspond with the fringe scientists whose research interests her.
- Throckmorton Operatives (p. 165) have begun to appear on the island, but they have little to no organization.

As Events Progress

- “Clyde” becomes a popular name for newborn boys, and “Clydette” for girls.
- Casually affected citizens begin criticizing the vices of others (though rarely curbing their own) and cooperating with the Peace Force.
- Throckmorton operatives multiply. The machine is especially effective against certain types of people. This is your series, so you choose the qualities of the easily-affected and the resistant yourself. For example, skin color, mental attitude, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, faith, age, medical history, taste in clothes, social status, drug use, mental health, and physique might all be correlated with resistance to or susceptibility to the device. Perhaps lesbians are all but immune while those who favor country music and have never used psychedelics are the first to succumb. Why? Who knows; the device works on the unpredictable quantum level, so have fun with it.
- Throckmorton Operatives begin assassinating people who do not fit into Throckmorton’s New World Order. Sometimes this means a carefully planned hit against a charismatic anarchist, but usually it involves beating the hell out of artists, homosexuals, drug users, prostitutes, writers, intellectuals, and other deviants. They also begin compiling data on citizens’ private lives, though they have, as of yet, no particular

reason to do so. The operatives begin organizing spontaneously.

- Throckmorton rises in the extermination business until he has a monopoly on the trade on Al Amarja. He then expands into other areas of business, winning people over to his side with uncanny ease. After his rapid success, he becomes a renowned public figure with a daily opinion hour on KRAK radio. Other media around the world begin broadcasting his messages, which are taken in some circles as pearls of incredible wisdom and common sense.
- Over years of troubled research, Angela Reyes develops the Throckmorton Device, guided by avant-garde quantum physics and bizarre theories as to the nature of the human mind within the brain. (Briefly, neurotransmitters work in such small quantities and over such small distances that unpredictable quantum effects have more influence than Newtonian cause-and-effect laws. The device works on the quantum level, altering the probabilities of certain interactions and thereby dominating human will, consciousness, and perception.) Reyes gets generous aid from Throckmorton.
- Fighting within and among secret societies escalates, sometimes bringing underground conflicts into the open. Some societies act against the growing Throckmorton operatives, others support the ephemeral movement, while most are locked in bitter internal warfare between the dominated and the free.

What the PCs Can Do

- Join Throckmorton, but that would be too easy.
- Attack the growing organization of Throckmorton operatives. Individually, they are not hard to deal with, but since they receive their guidance from the future, not from each other, tracing them to their leader is well-

nigh impossible. The PCs might find unusual allies in their struggle, such as the Mr. Le Thuys.

- Stave off operative attacks. The PCs or their friends are likely to fall into some category of “unwanted” within the Throckmorton *weltanschauung*, and the operatives will be out to get them.
- Assist Angela Reyes in her research. She gains money and connections through Throckmorton. Perhaps she needs some intellectual spies to steal valuable information from a paranoid oppenheimer on the island. It looks like a routine “hired sword” adventure, but later on, when the PCs find out Reyes’ role in the domination of the world, they’ll kick themselves. (And they might have gained useful information through association with her that they can later use to cause her downfall.)
- Get taken over. The Throckmorton Device begins affecting the PCs. They have to find a cure, antidote, or countermeasure fast. The cure might be unique (and thus useable only by the PCs and few others) or universal (and thus a potential solution to the Throckmorton threat).

Resolution

In ten years, Throckmorton’s operatives have infiltrated every government, secret society, and significant corporation. People all over the world are calling for “law and order.” The population is marked by censorship, bigotry, intolerance, and the assumption that what others do is your business. In many countries, leaders have assumed more and more power as the populace willingly cedes its liberties to authority, but none of these interim tyrants will last once the switch is flipped and Throckmorton reveals himself to the world.

With major enemies already eliminated and sensitive data stockpiled, Clyde Throckmorton has Reyes turn on her machine. Within weeks, five billion grovelling people are over-

joyed to accept Throckmorton as rightful world dictator.

At least that’s what happens if the PCs don’t do something about it. Here’s what they can do.

- Assassinate Throckmorton. Difficult, because by the time the PCs figure out who he is (or is going to be), he will have a powerful information and personal protection system in place, including infiltrators in most secret societies. Also, the Device is on his side.
- Assassinate Reyes. Impossible. Since she is going to build the device, and we know that the device will be built, assassinating her, if possible at all, might send the world into oscillation between two mutually exclusive timelines, the vibrations shaking the fabric of reality and causing the destruction of the universe as we know it.
- Convert Throckmorton. In this scenario, the Throckmorton device is susceptible to the very quantum brain activity that it controls, and it is imprinted on Throckmorton. Thus, it does not, by nature, cause fascism. Instead, it merely gives Throckmorton what he wants, which, in his case, is complete domination of the world. (If this scenario is true, the device may actually *cause* deviance within this society, so that Throckmorton can have enemies to catch and torment.) If the PCs can convince Throckmorton that anarchy, libertarianism, enlightened socialism, or hippie-style communism is really the best thing, the device will follow his will and dominate the world in this new way. But how do you convince the guy?
- Foul up the device. The cleanest resolution is to infiltrate Reyes’s research team and figure a way to jimmy the device so that it only works backwards in time, and self-destructs within two seconds of full operation. That way the terror ends without strange time-paradoxes creeping up (see

“Assassinate Reyes”). Maybe the players can come up with other ways to jury rig the machine.

- Antidote. The PCs can develop (or protect someone else while they develop) a device that has the opposite effect. The end result could be very interesting: anarchy sweeps the planet and human beings lose all respect for worldly authority and stop judging their neighbors.
- Get the hell out. Friendly extraterrestrials or extra-planar beings may offer the PCs an exile to another place far from the doomed earth.
- Devils in Throckmorton’s “Eden.” The machine works, but a select few are unaffected, the PCs among them. The few freedom fighters left must find a way to instill the desire for freedom and self-expression in the mind-numbed populace. The PCs have initiative, wits, intelligence, imagination, and artistic sensibilities to fight the overwhelming firepower of Throckmorton’s secret service.

