

ABERRANTTM

WORLDWIDETM

PHASE II



PHASE II: A Worldwide Sourcebook for Aberrant[®]

Stephan Berger (order #47748)

ABERRANTTM

WORLDWIDE

PHASE II

Something is wrong. The angels are falling one by one, and the world is poised for a plunge into madness. Will you try to prevent the cataclysm or welcome it as a glorious new age for novakind?

Time stands still for no man...

It used to be easy to be a hero. Now, the embattled Project Utopia is being pressed by enemies on all sides. Nova cults are springing up all over the world, and organized religion is beginning to get nervous. The Golden Age is over. The question that nobody wants to ask now is: What comes next?

...And very few novas.

Aberrant: Worldwide — Phase II brings the time frame of the Aberrant world up to 2015. The four scenarios included in this book allow characters in your Aberrant series to take their place in history. The conflict is just heating up. Choose your battles wisely.



ABERRANT

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INTRODUCTION

It just gets worse.

The tarnish on the Golden Age gets thicker and darker with every passing day. Many are beginning to wonder if it ever was really golden at all. Newspapers increasingly contain stories about rogue novas and the ways in which they're not like baselines, about novas turning their vast quantum abilities to ends that can most generously be termed "ethically dubious."

Pessimists, cynics and other grim-minded sorts speculate that the abuses of quantum power will just get worse until an all out war between baselines and novas breaks out and the human race is extinguished, leaving the Teragen the only victor. Meanwhile, the Directive and Project Utopia frantically look for ways of averting exactly that type of conflict, while categorically denying the possibility of any such outcome. The PR teams smile, wave and write soothing words to dismiss citizens' fears, while the researchers in the Rashoud facilities and Directive labs frantically search for ways to counteract the deleterious effects of taint. The world has had its time to dance. Now it gasps as it discovers the price the piper is asking.

Welcome to **Aberrant: Worldwide — Phase II**. We begin our journey in 2011, three years after the official beginning of the **Aberrant** timeline. As in **Phase I**, we will be exploring various scenarios, occurring over the course of a few years, each of which will push the world toward the eventual degeneration of human/nova relations and the great confrontation that lurks only decades away.

If you are a Storyteller, you will find these scenarios laden with potential for conflict (both between the players' characters and others and among the players' characters themselves), opportunities for character growth and development and chances to peer into the inner workings of the global conspiracies and media obsession that define the world of **Aberrant**.

Though these scenarios are set within specific times and places in the **Aberrant** storyline, Story-

tellers are welcome to include them wherever and whenever works within the frame of their series. Change or discard anything that doesn't suit your series. Just because its written here doesn't mean that Game Canon need override the kind of game you want to run. That said, however, future supplements *will* take into account the events that transpire here as part of the "official" timeline that closes the gap between 2008 and 2120. To sum up, then; this is part of the direction the overarching story is taking, and if that's not *your* direction, cool.

If you are a player, it is probably best that you put this book down now unless you want to ruin your own enjoyment of these scenarios. There is really very little here that a player needs to know going into any of the stories, and the Storyteller can easily fill you in on the necessary details. Suffice it to say that, through your character's actions, you will make a real and lasting impact on your series' world, no matter how things turn out, but those are things better discovered in the fullness of time.

Storyteller's Notes

Below, you will find an overview of the four scenarios to give you a taste of what takes place in **Phase II**. Each of the four is presented in a brief summation, detailing not only a bit of the action in the plot, but also some potential themes to explore, if your troupe wishes to address these issues on a deeper level, as symbols and omens of what is yet to come. More than simple "adventures," these scenarios present some real moral and ethical dilemmas to ponder, regardless of affiliation. These notes are intended to give you an opportunity to start thinking about exactly how and how much you would like to address all of these facets of the four stories. They are, as follows:

Chapter One, The Pope of Babylon (Spring, 2010) follows up on a plot thread left dangling in the **Aberrant Storyteller's Screen**. The characters are pulled into a web of deception by a powerful cultic faction within the Catholic Church and set up as patsies in the process. They will witness

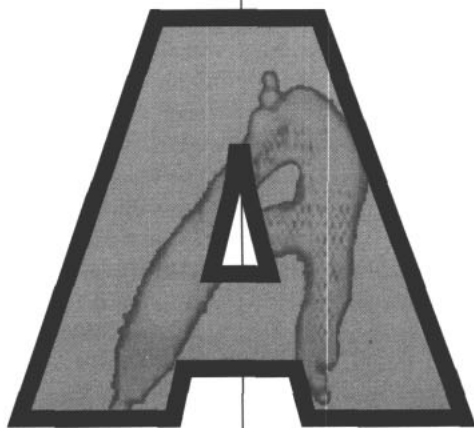
firsthand the powers aligning against the peaceable coexistence of novas and baselines and the depths to which the conspirators will sink as the characters try to navigate a labyrinth of deception and false clues before one of their most devout allies becomes a tool of their enemies.

Chapter Two, A Green and Pleasant Land (Fall, 2012) presents the Temple of the King, a social club and, some say, cult dedicated to returning England to its rightful place as a world power, at any cost. It's membership comprises some of the most influential individuals in all of England, and with the guidance of the two fanatical novas at its helm, it could bring England into a new age of glory — by undermining every other country in the world.

Chapter Three, Dominion (Winter, 2014) pits the characters against an alliance of nine of the most ruthless and amoral nova elites on Earth. The temptation

of power is a seductive one, especially among those whose illusions and ideals have been seared away by the crucible of war, leaving only the call to ambition. In the end, the characters must ask themselves why they even try to thwart the elites; is it for the sake of their faction's dogma, an ambiguous sense of what the "moral" thing to do would be or actual conviction?

Chapter Four, Where Heaven Ends (Summer, 2015) begins with a Project Utopia raid on the Amp Room and the consequences thereof. These include all out war, and as the saying goes, war is hell. The quantum battles result in the deaths of hundreds of baselines and novas alike. In the midst of the carnage, the characters must find Count Raoul Orzaiz of the Teragen and Ragnarockette of Team Tomorrow before a sociopathic elite wannabe executes them in a truly grotesque fashion as part of a sadistic media ploy.



The Pope of Babylon

From *Encyclopedia Britannica*

[From *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008 edition]

Babylonian captivity

Originally ascribed to the deportation of Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon in 597 BCE.... It was later applied to Popes exiled from Rome to Avignon, France between 1309 and 1377.

Introduction

[Memo from Special Agent Caroline Mantebe to Director Nakamura of the Directive, March 14, 2010]

Director Nakamura,

I must admit that this assignment caught me by surprise. Compiling background reports on religious organizations rarely falls under our mandate (especially ones with legitimate ties to the Vatican). Following my preliminary research, however, I now understand your concern. I haven't read this much paranoid, conspiracy-laden material since Umberto Eco's *Focault's Pendulum*. At least that I could excuse as fiction.

Please bear in mind that this is not the official report. This is a quick progress update on my investigation into Opus Dei. I'm currently hindered by the lack of first-hand accounts concerning the organization. Even ex-members are loath to discuss their former affiliations. I'd say their silence borders on fear.