THE PHARAOHS RISE

Millennia ago, the Pharaohs oversaw the destruction of the true human (Glug) race and the rise of the mutant humans (us). Since then they have been manipulating human society behind the scenes, getting us to develop super-technology that they can use to take to the stars and conquer the galaxy. The time has come for them to re-assert control over the human mutants and make them once again into a race of warrior-slaves.

The Present Situation

The Pharaohs have what they need to accomplish their tasks:

- Pirated intergalactic technology from captured UFOs.
- Loyal human quislings that work for them in betrayal of humankind.

- Huge amounts of military and financial power held either directly by them or by their faithful underlings.

Working against them are the following factors:

- Pharaohs are old, and their mental limits do not encompass modern technology, art, politics, science, or any other sophisticated human developments. Thousands of years ago, as children, they developed certain patterns of understanding the world, and these basic premises cannot change. They can never learn to grasp modern physics, laugh at modern humor, understand 20th century theology, or dance to rock and roll. That’s why they need human quislings to do the interpreting for them.
- The Movers have a great deal of power without any centralized authority figure. The Pharaohs can dominate any government, religion, or corporation that has a strict hierarchy, but they cannot handle the continual mind games of the Movers and have no hope of truly controlling them. In fact, the Movers may well be able to fool the Pharaohs into thinking that they (the Pharaohs) are in control.
- Over the millennia, we human mutants have developed a strong sense of individual liberty, something foreign to the mind-sets of the Pharaohs. They will find it somewhat more difficult to dominate humanity than they would have three thousand years ago.

The Plot Progresses

- The United Nations (controlled by international bankers who are unwittingly under Pharaoh domination) gains more and more power, the better for all of humanity to be controlled. It raises a standing army with the best technology available in the world. Puppet leaders come to power through elections and coups throughout the world. They quickly sign treaties to

uphold the growing power of the United Nations.

- Secret factories around the world begin producing interstellar fighting craft for use when the conquest of the universe is to begin.

What the PCs can do:

- Find out what is being built in those secret factories.
- Capture an Aphid for study, possibly a necessary step in finding a way to combat the Pharaohs.
- Assassinate Pharaoh quislings, making it hard for them to keep on top of changing human events.
- Infiltrate the quisling society and destroy it from within.
- Discover traitors within an allied society, traitors who have been feeding information to the Pharaohs. Find a way to feed false information through the same channels.
- A PC discovers that he himself is a Pharaoh whose memory has been blanked and then replaced with a human’s in an experimental attempt to see if the Pharaohs can learn to understand modern humans and thus be independent of their quislings. (This self-discovery probably comes only after the PC, in the presence of an Aphid, reverts to instinctive behavior and frantically feeds off it. Without the Aphid’s “milk,” the PC Pharaoh has been aging normally.)

Resolution

The Pharaohs fake an “alien attack” on major population centers around the world, and the UN responds by calling on all the world to form a united front against the “invaders.” In an elaborate charade costing trillions of dollars, the Pharaohs fool the world into thinking it is under attack, and the UN declares martial law across the planet. Soon, thousands, and then millions, are volunteering to fight the alien menace. Through continued martial law, the Pharaohs eventually achieve complete control over the human race and uses it to conquer major portions of the

CHAPTER 8: PLOTS

galaxy. (Note that the other races, while technologically advanced, lack the hostility, breeding capacity, and self-destructive tendencies of mutant humans, and the Pharaohs will indeed get far in their war, which promises to last for centuries.)

At least that's what happens if the PCs don't do something about it. here's what they can do:

- Join the Pharaohs and become commanders in their slave army.
- Hunt down and kill the Pharaohs. Yeah, right. These guys have lived for millennia, and they're not stupid. But maybe the PCs can get help from renegade extraterrestrials who see what's coming and break the non-interference codes that keep other extraterrestrials from making official contact with Earth people.
- Develop a disease that attacks organisms with the unique genetic codes that Pharaohs have, or bacteria that poison aphids' "milk," thereby killing the Pharaohs indirectly.
- Form an underground resistance movement that spreads dissent through modern art of all types, and that especially calls for the quislings to betray their masters. The Pharaohs would have a hard time understanding the message in the art without quisling assistance.
- Help a defector Pharaoh that has broken free of his conditioning and has become a free agent and advocate of peace. He has to fake his own death and then work with the best minds of the world to develop some attack effective against the Pharaohs.
- Appeal to the glugs for aid, and protect them as representatives from all the surviving slug colonies hold a meeting on Al Amarja. Perhaps the glugs, who cannot be swayed by Pharaoh machinations as the mutant humans can, are humanity's last hope. Maybe they know of a weird science or supernatural device that was used against the Pharaohs' creators, something that will turn the tables on the Pharaohs.
- Coordinate a universal blackout (perhaps with alien technology) that stops all electronics around the world. Without their computerized bank accounts, telephone connections to puppet leaders, and high-tech surveillance devices, the Pharaohs are vulnerable. How long can the PCs afford to keep the world in black-out as they hunt down the Pharaohs and massacre them?



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

SELF-REFERENTIAL AWARENESS

or, *"Oh my God, I'm a character in a role-playing game."*

This plot involves the PCs only — a very personal plot. Quite simply, they realize their true nature: player-characters in a role-playing game.

The Present Situation

The PCs believe themselves to be free agents, living beings, individuals, physically existent beings. They have no clue as to their true nature, but "something" has drawn them to Al Amarja, where reality ends and the fun begins.

The Plot Progresses

Strange things happen that seem to break the rules of reality, but indeed these events are merely caused by a higher order of reality (yours and mine). Note, the PCs should be following some other plot in the meantime so that this plot seems like a bizarre sideline. And be careful to control how much the PCs learn. Don't let them catch on too fast. And if you see one of the players flash on to what's going, be sure to swear him to secrecy, for the sake of the other players' enjoyment.