Josemarie Escriva, as you well know, founded Opus Dei in 1928. Escriva, a controversial figure even now, died in 1975, but not before turning Opus Dei into a force of reckoning. Their mandate sounds innocuous enough: to spread faith into all sectors of everyday life and expand Christianity's influence across the world. They target affluent and educated people and espouse an ultra-conservative point-of-view. This, of course, is all public knowledge. Probe deeper, however, and Opus Dei looks more like a cult. They are the only recognized Catholic organization, aside from the Holy Roman Church itself, that believes it was inspired directly by God, in this case through Escriva's visions. Out of 90,000 members, half are celibate; each member is required to wear a cilice (spiked thigh chain) every two hours and encouraged to engage in corporal mortification. Approximately a quarter of them live in Opus Dei communities where a "director" moderates their activities and influences their opinions. He opens their mail and even encourages members to drop their former associations.

Opus Dei is answerable to itself alone. Members are not required to list their financial statements or affiliation, and they only report to the Pope every five years. Opus Dei claims poverty, even though 30 percent of its members are university graduates who tithe generously to the organization. The remaining 70 percent hold partial associations with Opus Dei and hand over a portion of their salaries as well. After that, there are over 700,000 cooperators, or supporters, who also contribute with donations or volunteer work. This isn't counting the over 69 cardinals and 1,300 bishops who supported Escriva's beatification.

Since 1928, Opus Dei's gained power on both a secular and a political front. Specifically, thanks to John Paul II, it enjoys unprecedented freedom. When Karol Wojtyla, the soon-to-be Pope John Paul II, bowed before Escriva's tomb, it sent a clear message that Opus Dei was now the Vatican's favored son, even in the days before the 1978 Conclave. During his tenure, the former Pontiff raised the number of seats within The Sacred College of Cardinals from 111 to 166, seemingly ensuring a conservative successor at the next Conclave. He made Opus Dei *Autocephalous* in 1982, turning it into a personal prelature not tied down to any diocese and independent from other bishops. Just before he died, John Paul II elevated Opus Dei Archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani to cardinal. Many believed Cipriani was on his way to the Papacy. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

On a political front, Opus Dei has been heavily involved with Spain's government from Franco's regime up to the current administration under President Sabatini. This isn't counting its extensive influence in Argentina, Peru, San Salvador, Austria and France. When I say extensive, I mean Opus Dei either occupies cabinet positions, is courted by the ruling elect or maintains an archbishop or two in positions of primacy. Additionally, outspoken critics of Opus Dei have a way of dying.



Cardinal Giovanni Benelli, who publicly opposed it, died of a heart attack a month before John Paul II turned the organization into a personal prelature. He isn't the only member of the Roman Curia or the College of Cardinals to drop dead of a heart attack over the years either. The latest, oddly enough, was Cardinal Roderigo Alta, Benedict XVI's closest advisor, a known Opus Dei sympathizer and an opponent of *Ad Dei Lucem* (which proclaimed novus human in judgment). I've heard nervous accounts that he died as a warning against failure, although it's next to impossible to get any solid confirmation.

For whatever reason, Director Nakamura, we were lucky when the College of Cardinals elected Mario Bardi to the Papacy. Opus Dei watched its advantage vanish in a puff of white smoke at the 2001 Conclave, but I'm sure that hasn't stopped them. We have one opportunity to capitalize on this good fortune, because something tells me Opus Dei is hardly through. It isn't called the "Holy Mafia" without reason.

Special Agent Caroline Mantebe

[Letter excerpt from Bishop Dionigi Tettamanzi, Prelate-General of Opus Dei to Fr. Angelo Chalepeno, Assessor for General Affairs (The Section for General Affairs, The Vatican's Secretariat of State)]

Never forget Chalepeno, that we were cheated. John Paul II, our greatest accomplishment, tried to put Opus Dei on the Papal Throne before he died. I don't know how or why we lost to that liberal fool Mario Bardi, but I will not see all our accomplishments wither away. His Excellency's *Ad Dei Lucem* was the last straw, Chalepeno. It's time to deal with this upstart.

Your handling of the Cardinal Roderigo Alta situation was beautifully orchestrated, and may I say poisoning his cilice was a stroke of genius. I need you to apply your nefarious mind to other matters now. While nothing would give me greater satisfaction than seeing Benedict XVI delivered directly to our Lord's hands, this is a time for subtlety. Should Benedict XVI die, that American Cardinal Pentilla would surely earn the Papacy, and I will not be that shortsighted. We need to swing the advantage in favor of Cardinals Herranz or Cipiani. The Pope must be undone by the very implements he sanctions, novus. I entrust you with the details, but for the sake of protecting Opus Dei's complicity in this matter, you are now operating under *Disciplina Arcani*; you work alone and in secret. Keep me, and only me, abreast of your progress. I will see to your requirements.

Dionigi

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and I will cut him off from among his people.

— Leviticus 20:6

[Letter from Fr. Angelo Chalepeno, Assessor for General Affairs, to Bishop Dionigi Tettamanzi, Prelate-General of Opus Dei]

Your Excellency,

I am honored by your approval in the Alta matter. Having deliberated on the best course of action, I believe I have a suitable plan that meets all your needs.

Pope Benedict XVI is more valuable alive than dead, unfortunately. His premature death would seat the wrong successor and further aggravate our problems. By the same token, simply using novus to effect his downfall accomplishes little else. The Pope and his supporters are savvy enough to blame the actions of any nova on individual response rather than on their nature as a blasphemous species. To that end, we must attack Benedict XVI himself and reveal his infallibility *Ex Cathedra* to the College of Cardinals. By keeping the matter within the Church itself, we spare the Vatican the public humiliation, which they will be grateful for. In turn, Benedict XVI becomes a puppet controlled by the College and calls into question his choice of successor in Cardinal Pentilla. That enables you to maneuver Cardinal Cipiani into place.

My plan is as follows:

Step One: Find the proper disgrace. We could easily expose Benedict XVI to a number of scandals, but most are too crass for Opus Dei and worthy only of American politicians and the British Parliament. The ones that come to mind and are most difficult to dispute, however, are ties with organized crime, in this case the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate. You'll remember John Paul II spoke out against the Sicilian Mafia in 1995. Since then, there's been no love lost between the remnants of the Mafia and the Vatican. This means it's likelier to substantiate rumors against Benedict XVI (should any escape) rather than refute them.

Step Two: The proper crime. It recently came to my attention that one of our American numeraries, Matteo Giorie, is son to Piero Giorie, formally of the DeCavalcante family (New Jersey's *la Cosa Nostra*). Team Tomorrow imprisoned Piero during the 2004 war on crime, and Matteo has all but denounced his father. Piero is now dying of cancer and has been trying to make amends with his estranged son. I'm happy to say I brought the two back together, for a service, of course. I told Piero Giorie I would speak to Matteo on his behalf, on the condition that he helped me with a small problem. Piero has given me information on a dummy corporation through which *la Cosa Nostra* laundered money to Switzerland through the Vatican. The dummy corporation escaped T2M's purge and has been lying dormant for several years now.



THE POPE OF BABYLON

I've reactivated the dummy corporation to channel funds into a company under the name of Mario Bardi's brother Antonio. I can alter the computer records and make it look as though the accounts have been receiving money for some years now. I just need financing to set the process in motion.

Step Three: Discovering the crime. Because we want Benedict XVI's fall to come at the hands of novas, this part is the easiest to accomplish. We simply use them to uncover the bread trail we've left and let them find their way to the Papacy. I'll locate the right novas for the job, but for now, I think this will suffice?

On a final note, I told Matteo Giorie that his father was given indulgences for his renunciation of evil and reunited the two. Piero doesn't have much time left, but once he dies, I'll eliminate Matteo as a precautionary measure.

Yours in God,

Fr. Angelo Chalepeno

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.