- A fringe scientist with a device for measuring "probability infrac-tions" tracks the PCs down. She tells them that they break the laws of probability, that somehow they are beyond the laws that apparently govern the world. Perhaps, as an example, she has them flip a coin one hundred times, and it comes up heads each time.
- The PCs come into contact with small mystic cult that claims that reality is an illusion, and that most inhabitants of the "world" are merely figments of the imagination. A few, however, are actually extensions of "some kind of superior being in another, higher-order reality." Though not truly
- individuals, these rare people at least exist as direct expressions of a greater intelligence. All who are "high-order extensions" are actually self-conscious and aware, but the rest of humanity merely mimics self-consciousness. Or perhaps the rest are also extensions of this higher order, but with much less direct involvement in the higher order universe. (This bizarre cosmology is actually a strange interpretation that fits the role-playing universe.)
- A fringe scientist develops a way of contacting a "higher order of reality." The PCs can visit this world, where they meet the game moderator, or perhaps someone working for you. (This person does not yet reveal what's really going on.) This person shows them an encyclopedia or map that does not have Al Amarja listed there and explains that in this universe, Al Amarja does not exist, but that they know about it. Perhaps the game moderator answers some questions relevant to what the PCs are doing, giving them vital clues in whatever plot they are currently pursuing.
- The fringe scientist also pulls items from the "alternate universe," actually notes or items relevant to play. For example, if one of your players has passed you a note that says, "I follow Bartholomew [another PC] secretly to see what he's doing," this very note might fall into the PCs' possession.
- Someone confronts the PCs and says they are not real people. To prove it, she throws rapid-fire questions at them, such as "Where were you born?," "How many siblings do you have?," "What's your mother's maiden name?," etc. The point is that normal people should be able to answer these questions immediately, while the players may well have to pause while they invent the background. Also, search for inconsistencies in the backgrounds the PCs have developed. In the role-playing universe, once

the player has imagined something, it comes into existence, so once the PC says, "I have two brothers and a sister," it is so and has been so in the past. But if pressed, a PC may well create inconsistencies. The GMC uses this interrogation session as proof that the PCs are not real people, or at least not normal ones. If the PCs turn the table, they will find that the GMCs might also be unable to respond immediately and consistently to questions.

- Characters from other role-playing games appear on Al Amarja. They are characters from basic games played by neophytes. For instance, imagine an elfin thief who comes to the bar looking for adventure. He carries gold pieces each stamped "1 g.p.," talks about what "level" he is, and says he only needs one more "experience point" before going up to the next level, so he wants to know if there are any small monsters around that he can kill. Perhaps he brags about his "+2 dagger" and his "68% chance to pick locks." Eventually he realizes he is in the wrong world (there are no experience points on Al Amarja, so he can't raise his level while he's here), so he goes through a door and disappears. If the PCs fight the role-playing characters, you might want to use the "alien's" rules for combat when they attack, just to be strange.
- The characters hear that there is an area in the Edge that is completely vacant: nothing's there, not even emptiness. (In other words, you haven't decided what's there yet.) As soon as the PCs arrive to investigate, you make up the details on the spot, just as if it were any other area the characters were to wander into. And all evidence suggest that this is how the place has been for quite some time, so why was that guy talking about there being a void here?

Resolution

The PCs learn that someone named Wanton Heat Jet, a representative for Al Amarjan Investments, has invented a very interesting piece of work that they simply must see to believe. When they get their hands on it, give them this book; it is what Mr. Jet has written, verbatim. (He has used an anagram for his pen name.) And then Mr. Jet might want to show them the paragraphs at the bottom of this page.

Now that the PCs know who they are, have them meet their makers. A door opens (or whatever), and in step several people (describe the role-playing group exactly as they are). Each walks to his individual PC and says, "I am your creator. Now you have an opportunity to ask me anything you want" (or something like that). Encourage the players to have their PCs confront their makers, demanding to know why they were put through such struggles, why they were made defectively, etc. Have each player talk out the conversation between himself and the PC with the other players looking on. Played properly, this could be extremely dramatic.

And now what happens? Anything. Maybe the PCs will want to be granted independent existence, in which case cease the series and let the players know that they have just created an alternate universe where their characters are real people. But since they are now real people, they

can no longer be PCs and the series must end.

Or perhaps the PCs want to continue their adventures as PCs, now with the ability to call on their "patron players" to alter the universe when they need extra help. Better yet, by learning the rules of the game, they can do limited "magic." Their magical vocabulary may sound strange to others, since the PCs will be talking about "hit points" and "bonus dice," but it will be effective. After all, isn't magic simply using the unknown rules of the universe?

Or the PCs may be given god-like power, since their universe is not real. Imagine the chaos as they discover they can do anything they want? Such an event, naturally, completely transforms the series. Will the players develop a completely new way to role-play, or will they eventually decide to change everything back to the way it was?

Finally, the PCs may resent their status and find a way to come into the real world, take over their players, and conquer an unsuspecting world. They could be the vanguard of a force that liberates fictional characters of all kinds, bringing them to life and giving them the freedom that the "real people" take for granted.

WARNING: Do not play out the resolution of this plot while any of your players are under the influence of psychedelics.

STORY IDEAS

Here are some ideas for episodes and incidents that you can insert into your series.

OPPORTUNITIES ON THE EDGE

In the Props section is a copy of "Opportunities on the Edge." This page of the newspaper *Al Amarja Today* is aimed at adventurers, mercenaries, and other opportunists, so it may be of interest to your players. See to it that the player characters come across "Opportunities." Each of the entries on that page refer is explained below.

Reward

Anyone calling the number gets a recorded message stating the following. (Write in the date, as appropriate to your series.)

"Thank you for your concern about our colleague, Sean Bringman. He is a reporter for *Deathshriek* magazine in London who came to Al Amarja to follow up on some very promising leads. He was, unfortunately, very tight-lipped about his discoveries, so we do not know where on the island he would have gone. We last heard from him on [date], when he was staying at Cesar's Hotel. If you are interested in searching for Mr. Bringman, please leave your name and address after the tone, and I will have his photograph and my personal number sent to you. Thank you."

BEEP

Characters that leave their names and addresses are indeed sent a black and white photograph of a pudgy man in his thirties, curly hair, scraggly moustache, crooked teeth. Also in the envelope is the telephone number of a London residence with a note asking that the characters call if they have any information.

Unfortunately for the player characters, the man who called himself Sean

ATTENTION

If you think you are a real person on the island of Al Amarja, read this:

You're not. Al Amarja does not exist. You are merely a figment of someone else's imagination, with no existence, will, or consciousness separate from your creator.