— Deuteronomy 18:10

from Bishop Dionigi Tettamanzi

Chalepeno,

Your plan is inspired. You have my blessing, but you must move quickly on the matter. Benedict XVI will tour the United States in two months and hold a Consistory upon his return. Rumors say he plans to cut seats within the College of Cardinals to streamline the Vatican, including some of our allies. We must discredit him before then.

Reveal his culpability while he tours the United States. This should add drama to the charges leveled against him and prevent him from mobilizing his supporters until after his return. I'll have enough time to present the evidence to the College unhindered and can agitate the problem from there. If you're correct, Benedict XVI will be our own Babylonian captive by year's end.

I'll see you receive the proper financing for this endeavor. It may be expensive, but I'm sure the results will be worth the investment. See you do not fail me. It grieved me to lose Alta, and I'd hate to see Opus Dei crippled further with your premature demise.

Dionigi

For thou has trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me.

— Isaiah 47:10

[Encoded two-way OpNet conversation log between Prelate Bertolli Genavesse, *Archivum Historicum Societatis Iesu*, and unknown parties. Translated from Italian.]

— Genavesse: Good morning, hello?

— Unknown: Is this Bertolli Genavesse?

— Genavesse: Yes? Who is this, your video is—

— Unknown: You're a reporter for the Jesuit Historical Institute?

— Genavesse: Yes, I am. I'm sorry, but who is this? Your video transmission is turned off. I can't see you.

— Unknown: My identity remains unimportant for now. Listen, are you alone?

— Genavesse: Of course I'm alone. What is this about? It's three in the morning.

— Unknown: Forgive me for this irregularity. I don't mean to frighten you, but I need your help. I—I can't say who I am for the moment, but I know your work as a reporter. They say that you're impartial. You're not afraid to speak the truth, regardless the truth. Is that correct?

— Genavesse: So I've been told. What is this about? And stop being so cryptic. I'm a second away from hanging up you know.

— Unknown: No! No, please don't. I don't know who to trust. [Pause] Are you still there?

— Genavesse: [Sigh] Yes. What is it?

— Unknown: I...I don't know how to say this except...I'm a consultant for the Pontifical Council Cor Unum. Specifically, I help oversee the distribution of donations for the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel.



THE POPE OF BABYLON

- _ **Genavesse:** The foundation against desertification? I know of it.
- _ **Unknown:** Yes, well, what you don't know is that somebody is using our network of donations to launder money from the United States into Vatican City.
- _ **Genavesse:** What!?! This must be a joke? Are you certain?
- _ **Unknown:** Sadly, yes. I checked my data repeatedly.
- _ **Genavesse:** Can you provide me with proof?
- _ **Unknown:** Nothing that can't be refuted or explained away through clerical errors, but there is somebody who can substantiate what I've uncovered. That's why I need your help.
- _ **Genavesse:** How?
- _ **Unknown:** I heard you'll be traveling ahead of Benedict XVI on his tour through the United States. Is that true?
- _ **Genavesse:** Yes, by about a week. I'm to chronicle and report on the Jesuit dioceses and their preparations for Benedict XVI's arrival.
- _ **Unknown:** I've made a contact with a priest in the United States who's part of this money-laundering operation. He's willing to come forward with the relevant facts but only if he can speak to someone face-to-face. My duties prevent me from traveling but not you. You can meet him in my stead and get the proof you need.
- _ **Genavesse:** Very well. Who is this priest?
- _ **Unknown:** Not yet. I'll relay the information to you later, when I'm sure the line is better secured. I'll be in contact.... [Hang-up]
- _ **Genavesse:** Wait! Damn!

Letter from Fr. Angelo Chalepeno

Your Excellency,

The trap is set. Bertolli Genavesse will begin our investigation, and the novae you've sent me (Apocrypha, Fidei Defensor, Aureole, Dirge and Tenebrae) will dispose of him before he can meet with our mole. I've found a second group of novae who'll serve as excellent investigators in Bertolli's murder. The clues are simple enough to follow, while Apocrypha and his entourage will lend credence to any accusations of conspiracy leveled against the Papacy.

Let the *Malleus Maleficarum Novum* fall where it may. This new Inquisition against Mario Bardi's heresy will finally see justice for Opus Dei.

Yours in God,

Fr. Angelo Chalepeno

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

_ Exodus 22:18

Aberrants?

[Telephone conversation between Fr. Angelo Chalepeno and unknown parties through multi-terminal route. Translated from Italian.]

- _ **Chalepeno:** Angelo Chalepeno, hello?
- _ **Unknown:** We received your message. This line is secure. You can talk freely.
- _ **Chalepeno:** Excuse me? Sorry, but who is this?
- _ **Unknown:** My identity is not an issue here. Suffice to say I represent the Aberrants. This line is secure for another three minutes. After that, I hang up, and I won't call back. Make good use of that time Father Chalepeno.
- _ **Chalepeno:** Ah! Well, yes, I've been trying to reach your people for a few days now. [Pause] I have an urgent matter that I believe concerns us both. [Pause]
- _ **Unknown:** Don't wait for me to respond. It's your two minutes and 40 seconds here.
- _ **Chalepeno:** Sorry. I'm not used to cloak and dagger dealings. Well... it came to my attention recently that somebody is using the Vatican as a cover for illegal activities. At least, this is what a Vatican reporter told me before he vanished. His name is Bertolli Genavesse and....
- _ **Unknown:** What does this have to do with the Aberrants. We're not hired-help or a service for missing persons.



THE POPE OF BABYLON

_ **Chalepeno:** I understand that, but I believe this might interest you. Bertolli told me that whoever is using the Vatican is also duping novas of faith into helping them. Now I fear Bertolli's disappearance might have something to do with these novas.

_ **Unknown:** Still not convinced. You've got two minutes left.

_ **Chalepeno:** Then how about this. If someone is using novas to undermine the Vatican, this will certainly affect the secular view of them when this information comes to light. Benedict XVI has proven a strong ally to your people through the *Ad Dei Lucem*. Using novas against the Vatican will either make him appear the fool for his support or force him to reconsider his position. If this matter is resolved quietly, however, not only is Benedict XVI's faith in novas strengthened, but the Aberrants also gain the enthusiastic support of a small country. Project Utopia has no jurisdiction in Vatican City. Wouldn't it help your agenda to enjoy that kind of support?

_ **Unknown:** Nice words, but how do we know you can carry through on your promises? You don't speak for the Pope.

_ **Chalepeno:** True, but I do have his ear. The Secretariat of State office works closely with the Pontiff, and I am third behind the Secretariat of State. We handle the everyday affairs of caring for the Catholic Church and dealing with the Roman Curia. We oversee the official communication agencies and embassies of Vatican City across the world. At the very least, isn't my support worth something? Our ambassadors and our embassies enjoy diplomatic immunity within the Europe Commonwealth and the United States, and I handle their lines of communication. What's it worth to have access to that kind of assistance?

_ **Unknown:** I'll have to speak with my colleagues, but you've earned yourself another phone call.

_ **Chalepeno:** Thank you. Listen, if you wish to verify my story before calling me back that's perfectly acceptable. The reporter who's missing is Bertolli Genavesse. He was staying at the Four Seasons Hotel in Manhattan, Room 2114. I contacted the hotel as Bertolli Genavesse and asked them to keep the room undisturbed.

_ **Unknown:** Fine, we'll be in touch.