Everything you think you have gained, suffered, sought, or accomplished is imaginary, designed solely for the amusement of a handful of people who really do exist. You are a player character in a role-playing game. The truth may hurt, but at least now you know your true nature.

Bringman is currently sipping rum in Jamaica. He did come to the island and stay for a few days, and then he slipped himself out (abandoning his goods in his hotel room) and came to Jamaica. The reward is a scam, since no one is going to be able to find “Sean Bringman.”

The people behind the scam want to discover more about what is going on in the Edge, so this fake reward is intended to get a lot of people snooping around a lot of places. Meanwhile, operatives are observing the reward-hunters to see if they find anything.

The group behind the scam could be Movers, Pharaohs, Neutralizers, investigative reporters, a governmental organization, or some other group of your design.

“Sean Bringman” visited the following places, in an effort to draw attention to them: First School of True Sensation, the Jungle (home of the Dog-Faces), Cesar’s Hotel, Sad Mary’s Bar and Girl, and any other areas you would like the player characters to investigate.

This plot hook gets the PCs snooping around, and even if there is no Sean Bringman to find, there are plenty of other mysteries to uncover.

Kill With Your Bare Hands

Simply an ad for a martial arts school. If some of the player characters lack fighting skills, they may want to enroll. See p. 100.

Money for Fighting

An ad for fighters at Sad Mary’s. See p. 101 for more information.

Hiring

The Peace Force is hiring, but the acceptance and training processes are so long and difficult that few PCs are going to be interested. This entry is meant as background detail rather than a bona fide opportunity for the PCs.

Neo-Care

Dr. Nusbaum does indeed offer low-cost health insurance, the only catch being that he does not have to follow

the Hippocratic Oath when determining proper treatment. He prefers more experimental procedures so that, even if they don’t work, he can learn something by examining why the procedure failed. See p. 78.

Wanted: Bodyguards

Ad for Armorguard. “Speeders” means amphetamine addicts, who can be unpredictably violent. See p. 72.

Money for Dancing

Ad for nude dancers at Sad Mary’s Bar & Girl. See p. 101.

Truth

Anyone who calls talks to Harrietta Vickers, the woman who was intending to give the lecture. Since placing the ad, she has had a friendly talk with a Vornite operative (a Mover, see p. 139). She explains to the characters that the ad was just a joke to point out to people how desperately they want to believe in conspiracies, when in fact there are no such things. The ad is a piece of avant-garde performance art demonstrating the superstitious nature of humanity. “I hope you learned something.” The Vornite did a good job on her, but someone who is good at reading people may be able to detect tension in her voice. (Roll 2 dice versus the player’s roll. The player only detects something if his roll beats these 2 dice.)

Celebrate

Essentially the straight scoop on the Temple. See p. 104.

Enhanced Senses

An ad for the First School of True Sensation, a scam and a Kergillian front. See p. 93.

Gun Metal

The straight scoop. See p. 97.

Ahmed’s Kwik Klinik

The PCs may want to keep this place in mind, especially if they ever get shot. See p. 72.

Total Taxi

A truly all-purpose service, but pricey. See p. 107.

Bounty

The Asylum pretends to treat the empties, but actually sells or gives them to friendly allies. See p. 155. If the characters ask around, most people, but not everyone, knows what an empty is.

Need Cash?

That number leads to the Peace Force (p. 145). Payment is made only after the information is verified. Rewards can be generous, but the Force likes to keep track of who’s a snitch so as to be able to blackmail them at some later date.

If the PCs wanted to, they could make fair money as Peace Force informers.

LITTLE SCRATCHES

Another useful part of *Al Amarja Today* is “Little Scratches,” essentially an anonymous graffiti board. (“Little scratches” is the literal translation of the Italian word “graffiti.”) An example is in the Props chapter, with entries explained below.

Weather the Cuckoo Likes

This is one of the Cut-Ups’ mottos. See p. 114.

Love, God

One hopes that this message is the work of a madman.

My Life Was Changed

Submitted by someone who fooled herself into believing that the School had actually helped her.

I Hereby Retract...

A former anti-government activist who was captured and “cured” of her anti-social delusions by the ever-competent Dr. Nusbaum.

A Friendly Warning

Submitted by the Net in hopes of driving potheads to more dependable suppliers (them) or making people so afraid of pot that they try harder, addictive drugs, which the Net can then sell them.

Snarling Demon

Snarling Demon is a fighter at Sad Mary's. Her manager placed this ad in hopes of drumming up interest in her fights.

Geoffrey Dirktongue

Dirktongue leads a Satanist gang outside the control of the Glorious Lords. His immediate inferior submitted this piece in order to incite the Glorious Lords into killing Dirktongue.

The Rest

Self-explanatory, or make up your own background.

LIVING IN THE EDGE

Plenty of strange and interesting things can happen as the PCs simply live in the Edge. The exact events must depend on the style of your series, the plots you intend to emphasize, and the kinds of encounters the players want to have, but below are some ideas to get you started.

Move In

The local gang comes to introduce themselves and collect "dues" for their protection service. Strange neighbors (hooks for future adventures) come to the apartment-warming party. The previous inhabitant left obscure clues to strange mysteries stuffed behind the radiator, taped to the underside of the sink, or stuffed down the toilet. The place is haunted by a previous inhabitant. A desperate GMC comes to the PC in the middle of the night; she thinks the friend of hers who used to live there is still there, and she was coming for help in a "very serious, personal matter."

Neighbors say things like, "You're in 3-B? 3-B?! *Maalesh*. I guess it had to happen to someone. No, no, just silly rumors, nothing you should trouble yourself about."

Making Friends

Locals provide information about the island, or even take the PCs on a tour. A friend suddenly stops showing up at the neighborhood bar; the PCs may wish to investigate. The friend is newly involved in some exciting prospect (a scam, a power group, the School of True Sensation, etc.); and she sincerely wants the PC to get involved as well.