CNN News report, 05/13/2010

Reginald Baker White: New York, USA

_ **White:** So with a few days left, New York City prepares for Benedict XVI's first visit since his surprising rise to the Papacy. Among the delegates scheduled to appear in the welcoming committee are Mayor Angela Careso and Cardinal Pentilla, Archbishop of New York. Meanwhile, Team Tomorrow Americas, which has been overseeing His Excellency's security during his cross-continental tour, is working closely with New York authorities. When asked about potential problems with the Followers of the Avatar Cult and their leader, The Avatar, T2M Americas leader Ricardo Montoya-Bernal had this to say....

[Encoded OpNet Message]

From: Meztiszo

To: Investigation Team

Subject: Quick and Dirty

Date: May 13th, 2010

New work,

After that wonderful job you folks pulled in Bahrain, I thought I'd give you a plumb assignment in your own back yard. There's an archivist for the Jesuit Historical Society named Bertolli Genavesse who's also a freelance reporter for the Vatican. He was in town covering Benedict XVI's arrival. He's holed up in the Four Seasons Hotel in Manhattan, Room 2114, but he's not answering any calls. Last anyone heard, the boy was investigating some tawdry bit of Vatican nastiness. Look into it, and see what you come up with.

Meztiszo

PS: Oh, and if you're wondering why I'm sending in your team, it's because there might be novas involved. No details on whom, but some religious elites are rumored to be running around. Just be careful. With T2M's presence in NYC, the situation could degrade really fast if you're not discreet.





DeVries

[OpNet Message from Fr. Angelo Chalepeno to Elaine Katzenbaum]

Dear Mrs. Katzenbaum,

I wanted to thank you for the package you sent. Your discretion was greatly appreciated, though you'll understand if I'm still reticent. I'm used to relying on my own resources to settle matters, and have never employed foreign brokers. Because this affair takes place in New York, however, and may involve novas, I have no options left (especially given recent developments).

First and foremost, please be aware that I do not approach you in my official capacity as Assessor for General Affairs for the Secretariat of State. Rather, I'm employing your services as a concerned member of the Vatican who has encountered some unpleasantness and wishes to solve the matter quietly. An ally of mine, Bertolli Genavesse, was in New York this past week. Officially, he was there documenting His Supreme Excellency's arrival to your fair city. Unofficially, he was investigating allegations of "wrongdoings" against the Vatican. In his last call, Bertolli said a group of novas were involved in the fiasco, but he would not elaborate further. Subsequently, all communication with him ceased. I haven't been able to contact him over the last day, which is highly irregular.

Mrs. Katzenbaum, because of the urgency involved and because I cannot get away from my duties in Vatican City, I leave this in your care. I've already forwarded you my account draft number for payment, and I believe my credit check has met with your satisfaction? I need to hire a small team of novas to find Bertolli and, if necessary, complete his investigation. Discretion is of utmost priority, so I ask the results of their inquest remain out of the public light. Given this requirement, please assign any novas you believe best suited to this task but nobody too famous, please. While I have no doubts as to the efficiency of Pursuer or Overkill, I'm afraid they're too high profile.



Please prioritize this assignment, I'd be more than willing to pay the additional fees. I await your contract, after which I'll send you Bertolli's last known address.

Yours in God,
Fr. Angelo Chalepeno

Project Utopia

[Urgent Project Utopia memo]

From: Director Ilsa Mortensen, Chief Diplomat for Diplomacy Corps

To: Dr. Nigel Carstens, Director for Nova Coordination

Re: Unusual Request

Date: May 13, 2010

Mr. Carstens,

I just received a very unusual request forwarded through my operative Irena Calpeggio. A Fr. Angelo Chalepeno of the Vatican's Secretariat of State contacted her on a matter of extreme urgency. Apparently, an archivist for the Jesuit Historical Society named Bertolli Genavesse has vanished in New York. Mr. Chalepeno seems most distressed about the matter. He claims Mr. Genavesse was investigating allegations of wrongdoings against the Holy See and even indicated some renegade novas might be involved. Given this is taking place in New York on the near-eve of the Pontiff's arrival, Mr. Chalepeno has asked for Project Utopia's help and discretion in the matter. He doesn't want anything happening that could detract from Benedict XVI's visit, and I concur.

I'm issuing a formal request for an investigative team to look into Mr. Genavesse's disappearance, given this could strengthen diplomatic ties between Project Utopia and Vatican City. I don't need to remind you that our reputation has taken a beating these last two years. The support of the Roman Catholic Church would greatly improve our standing and public image. I leave this in your capable hands. Pick a team you believe best suited for this assignment, but remember, discretion is a must. Try not to use any high-profile members of T2M, and remind your team that they are not to speak with the press. I'll have the pertinent information from Mr. Chalepeno shortly and will forward that ASAP.

Thank you in advance,
Director Ilsa Mortensen

[Excerpt from Project Utopia mission profile folder, Operation: Holy Roller]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you well know, most of T2M Americas' veteran novas are in New York ensuring a safe visit for the Pope. While the press concentrates on them, we need your team to conduct a discreet investigation. You're searching for a man by the name of Bertolli Genavesse, a reporter for the Vatican who was staying at the Four Seasons Hotel, Room 2114. In addition to covering the Pontiff's visit to New York City, Mr. Genavesse was apparently conducting an investigation into some illegal activities within the Roman Catholic Church. You now understand why discretion is necessary. Mr. Genavesse's last report indicated some novas were somehow involved, though whom or in what capacity remains a mystery.

Your mission parameters are as follows:

- _ Investigate Mr. Genavesse's disappearance. Start with his hotel.
- _ If necessary, continue Mr. Genavesse's investigation and secure any loose ends that might be uncovered by reporters or enemy novas.
- _ Ascertain the strength and identities of the enemy novas. Avoid engaging them unless you outnumber them two-to-one. Otherwise, contact mission control, and wait for backup.
- _ Under no circumstance are you to disclose the nature of this mission or investigation unless otherwise sanctioned by me. Avoid confrontations with the press or law enforcement.

Good Hunting
Director Nigel Carstens



Teragen

[Phone Conversation excerpt between Count Raoul Orzaiz and Jeremiah Scripture]

Begging your forgiveness Raoul, perhaps my mind is simply slow today but I fail see how this matter concerns us. Not only is this a matter of baseline spirituality, but I still bear deep-seated grievances against the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Dictatorship. I think they're their own worst Antichrist, and the consequences they call down upon themselves are theirs to suffer. Perhaps a good trauma will help bring dear Mother Church into the 21st Century.

Please don't mistake my request as acceptance of their intolerance, Jeremiah. Admittedly, I have less reason than you and Divis to despise them, but there is a matter of taking advantage of the situation.

Keep your friends close and your enemies closer, is that it?

More than that; if this Chalepeno is telling the truth, then somebody's exploiting novae. You know as well as I that there's an indistinguishable border between dupe and scapegoat. What reflects badly on one nova influences us all. At the very least, we could use this opportunity to enlighten more of our kind.

Ah, Raoul. You know I would dearly love to be in agreement with you on this, but I fear I am of two minds and cannot provide the whole-hearted advocacy that you clearly want from me. I'm not sure I'm the ally you're seeking.

Or perhaps you're the best. You understand the tenets of religion far better than I do.

Careful, Orzaiz. Religions breed zealots, and zealots make eager martyrs. There is no such thing as blackmail with faith. There are only mistakes waiting for a crusade to rectify them. There is only retribution.

Besides, who says what we learn from this missing reporter Genavesse isn't to our advantage. Perhaps we can use their own weaknesses to press our agendas.