Significant Other

In addition to all the fun and tension that romance can bring to a PC's life in any setting (meeting the folks, jealous ex's, suspected infidelity, competition among PCs, etc.), romance in the Edge can lead to other events. The SO is a member of a strange sect or secret society; perhaps the "romance" is just a front to get the PC involved. The SO is "wanted" by a power group and unwillingly drags the PC into a dangerous situation. The SO provides the PC with the only island of stability and trust in the violently unbalanced world of the Edge.

Getting a Job

A job with the government (e.g., library) requires an extensive application, complete with a 250 word essay on how Al Amarja leads the world as a paragon of democracy. The employer is up to something, and the PC stumbles onto it. The employer gives the PC grief about any absences and such that result from adventures. A co-worker is a rival for the boss's attention and approval; he gives the PC hell on the job. A co-worker becomes a friend of the PC. The company gets in serious trouble with the Peace Force, the Net, or some other group; and the PC gets caught up in the mess.

A WEIRD STORY: GATEWAY TO THE HEREAFTER

As an example of how strange you can get in your OTE stories, here is an episode you and your players may enjoy.

This episode is hard to plan out ahead of time; just be ready to run it when the time is right. A character dies, but continues to live in his imagination. The character and player do not realize that the PC is dead, but the episode gets more strange and dramatic until finally the PC and player realize that the PC has been dead for most of the session. At that point, the PC goes on to the appropriate afterlife (or reincarnation). A surreal experience.

When one of the characters dies, don't let the player know that he's a goner. Instead, tell him that he's knocked unconscious or out of the fight or other some such maneuver. Go ahead and finish the scene being played out, but when a pause comes, clue the other players in on what's going on. Ideally, you should have at least a few hours to play out the passage to the afterlife. If a PC dies near the end of a session, you might want to wait until a timelier death before springing this surprise episode on the players.

Here's the situation: the PC is dead, but his mind is continuing to "dream" its life. At first, this "dream" will be very much like real life, but as the soul nears its fate and moves farther from material life, the dream becomes more and more strange. The session can climax when the PC realizes he's dead, or when the PC moves to an appropriate afterlife or rebirth. Get the other players to understand the situation and play along. At first, they should run their characters normally, but they can get more and more strange (terrifying, bizarre, incoherent, divine, wraith-like, distant, whatever) as play progresses.

For more inspiration, read "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" by Ambrose Bierce.

CHAPTER NINE

PROPS

This final chapter gives you several pages of photocopiable material to hand out to players. These props are things you can have the PCs encounter in their travels through the Edge. By providing these props to your players, you give them a good sense for what can be found in the Edge. Even mundane props like the Business Directory invite PCs to participate in what happens in the Edge.

Permission is granted to photocopy the following pages for personal use.

Business Directory

Identifies those businesses described or mentioned in this book. There are, of course, many more businesses than those listed here, but this at least provides the players with a sample from which to choose.

Welcome to Al Amarja

Available to tourists at the airport, hotels, or from Total Taxi.

Al Amarjan Slang

Total Taxi drivers provide these to burger fares.

Opportunities on the Edge

Found in *Al Amarja Today*, a local newspaper.

Little Scratches

Also found in *Al Amarja Today*.

“I have transcended...”

A player handout for the introductory adventure, “Contact on Al Amarja” (see p. 208).

Seversen Convocation

Guest List and

Convocation Agenda

A player handout for the introductory adventure, “The Bodhisattva” (see p. 211).

Character Sheet

Give one to each player. You can keep stats of major GMCs on these things, too.

Character Log

Give each player as many as they need. Believe me, these things do encourage players to take notes, and their notes can greatly improve the continuity of a series. Also use them for major GMCs.

AL AMARJAN SLANG

barrio — one of the quarters or sectors of the Edge, taking the name of the plaza around which the quarter is located. E.g., the Sunken Barrio encircles the Sunken Plaza. Barrios often simply referred to by the name of the plaza, as in “Sad Mary’s is in Flowers.”

bennie — one who works for a patron

black — firearm(s), esp. in the phrase “to carry black” (to go armed)

burger — newcomers to Al Amarja; there is no plural, so one can say “Look at those three burger” or “There is a lot of burger in the Sunken Barrio.”

deep — spiked with depressants, as in “deep coffee”

jumped — spiked with stimulants, as in “jumped coffee”

lucy — a satanist, from “Lucifer.” Don’t call them this to their faces.

maaleesh — no sweat, don’t worry, take it easy, relax, chill out, etc.

’Martian — Al Amarjan (shortened & corrupted form)

normie — someone who does not partake in the Al Amarjan lifestyle

oppenheimer — fringe scientist

pube — an adolescent who has legally acquired the status of an adult

scarab — newcomer to Al Amarja, “burger”; because the scarab beetle eats dung

starver — an artists, especially an independent one

ugly — someone deformed by genetic misfortune

willie — slave; all slaves on Al Amarja are voluntary slaves

zero — a worthless, hopeless person

Courtesy of **TOTAL TAXI**. For your total taxi needs, call 222444!

Business Directory

AIRPORT

D'Aubainne International Airport

Come for travel, stay for the fun.
Airport Road, east of the Edge. 350783

ART

Art's Fine Arts

Velvet, black-light, psyche-delic, the works!
70 Sunken Plaza. 879223

The Lying Truth

Prints and originals.
103 Plaza of Flowers. 758339

BARs, TAVERNS, RESTAURANTS

Bitter & Herb's

For special people.
170 Drudge Lane, Justice. 562822

Breakneck Café

Come rain or shine!
170 Plaza of Flowers. 755519

Chateau D'Or

12 Amethyst Lane, Broken Wings. 639184

Chrome Dome

The only place for micromonic music.
678 Ogre Drive, Four Points. 545678

Crablegs

210 The Ramble, Flowers. 759766

Den of Thieves

No wimps.
35 Sunken Plaza. 876409

Dogu's

For relaxing, African food.
110 Plaza of Flowers. 750469

Home Brew

230 The Ramble, Flowers. 759711

Morning Glories

Open 5:30 AM - 2 PM daily.
211 The Ramble, Flowers. 759614

Morrie's Arcade

Video games & pizza
265 Leibniz Ave., Science. 671126

The Pause

Stop and refresh yourself.
90 Plaza of Flowers. 753110.