I'm saying no to Chalepeno, but yes to you, Raoul. Proceed with the investigation, but refuse the good father. He seems to have revealed more than he should have, but then again, that may well have been his intention. He's overly eager for help, notably so for our help. Bait him, and let him continue pleading. Your description suggests that he is controlling and manipulative enough to steer others into his own web of conclusions. He won't expect us to start until he says so. The advantage, therefore, is ours — for the nonce.

So, you're saying no?

Very clever.

I leave you to pick the team. While I respect Geryon's and Leviathan's struggles, you may find them somewhat heavy-handed for the affairs of faith and tact. Make discretion your primary criterion. Inform those you choose that they are likely venturing into a trap.

Hehl Unfortunately, everything in our line of work is a potential trap.

Truer, however, in this case. Your agents will be entering a city filled with T2M members ready to quash any threat against the Pope. Tell your Terats to proceed cautiously and report only to you.

I know. I'll handle the details and keep you updated. This should be interesting.

Theme

[Wiretap conversation between Bishop Dionigi Tettamanzi, Prelate-General of Opus Dei and Prelate Eduardo Mancenzo, personal assistant. Dated 14/10/2007]

Note to supervising agent: This wiretap was since uncovered. Have been unable to implant new bug due to stringent ECM thanks to the Amana Christian Commune in Germany (Amana is involved in the manufacture of electronic goods but has recently been buying from Kuro-Tek on behalf of Opus Dei).

— **Tettamanzi:** What do you see on the screen?

— **Mancenzo:** Colors, Your Eminence, lines and blotchy colors.

— **Tettamanzi:** So? What is it?

— **Mancenzo:** I... I can't tell.

— **Tettamanzi:** Exactly! And why can't you tell?

— **Mancenzo:** Because you've zoomed in too close into the picture.

— **Tettamanzi:** Good! What if I told you, for the purpose of this example, that this is Our Lord's love?

— **Mancenzo:** Sir?

— **Tettamanzi:** For the purpose of illustrating a point, that's the love of Our Lord. Would you believe me if I told you that?

— **Mancenzo:** Of course, Your Eminence.

— **Tettamanzi:** Well, I admire your loyalty Mancenzo, but would you believe me for the right reasons? [Sigh] You're staring at me like a goat Mancenzo, let me explain. Perception is a matter of distances. The great people in life are those who can step away from the world and everything around them, including their loved ones, and continue stepping back until the picture grows in clarity. I perceive Our Lord's love more clearly because I've taken greater strides than you. In that journey, I've sacrificed many things to see what I now see. The Blessed Josemarie Escriva took titanic steps to study the greater picture and appreciate things I can only dream of glimpsing. Only Our Lord, however, can see it all.

— **Mancenzo:** So we follow the wisdom of our betters until we can see that love for ourselves?

— **Tettamanzi:** You must throw off the shackles of those who would hinder your journey. That is Opus Dei. It is a migration of faithful traveling in like company, searching for those markers left by Josemarie Escriva. Others cannot understand what you see from where you stand.

— **Mancenzo:** But...?

— **Tettamanzi:** Ask your question Mancenzo. I prefer a man of intelligence to the blind and mute gnats buzzing about our Pontiff.

— **Mancenzo:** If I can't see the picture yet, how do I know the Lord's love awaits me?

— **Tettamanzi:** Fideism, Mancenzo — faith over reason. Perception is a matter of distance, but faith fuels the travel. You need both. Without distance between all things, you cannot properly perceive the world around you. Without faith, however, you can't make that journey. That is our strength: the distances we go to and the sacrifices we make. Remember that each person sees things according to where he stands. Understand that, and you unravel his motives.

[Letter excerpt from Bishop Dionigi Tettamanzi, Prelate-General of Opus Dei to Undersecretary Monsignor Francois-Andre Roi for the Congregation for the Clergy]

...The die is cast my friend. Chalepeno plays his part well, but I fear he's placed himself under too much scrutiny. Whoever searches for answers will seek him out first. Once Chalepeno's role in this is finished, administer the neuromuscular-blocker pavulon to his cilice. With Chalepeno's liver problems, the drug should make quick work of him without leaving a trace.

I took the liberty of installing a virus on Chalepeno's computer system. One message from me will unravel his entire hard drive, eliminating any evidence. That should close off the roads leading back to us.

Dionigi

[Letter from to Fr. Angelo Chalepeno, Assessor for General Affairs to Bishop Dionigi Tettamanzi, Prelate-General of Opus Dei]

Your Excellency,

The game begins in earnest. Bertolli is dead at the hands of Apocrypha, and the investigating dupes are on their way to his hotel room. Everything proceeds according to plan, guided by Our Lord's providence and my bread crumbs.

If all goes well, Benedict XVI will be Pontiff only in name, and the College of Cardinals will be ours within the week.

Yours in God

Fr. Angelo Chalepeno



Act I: Introduction

Welcome to the drama. The actors are set, the curtains are about to rise and the lights are ready for cue. Everybody understands their role, even the characters that don't know they're a part of the performance. Act I is the culmination of Opus Dei's political coup to control the Vatican; regardless of its success, the attempt illustrates its sincerity to do whatever it takes and its available resources to pursue such agendas.

Act I is the investigation behind Bertolli Genavesse's murder. What starts with allegations of wrongdoings swiftly uncovers corruption within the highest offices of the Vatican. A money-laundering operation reveals a complicated system to use church donations to process drug money from various parts of the United States, all the way into Vatican City itself. During this path of discovery, however, the characters also encounter a group of novas willing to sacrifice their very lives to carry out their religious obligations.

If this section seems straightforward, it's because Chalepeno designed it to be simple. The characters are meant to go from A to B to C in succession because it suits Opus Dei's agenda. It isn't out to challenge the team. The team is a formality in uncovering the money-laundering scheme. Few worthwhile deeds are ever that easy, however. Act I may progress according to Chalepeno's timetable (pending the team's actions of course), but its

conclusion is a catalyst for greater woes. By establishing one plot, Chalepeno accidentally sets a second one in motion. Therein lies Act II.

Scene One: Four Seasons and a Funeral

New York is alive with anticipation. Although Catholicism only holds part of the city's heart, no one can deny the sense of history in the making. Popes rarely visit stateside, and even fewer are as contemporary as Benedict XVI. The *Ad Dei Lucem* is supposedly the first in a series of reforms about to set the world on its ears. Experts believe women's acceptance into the priesthood is soon to follow. For now, however, it remains a hotly debated topic that threatens to schism the Church. Benedict XVI's visit to the United States is believed to be a diplomatic mission to bring the North American bishops and cardinals in line with the Papacy's new message of tolerance and acceptance.

For the characters, the Pope's visit is background noise. Constant reminders abound, however, in the thousand and one preparations that the city has undertaken. The most obvious remain the festive decorations splattered across walls and strung between streetlights. Electronic marquees display witticisms like *Are you ready for the XVI's Coming*. If the characters pay close attention, they also notice the sinister side of the Pontiff's eminent



visit. Members from T2M Americas fly across the sky, reminding miscreants that they're ready to deal with any mischief. The homeless population has significantly dwindled ever since the police shuttled transients into shelters or out of the city entirely.

Entering the Hotel

The Four Seasons Hotel is a typical upper-crust establishment catering to clientele who can afford the \$2000-a-night penthouses. The exterior is early 20th Century brownstone, with a simple façade and no balconies. The lobby is richly papered in gilded floral patterns, sheathed in marble, adorned with deep-stained woods and draped with an assortment of silken curtains and wide-carriage chandeliers. The elevators still use attendants for no other reason than to maintain that old-millennium charm. People speak in whispers, and everybody wears some expensive ensemble, from classic to designer chic.

Chalepeno already called the hotel in advance as Bertolli Genavesse and asked the staff not to disturb his room. As far as they know, Mr. Genavesse was out of town briefly on business and is due back any day now. The characters should know this as well, since Chalepeno included this information in his instructions. As such, room 2114 remains undisturbed. Getting there, however, is a different matter.

The staff at the Four Seasons is paid to be intrusive and snotty. If the characters casually stroll in, expecting little opposition, they're in for a surprise. True, the business-attired security guards are no match for novas, and they will back down if threatened, but they will not allow quantum-powered individuals to walk in without challenging them. If the characters are there to visit someone, they must wait in the lobby until the guest allows them up or comes down to see them. The concierge and security guards are quite emphatic on that point.

Observant characters will notice through an Intrusion roll at standard difficulty or an Awareness roll at +1 difficulty that there are security cameras hidden in the darkest corners of the lobby. These live-feed cameras all lead to a security room at the end of an adjoining corridor. The team can easily break into it and remove the DVD recordings of their actions.

If the characters force their way past security or the concierge, neither will physically resist them. The hotel staff is smart enough to know it isn't a match for novas. Instead, the staff allows the characters to pass. While the concierge and security guards were arguing with the team, somebody dials 911. The police will arrive in five minutes. If the authorities can't settle the matter peacefully, the Storyteller may take appropriate action, whether the police sends in a SWAT unit or contacts the Directive to handle the problem.

Needless to say, some forethought can prevent all of this. Characters without visible aberrations or with the Dormancy Background can slip into the hotel with little effort, while Mega-Social Attributes are the simplest and quietest way around a problem. As a reminder, however, security

will notice and confront visitors who aren't well dressed trying to get into the elevators. The team can bypass all this grief by sneaking in from the rooftop or through a window in an unoccupied room. This requires an Intrusion roll at +1 difficulty. If the characters fail, however, security guards converge on that location in under a minute, with police five minutes behind them.

Hotel Security

Physical Attributes and Wits 3, all other Attributes 2; Awareness 1, Brawl or Martial Arts 1, Bureaucracy 1, Firearms 2, Interrogation 1, Might 1; Willpower 4; automatic pistol

Police

Physical Attributes, Perception and Wits 3, all other Attributes 2; Awareness 2, Brawl or Martial Arts 3, Drive 3, Endurance 3, Firearms 2, Interrogation 2, Investigation 1, Might 2, Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2; Willpower 6; automatic pistol, SMG or assault rifle, flak jacket or full riot gear.

Room 2114

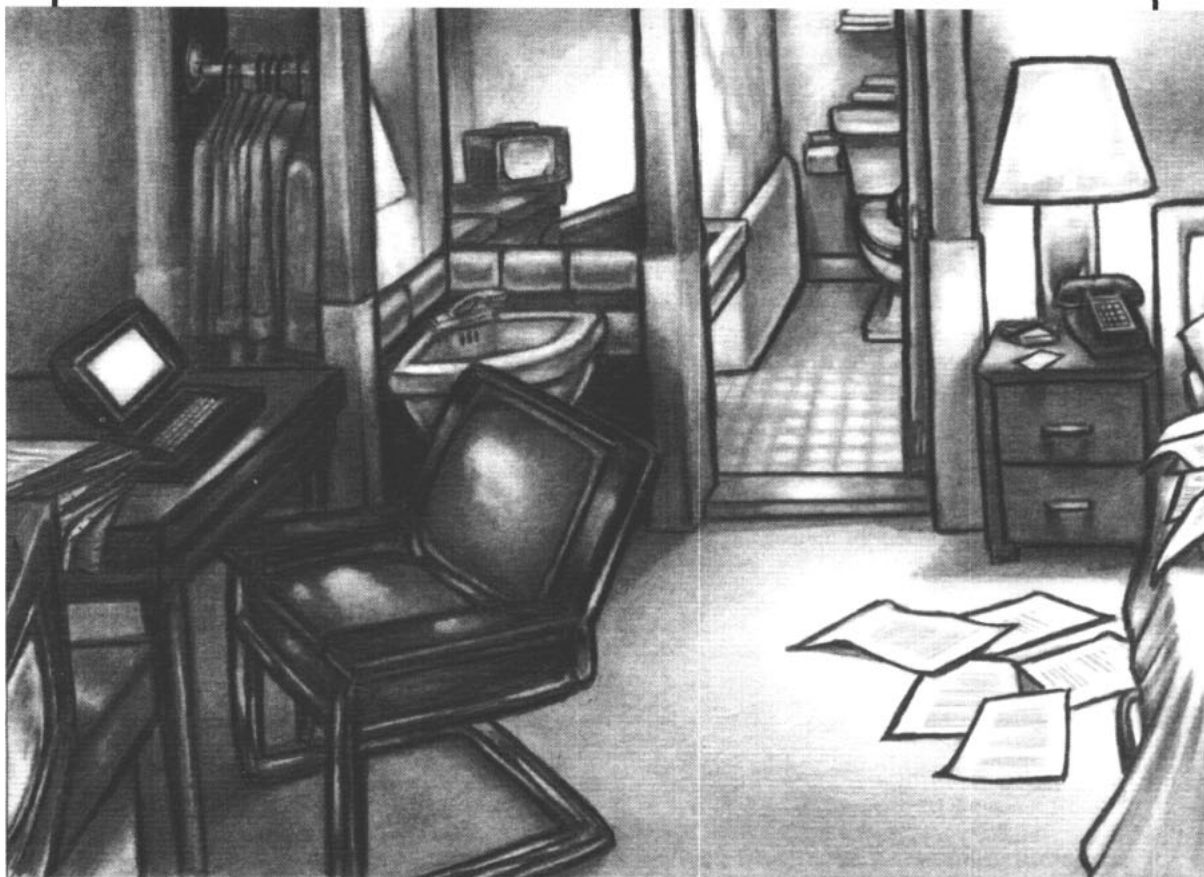
Hopefully, the team arrived at Genavesse's room without any problems. The door's card-key lock is nothing that an Intrusion roll at +1 difficulty couldn't solve. A strong shoulder also works wonders, but not without alerting the front desk (unless the character can deactivate the alarm through an Intrusion roll of standard difficulty) or anybody walking by the door with a busted frame. Other options include using subtle powers to bypass the lock or bribing (charming) one of the floor maids into letting the character in.

On the door itself is a *Do Not Disturb* sign. Bertolli Genavesse had all his research scattered about the suite and didn't want anyone rearranging his papers. The interior of the room betrays Genavesse's messy, research intensive

Genavesse's Trail: Part I

To unravel the room's clues, it is important to understand what happened to Bertolli Genavesse. He arrived in New York on Monday, May 7, 2010, where he registered for a weeklong stay at the Four Seasons. Unofficially, he was following the trail left by Angelo Chalepeno. Genavesse spent the next two days researching both the preparations by the local Jesuit priests and the money-laundering operation. He studied story clippings of the local Mafia to confirm the identity of Piero Giorie (who's the Church's Mafia contact according to Genavesse's source) and the Banco de Madrid, which was reputedly handling the laundered money.