Roger Bacon's

112 Leibniz Ave., Science. 670259

Rugosi's

The best in Italian food.
130 Plaza of Flowers. 756830

Sad Mary's Bar & Girl

10 Plaza of Flowers. 750044

Sarah's Teahouse

Private compartments, total privacy. 24 hrs.
240 Rum Street, Sunken. 858348

Scoopmeister

For the best ice cream in the most varieties.
65 Plaza of Flowers. 759682

The Screening Room

218 The Ramble, Flowers. 756428

Sequins

A night club, for the best that money can buy.
410 Platinum Avenue, Broken Wings. 640339

Wilma's Café

Fast, decent food.
90 Sunken Plaza. 872538

The Wooden Plate

Located in historic Chateau Melmoth; Hungarian cuisine our specialty
777 John Dee Lane, Sunken. 873270

BODY MODIFICATION

Flaming Fashion

Complete styling salon.
30 Plaza of Flowers. 751229

Hole in the Wall

Tattoos, piercings, and scars at cut rates.
150 Plaza of the Four Cardinal Points. 456339

Indelibles

Tattoos, permanent and temporary.
69 Plaza of Flowers. 759324

Myron's Gym

Pane glass windows!
120 Plaza of Flowers. 754487

BOOKSTORES

The Archives

No book too weird or morbid for us.
380 Plaza of Justice. 377612

Forbidden Words

69 Plato St., Great Men. 786987

The Golden Bough

Occult sciences our specialty.
150 Plaza of Flowers. 759338

The Last Page

Newspapers, magazines, comics, paperbacks
231 The Ramble, Flowers. 752453

Regal Games & Books

120 Plaza of Great Men. 781297

CHILD CARE

First Steps Creche & Day Care

412 Capricorn Lane, Four Points, 457132

CHURCHES

Temple of the Divine Experience

Celebrants of all faiths welcome (except Satanists).
6400 D'Aubainne Avenue, Sunken. 448320

CINEMAS

Cinema de Vivisection

Like nothing you've ever seen before.
601 Gradation Lane, Science. 681217

Trumpet Cinema

The latest and the hottest.
50 Plaza of Flowers. 756201

CLOTHING & ACCOUTREMENTS

Adults Only

Serving your special needs.
109 Plaza of Flowers.
750370

Ajax Specials

The latest fashions: nooses, chaps, boots. Full selection.
241 Rum Street, Flowers.
558247

Dan & Barry's Clothing Shop

Men's and women's continental fashions.
205 The Ramble, Flowers.
750176

Hegermeier's

Men's fashion.
61 Plaza of Flowers.
757850

Metalworks

Manacles, handcuffs, & assorted gear. All weights & sizes.
593 Pogrom Lane, Four Points. 363994

Neat Fit

Men's clothes. Good prices.
400 Plaza of Justice.
370812

Rapukchin's

Fashion for women.
105 Plaza of Flowers. 758322

Touch of Death

Used nooses! The authentic article!
13 Plaza of Justice. 379781

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Broken Wings Community Action Society

For a better society.
172 Broken Wings Plaza,
2nd floor. 387245

Guiding Hand

7412 Freedom Road, Broken Wings. 380516

EMPLOYMENT

Found Hope Agency

Work for you!
60 Plaza of Great Men.
834078

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Al Amarjan Investments

Get a piece of the action.
30 Plaza of Gold, Suite
1200. 689330

Swaps

Buy, sell, and trade anything that's worth our time.
1 Plaza of Gold. 230000

FLORISTS

Flowers by Leona

206 The Ramble, Flowers.
758846

FOOD & DRINK

Last Supper

Cheaper than those other stores.
210 Plaza of Justice. 374491

Liberty Liquors

Stock up now.
30 Sunken Plaza. 878334

Lou's Booze

Happy hour before the hangings!
205 Plaza of Justice.
374069

GAMBLING

Antionette's House of Fortune

Take a chance!
1213 Offal Lane, Four Points. 712984

D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center

Bet on surgical procedures of all kinds!
271 D'Aubainne Avenue,
Justice. 777109

GAMES

Leisurely Pursuit

Popular and innovative games.
83 Plaza of Flowers. 57399

Regal Games & Books

120 Plaza of Great Men.
781297

GEAR

Gun Metal

All your equipment needs. Knives, caltrops, tools, special clothing, etc.
596 Pogrom Lane, Four Points 458299

Grim Kiichi's Tools & Stuff

2317 Varicose Lane,
Flowers. 652727

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Al Amarja Hall of Records

Public documents available for nominal fees.
5212 Liberation Ave., Arms.
559042

Center for Paranormal Control

Registration: fast, easy, and it's the law!
Plaza of Arms.
SWITCHBOARD 558611
SIGHTINGS LINE 555666
REGISTRATION HOTLINE 558724

HOSPITALS & HEALTH CARE

Ahmed's Kwik Klinik

NQA. Cash only. 24 hrs.

120 Pogrom Lane, Four Points. 330707

Betty's Health Center

Cash fast!
40 Plaza of Great Men.
780421

D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center

Friendly terms, post-modern treatment facilities. Run by world-renowned Dr.

Nusbaum himself.
271 D'Aubainne Avenue,
Justice.

EMERGENCY 333333

NON-EMERGENCY 777000

D'Aubainne Asylum

Complete recuperative services for the insane.
Republic Road, southeast of the Edge. 320900

The Good Doctors

Drop in any time.
20 Plaza of Flowers. 751980

Sylvan Pines Sanitarium

Rest and recuperate in our pleasant country facility.
420 Willowbrook Lane (rural). 444345

HOTELS

Bienvenidos Hotel

Great prices, great location!
200 Plaza of Flowers.
756892

Cesar's Hotel

A four-star hotel, perfect for travelers & tourists.
40 Sunken Plaza. 875365

E-Z Sleep

Don't believe the rumors. Try us.
2519 Pogrom Lane, Four Points. 399001.