On May 11, 2010, Genavesse received a call from Father Henry Stanislav of the Church of the Resurrection (Genavesse's contact to the money-laundering scheme, see Scene Four for more information). Stanislav set the appointment for 7:30 that evening at an abandoned church (2383 West Sycamore Street), which Genavesse wrote on the nightstand notepad before tearing out the top page. That left an impression on the next page. The meeting was a setup. Apocrypha ambushed Genavesse at the rendezvous, leaving Stanislav to feign innocence.



methodology. Although he worked for the Vatican, Genavesse prided himself on being a professional reporter. He never allowed faith or belief to color his reports, which often landed him in trouble with John Paul II's administration. Genavesse's critics still say he's overly objective even in matters of faith, though Benedict XVI's administration has been far more lenient with him.

The room itself is a simple suite with a single bed, a nightstand, a table, two chairs, a squat dresser mounted by a television set and a partitioned sink and open closet niche with an adjoining bathroom. A clutter of paperwork and books lies scattered on the bed and floor. On the table is a laptop already plugged into the OpNet and a small stack of local newspapers. The dresser and closet are full of clothing, and the suitcase hidden under the bed is empty. Searching the suite, the characters find the following facts:

- The empty suitcase and the dresser and closet filled with clothing are sure signs Genavesse didn't leave town. He also left all his toiletries.

- The documentation on the bed and floor are all research oriented. Genavesse was in town reporting on the Jesuit diocese. Most of the papers are mission statements, announcements and newspaper clippings concerning these religious organizations. The books cover the history of the regional missionary efforts. The exception is a small pile of papers regarding the local *la Cosa Nostra* or Mafia families. Newspaper clippings and printed OpNet searches reveal in-

formation on the Gambino, Genovese, Colombo, Bonanno and Luchese families. This includes the arrest of Mafia *dons* like Nick Corozzo and John Gotti and the T2M initiative that collapsed the five families. Three names are circled in the articles: Piero Giorie, Thomasso Scapagi and Eduardo Antonelli (see Section Two: Fact Finding for more information).

- The nightstand has a lamp, a telephone and a notepad. The telephone holds five messages that are easily accessed:

Message #1: (6:57 PM, 05/11/2010) *Dammit! I was hoping you were still there. I can't make our meeting. I... I think I'm being followed. I hope to God you haven't left yet. Please call me back.*

Message #2: (8:39 PM, 05/11/2010) [Hang-up]

Message #3: (9:04 PM, 05/11/2010) [Hang-up]

Message #4: (10:32 PM, 05/11/2010) *I... I haven't heard back from you yet. Dear God, I hope you're all right. Please call me, ok? I'm worried...*

Message #5: (1:03 AM, 05/12/2010) [Hang-up]

The voice is the same in the two messages. This is Father Stanislav, who knew full well that Genavesse had already left the hotel when he called. He's establishing his alibi.

The notepad is empty, though the top page is ripped out. Characters with Mega-Perception: Analytic Taste/Touch or anyone who simply rubs graphite across the paper can read the impressions of the previous page. If the players don't pick up on that trick, the Storyteller may

allow them an Awareness roll at +1 difficulty or an Investigation roll at standard difficulty to figure it out. The indented script from Genavesse's scribble reads:

Meefing — 7:30

Abandoned church — 2387 W. Sycamore Street

• The table has a laptop and several New York newspapers (The New York Post, The New York Times, Garden City Life, Gotham Gazette and New York News) dated for the past two weeks. All the articles deal with the Pontiff's visit, but scattered throughout the piles are small scraps of paper with quick notations. These morsels were taken from the OpNet or during quick conversations with Father Stanislav. Among the hastily jotted notes are:

Father Henry Stanislav... regrets?

Banco de Madrid — (April 7, 2004) Why change?

Dominique Esposito — Manager — Call back on Monday, 16th.

Madonna Horizons Consulting. No response. Closed down?

Check Better Business Bureau, NASDAQ, etc.

Label: Donations from 10M 1993-1997 to 30M

2002-2010!

The Storyteller may allow characters with Investigation a standard difficulty roll to realize that there isn't a notebook or chip-recorder in the room. All reporters use some medium to record research findings or observations. Genavesse's suite is sparse of personal notations. Either someone took it, or more likely, he's carrying it with him, wherever he is.

Oddly, Genavesse's laptop isn't password protected, so it's easily accessible. All his files are articles and stories written in Latin or Italian. None pertain to the money-laundering operation, though characters that log on to the OpNet through the laptop can easily find a listing of Genavesse's prior searches using various search engines. The list includes the following addresses:

//Op.NASDAQ.com/companysearch/MadonnaHorizonsConsulting (Genavesse was trying to find stock listings for this dummy corporation, but there are none.)

//Op.betterbusinessbureau.com/generalcompanysearch/MadonnaHorizonsConsulting (Again, there are no listings for this company.)

//Op.workhorse.com/search/madonnahorizonsconsulting (Genavesse used a browser called WorkHorse to conduct his research. There are no matches under keyword search: Madonna Horizons Consulting.)

//Op.workhorse.com/search/lacosanostra/newyorkstate (Another OpNet browser search, this time with dozens of listings for La Cosa Nostra. Genavesse searched out five sites including capos-and-dons.com, lacosanostra.com, t2m.com/WaronCrime, mafia.com and sin-dicates.com. He printed out the pertinent information.)

//Op.workhorses.com/search/BancodeMadrid/branches/newyorkcity (Genavesse's search for the local Banco de Madrid. There is one branch in Manhattan.)

Where to Go From Here

This portion of the adventure allows the team to pursue several different avenues of investigation. If the characters conduct more research using the clues already left behind by Genavesse or they decide to track down the names scribbled on paper, go to Scene Two where the various clues are further elaborated. If the characters decide to go searching for Genavesse using the notepad indentations, they can go to Scene Three.

Scene Two: Fact Finding

There is no set location for Scene Two. Instead, this section allows the characters to earn more information through research and contacts. If the notes in Genavesse's room seem scant, that's because he kept his notebook with him. Whatever the team uncovers won't be significant in blowing open the case, but it will fill in the missing pieces of the puzzle and allow the characters to reach their own conclusions without everything being revealed through exposition. It also involves them in the investigative process. More importantly, it's a segue into Act II when the killing begins. The notes provide familiarity for the characters and heighten the team's interest in uncovering the events of the final act. The Storyteller should therefore encourage and reward a character's attempt at researching with snippets of information that eventually fill out the big picture.

Research Information

Bertolli Genavesse left behind enough names for the characters to launch their inquiry. Standard research methods include using OpNet search engines, telemarketing databases, public records and even operator assistance. Beyond that, characters with Investigation know to check the plethora of vital information sources including the National Archive, the Social Security Administration, the Department of Corrections, the Secretary of State (for corporate information) and the Office of Vital Statistics. As far as disclosing facts is concerned, the different states have varying degrees of privacy controls. Some will forward data only through official letter queries. Others use toll-free lines (to keep records of the caller and his location) or might even answer questions via the OpNet. A few will outright refuse to give details due to improved Privacy Laws. Bribes, using the Freedom of Information Act in a judicious argument, Mega-Appearance Attributes or a good sob story, however, are all valid methods of circumventing rules and regulations.

The characters can uncover the following nuggets using the above methods. Those marked **Standard**, +1 or +2 indicate the degree of difficulty in accessing the pertinent information, whether through Bureaucracy, Intimidation, Interrogation, Streetwise or Subterfuge rolls. **Automatic** means the information is available through the phone operator or public records.