Midas Hotel

1050 Point West, Gold.
681947

MESSENGER SERVICES

Spee-D

*Any package, anywhere,
any time.*
1309 Sluice Street, Science.
398760

MUSEUMS

D'Aubainne Museum of Modern Life

Educate yourself.
1500 Dump Street, Great
Men. 556309

NEWSPAPERS

Al Amarja Today

*The only news you need to
read.*
506 D'Aubainne Avenue,
Justice. 354667

NIGHT CLUBS

Burger Burger

*Country line dances every
Wednesday!*
235 The Ramble, Flowers.
755396

Sad Mary's Bar & Girl

*Come see our unique perfor-
mance stage.*
10 Plaza of Flowers.
750044

Sequins

*A night club, for the best that
money can buy.*
410 Platinum Avenue,
Broken Wings. 640339

PEACE FORCE

Peace Force

*We've got the \$\$ if you've
got the names.*
1 Plaza of Arms
EMERGENCY 555555

OTHER 558940
SNITCHLINE 772102

PERSONAL SERVICES

Sad Mary's Bar & Girl

Unique selection of partners.
10 Plaza of Flowers.
750044

The Scarlet Palace

*Pleasures beyond your
wildest dreams...*
416 Dominic Circle, Broken
Wings. 386241

A Woman's Touch

*Swedish and Japanese mas-
sages.*
140 Plaza of Flowers.
758221

PETS

Insta-Pet

*Exotic animals for rent or
purchase.*
160 Plaza of Flowers.
759423

RADIO

KRAK Radio

*Tune in to the voice of Al
Amarja.*
1100 - 21st Street, Traboc.
285725

REPAIR

Dmitri's Fix-It Shop

*You break? I fix. No prob-
lem.*
171 North-Northeast Court,
Four Points. 699284

ROOMS

Rooms for Men

*By day or week. Security
guaranteed.*
797 Dump Street, Great
Men. 856732

SCHOOLS

D'Aubainne University

*Offering night classes, edu-
cation extension, specialty
classes, and much, much
more.*

1 Plaza of Science
PERSONNEL 231664
ADMISSIONS 231665
INFORMATION 231600
ALABASTER AUDITORIUM
231769

First School of True Sensation

See what others miss!
2712 Welt Lane, Flowers.
538221

Kuan Tun's Black Belt Academy

*Learn to kill with your bare
hands!*
111 Lost Lane, Flowers.
673940

SECURITY

Aries Gang

Protecting the Flowers Barrio.
40 Plaza of Flowers.
750983

Armorguard

*Bodyguards for short and
long-term jobs.*
600 Endeavor Street,
Sunken. 713779

Dunkelburg's Security

*Keeping the Broken Wings
Barrio safe since 1955.*
120 Plaza of Broken Wings.
344000.

Emergency 999

Safe N Sound

*Get the red dagger on your
side.*
12 Hangman's Alley, Justice.
678022

SPORTS

Blackfire Entertainment Enterprises

Guns, guns, guns! All legal!
334 Endless Lane, Suite 306,
Flowers. 652889

TAXIS

Giovanni's Cabs

Fast, decent service.
562 Fishery Lane, Sunken.
850734

Total Taxi

For your total taxi needs.
1876 Bend Street, Sunken.
222444

TELEVISION

Al Amarja Television

*The best from around the
world.*
1131 Shatter Avenue,
Science. 671554

AXTC

*Local and alternative pro-
gramming.*
220 The Ramble, Flowers.
756221.

VIDEO RENTAL

A Screen of One's Own

*Check out our special collec-
tion.*
70 Plaza of Flowers.
752993

VISITOR SERVICE

Tourist & Visitor Service of Al Amarja

*All you need to know to
enjoy yourself in Al Amarja.*
113 Wrench Lane, Sunken.
453311

WELCOME TO THE EDGE

Welcome you tourists, sight-seers, entrepreneurs, seekers, sybarites, citizens of illegal nations and you terminally misguided; welcome to the Edge. May your stay be pleasant or eventful, whichever you wish.

To make your stay in Al Amarja more enjoyable, kindly keep in mind the following facts about our fine island.

Firearms — Firearms of all kinds are outlawed since there is no wild game to hunt.

Only the Peace Force may carry firearms. If you have smuggled firearms onto the island and are caught with them, you will face severe punishments.

Controlled Substances — All intoxicants generally illegal in the civilized world are illegal on Al Amarja. Do not be deceived by appearances.

The Temple — Social and spiritual needs may be met at the Temple of the Divine Experience on D'Aubainne Avenue. Celebrants of all faiths and sects (except Satanists) are welcome at the services. Please note that the high priestess of the Temple is Cheryl D'Aubainne, daughter of Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne, Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of Al Amarja. Utmost respect is therefore due to the Temple, its celebrants, and its creeds.

Currency — Al Amarja uses the US dollar as its currency. Exchanges of other currencies, as well as valuable substances in general, may be made at Swaps, on the Plaza of Gold. Please note that Swaps is run by Constance D'Aubainne, the daughter of Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne, Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of Al Amarja. Utmost respect is therefore due to Swaps, its employees, and its policies.

Medical Services — Should you find yourself in need of medical services during your stay (and may the gods forbid such a calamity), you may seek medical attention at the D'Aubainne Clinic, on D'Aubainne Avenue. Dr. Nusbaum and his staff are eager to ease your suffering. Special programs are available for those who are unable to pay for the services they require.

History — Al Amarja was liberated from the Italian fascists on October 7, 1940, by Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne. Since that time, she has brought stability, excitement, peace, security, and prosperity to Al Amarja. It was she who saw the wisdom of adopting the language and currency of the ascendent nation and thus put us in our enviable position among Mediterranean islands. Al Amarjans continue to enjoy a healthy mix of cultures and languages, while relying on our connection to the USA for unity and stability. And we freely offer the delights of these cultures to visitors. Welcome, and enjoy.

Al Amarja Today

"The Only News You Need to Read!"

OPPORTUNITIES ON THE EDGE

REWARD! \$50,000 for the return of Sean Bringman. For more information, call 577891.

Learn to KILL WITH YOUR BARE HANDS! Affordable, flexible classes in self-defense now available. Kuan Tun's Black Belt Academy, 111 Lost Lane, Flowers. Call 673940

MONEY FOR FIGHTING
If you can swing a punch and take one, you can earn good money tonight! Apply in person at Sad Mary's Bar & Girl, 10 Plaza of Flowers. Ask for Mr. Germaine.

HIRING! The Al Amarja Peace Force is now hiring for three Peace Officer positions. Urban combat experience a definite plus. Martial arts training a must. Bonus pay for hires with no criminal record. Apply in person at the Peace Force Headquarters, 1 Plaza of Arms.

NEO-CARE
Low-Cost Health Care Insurance Program

You can get Dr. Nusbaum's personal medical attention at lower cost than ever before. Qualify for state-of-the-art, cutting edge technology and procedures. Special rates for bodyguards, fighters, Peace Officers, etc. Call 777000 or come to the D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center, 271 D'Aubainne Avenue, Justice, for details.

WANTED: BODYGUARDS
Must be combat-experienced, unthinkingly loyal, tight-lipped, and willing to take a blade in the gut now and then. Call 713779. Speeders need not apply.

—MONEY FOR DANCING—
If you've got it and like to flaunt it, you can earn big bucks tonight! Apply in person at Sad Mary's Bar & Girl, 10 Plaza of Flowers. Ask for Mr. Germaine. Any gender.

TRUTH

At last, learn the truth about the Movers. Free seminar, open to

public. Your understanding of the world will never be the same again. Learn who controls the media, international politics, the economy, religious movements, and more. Forewarned is forearmed. Call 670032 for dates and times.

— Celebrate! —

Come join us at the Temple of the Divine Experience. All faiths (save Satanists) welcome. No religious experience necessary.

Sunday: Mid-Eastern Compromise

Monday: New Age

Tuesday: Sommerites

Wednesday: In your face.

Thursday: Eastern Conglomeration

Friday: Secular Mystics

Saturday: Party!

Come to the service or services of your choice any night at 7:30. 6400 D'Aubainne Avenue, Sunken. 448320

ENHANCED SENSES

Whether for business or pleasure, we can hone your senses to peak performance at the First School of True Sensation. Call 538221.

Need something special for that big assignment?

Want to feel safe at night?

Try...

GUN METAL

596 Pogrom Lane. #458299

Embarrassing wounds, diseases, or other misfortunes? Want confidential, competent service? Be sure to tell the ambulance driver to take you to...**AHMED'S KWIK KLINIK**, 120 Pogrom Lane. 330707

TOTAL TAXI — For your total taxi needs. 222444

Bounty of \$500 for each empty delivered to the D'Aubainne Asylum, Republic Road.

NEED CASH? Turn someone in. Just call 772102. It's easy.

LITTLE SCRATCHES

This is the weather the cuckoo likes, armored division submissive to vernacular the world into a gambling birdhouse velocity.

—the Cut-Ups

Satan saves those who save themselves.

Blue shock kills.

As you heap live coals on your own head, remember that it is all a choice of will.

You had your chance, but you cleaved to totalitarianism and idolatry, and now I will have to destroy you all.

Love,
God

My life was changed by The First School of True Sensation. Try it!

Lucifer's Glorious Lords of Passion rule!

I hereby retract all slanderous comments I made against the democratic government of Al Amarja and Her Exaltedness Monique D'Aubainne, Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of Al Amarja. Under the

dominion of fascist mind control, I committed heinous crimes against my fellow Al Amarjans and against your democratically elected government. I deeply regret the pain and suffering that I caused the innocent, and I beg my compatriots to accept me back into society, reformed and ready to undo the evil I have created.

—Marianne Hillmer

A friendly warning.

A large supply of tainted pot has been shipped to Al Amarja. If you must buy, buy only from those you trust.

Down with oppressive drug laws!

Al Amarja needs modern waste-disposal. Oust the Garbage Men.

Snarling Demon will never be defeated. Come to Sad Mary's and see for yourself.

Geoffery Dirktongue is the rightful ruler of all Satanists in the Edge. Those who cleave to pretenders will suffer, now and Afterwards.

LITTLE SCRATCHES/OPPORTUNITIES ON THE EDGE:

Widely Read, Reasonably Priced

Place Your Ad or Announcement Today!

Contact *Al Amarja Today*

Telephone: 354667, Extension 210

or simply visit our offices at 506 D'Aubainne Avenue, in the Justice Barrio

I have transcended the boundaries of reality in which you think you live and have learned many things. First, that a terrible threat is rising against humanity, one that, unknown to you, you are working against. Good luck! Second, that while you may face frightful dangers, you are ever safe and unharmed in the Minds of your Creators, so have courage.

To take the next step in defense of humanity:

Plaza of Flowers, 8:00 PM

Seversen Convocation Guest List

Your Hostess: Dr. Chris
Seversen.

Other Guests

Angela Reyes, *Graduate student in
physics at D'Aubainne
University. Al Amarja.*

Dr. Konztanti Horokopolous,
*Parapsychology. Athens,
Greece.*

Dr. Natasha Gorodnov,
Phytochemistry. Kiev, Ukraine.

Cast, *Practical Metaphysical
Cosmology. Chicago, USA.*

Dr. Signe Oleson, *Planar
Cosmology. Oslo, Norway.*

Herr Dr. Otto Unger, *Ancient
Anthropology. Berlin,
Germany.*

Seversen Convocation Agenda

Friday

11:30 AM to 1 PM — Brunch

*Show up any time and meet the other
guests.*

1 PM to 5 PM — Unstructured

Tour the grounds and meet the guests.

5 PM to 7 PM — Supper

7 PM — Private consultations with your
hostess

Saturday

8 AM — Breakfast

9 AM to Noon — Presentations

*Each participant will make a presentation
to the attendees on their work.*

*Suggested length: half-hour to one and a
half hours.*

Noon — Lunch

1 PM — Unstructured

5 PM — Supper

7 PM — Presentations Resume

Sunday

8 AM — Breakfast

9 AM — Continue Presentations, as needed.

Noon — Lunch & Farewell

OVER THE EDGE™

CHARACTER SHEET

Character Name

Player Name

Traits & Signs

Drawing

Possessions

Physical Description

Wounds

Personal Description

Hit Points

Psychic Pool

Experience Pool

ATLAS
GAMES

[illegible]

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