• Father Henry Stanislav

Automatic: Phone number and address at the Church of the Resurrection.

Standard: Father Stanislav has been running Church of the Resurrection for well over a decade now. He's a charitable man and has always provided for the community.

+1: The IRS investigated Stanislav five years ago with a thorough audit on his credit history and financial records. During the T2M purge of *la Cosa Nostra*, one Mafia member accused Stanislav of accepting bribes. The IRS checked the priest's finances, but it found nothing.

+2: Under Stanislav, the Church of the Resurrection has received sizable donations from parishioners and from Madonna Horizons Consulting for missionary work abroad. Primary recipient of funds has been Cor Unum's Foundation for the Sahel.

- Banco de Madrid

Automatic: Phone number, address and branch manager's name (Dominique Esposito).

Standard: Banco de Madrid espouses conservative family values and often provides scholarships and financial assistance for reliable members of the Catholic community.

+1: Banco de Madrid wires donations in Stanislav's name from the Church of the Resurrection to the Pontifical Council Cor Unum for Human and Christian Development.

+2: Banco de Madrid itself handles the finances for the Spanish chapter of Opus Dei, a religious and supposedly non-profit organization with considerable pull within the Vatican. Additionally, Banco de Madrid dispensed more money to Opus Dei than to any other charity. In 1978, it contributed to build Opus Dei's new headquarters, now located in Manhattan.

- Pontifical Council Cor Unum

Automatic: Address and phone number in Palazzo San Calisto in Vatican City.

Standard: Cor Unum is a charity organization for Human and Christian Development to help Third World nations. One of the main drives is the Foundation for the Sahel (in Burkina Faso, Africa), which fights drought and the advance of the Sahara.

+1: Through the Sahel Foundation, donations leapt from over 10 million dollars between 1993 and 2000, to over 30 million in the last seven years. In turn, that money goes to contractors and engineers to help fight desertification and to build new missions and hospitals.

+2: There have been several reports criticizing the Sahel foundation. Principle are claims that the money is being misappropriated. Part of the mandate to "fight desertification" is nebulous and seemingly justifies exorbitant expenses. Already, one contractor has been caught overcharging Cor Unum on building costs.

- Dominique Esposito

Automatic: Home number and address. Dominique Esposito is currently in Aspen with his family for the week but will return on Monday.

Standard: Dominique Esposito has a wife and three children. They attend church at Iglesia de la Santa Virgen regularly and are heavily involved with their community.

+1: The Espositos are originally from Madrid but moved over in 2005 with the sponsorship of their priest.

The church even provided Dominique with one of the best immigration lawyers in New York City.

+2: Dominique Esposito is an Opus Dei cooperator and donates money regularly. Background checks of +2 difficulty also reveal his priest and his immigration lawyer are card-carrying Opus Dei members.

- Piero Giorie, Thomasso Scapagi and Eduardo Antonelli

Automatic: Phone numbers or addresses belonging to family members of the three men.

Standard: Giorie and Scapagi are serving time. Antonelli was murdered in prison last year. All three men were arrested during the T2M war on *la Cosa Nostra*.

+1: All three men were indicted on a variety of crimes, mostly pertaining to racketeering and money-laundering. In particular, Piero Giorie handled the finances for the DeCavalcante family in New Jersey. He's serving a life sentence without possibility of parole in the Justice System's new "No Tolerance" campaign.

+2: Piero Giorie was recently transferred from the Attica Correctional Facility (a maximum-security prison) to Bayview Correctional Facility (a medium-security prison). He has special leave to visit the New York Presbyterian Hospital (Cornell Radiology Department) under guard every Thursday for radiotherapy treatment. Giorie is suffering from advanced metasthetized cancer and isn't expected to live beyond a year. Whether the characters learn this themselves or through Genavess's notes, it's important they have this information by the end of Act I.

- Madonna Horizons Consulting

Automatic: Contact information for Madonna Horizons Consulting through the operator, but nobody answers the phone.

Standard: Madonna Horizons Consulting has no OpNet site, therefore no listings for it will come up during searches. Only the Secretary of State's office has any information listed on their OpNet site, but even that is minimal.

+1: From 1992 to 2004, Madonna Horizons Consulting saw an impressive volume of business go through its doors. That changed in 2004, when business declined drastically (strangely enough, the company recession coincides with T2M's war on crime down to the month). It's barely operating currently.

+2: Piero Gore is listed on the board of trustees along with Thomasso Scagi and Eduardo Antonio (note the misspelling of their last names). Additionally listed are Benetto Schola and Pietro Cammelli. Searches for them reveal nothing, but searches for Scholari and Cammelliri (add "ri" to the ends of either names) find both men serving life-sentences in Green Haven and Upstate Correctional Facilities, respectively. Locating them is a simple matter of checking Genavess's newspaper clippings. The 2004 media regularly featured a who's who of T2M's arrests.

Hard Investigations

In case the team decides to question different people, here's a quick and dirty rundown on what the characters can expect to find. Again, the Storyteller shouldn't discourage this investigation since it familiarizes the

characters with the guts of the story. Allow them a sense of accomplishment from earning these clues and formulating their own theories.

- **Father Henry Stanislav:** The meeting with Father Stanislav is covered in Scene Four.

- **Banco de Madrid:** Banco de Madrid is a small financial institution catering to the Spanish District. It's one of the few remaining banks that hasn't forced client service onto the OpNet. Heavily involved in the community, it does little to hide its religious affiliations and thus attracts an older patronage. Tellers wear their crucifixes proudly, and a few even have an icon of Christ or a picture of Josemarie Escriva on their desks. Word on the street is Banco de Madrid is a recruitment office for the local Iglesia de la Santa Virgen. Customers are often told that it's easier to receive loans or mortgages if they're involved with the Iglesia.

Aside from some sinister religious undertones, there is nothing at the Banco de Madrid for the characters to find. Dominique Esposito, the branch manager, is away for the week, and he is the only link to the money-laundering operation (which the tellers and acting manager know nothing about).

- **Pontifical Council Cor Unum:** Pope Paul VI established Cor Unum, meaning "One Heart," in 1971. Its mandate is to help third-world populations through various humanitarian programs and relief efforts. There are no offices for Cor Unum in New York City, so research will be OpNet related or through European contacts. Most information is available on the Vatican sites and Cor Unum's own mission statements and press releases.

The Foundation for the Sahel is named after a region in Burkina Faso, Africa at the southern advance of the Sahara. Over the last seven years, the foundation donated 30 million dollars to fight this phenomenon. The Storyteller should allow the characters a Standard Investigation or Bureaucracy roll to figure out: Why is 30 million dollars US being piped into an organization without nova resources or advanced sciences when Project Utopia is already terraforming the entire region?

- **Dominique Esposito:** If it seems convenient that Esposito is on vacation when the investigation is underway, it's because it's deliberate. Although Angelo Chalepeno is using Esposito in the scheme, this Opus Dei supporter is still important to the organization. As such, Chalepeno has arranged for Esposito's "vacation" to take him out of danger until Monday, November 16. If the incident in New York gets blown out of the water, Opus Dei can always hide the Espositos in Denver.

If the characters track Esposito down in Aspen or quietly await his return, the man is wily enough to talk his way through the situation. At first, he'll play innocent of any wrongdoing, but if pressed or confronted by a charismatic nova, he'll claim he was coerced. If he didn't cooperate with Piero Giorie and the Mafia by laundering money through his bank, they would have killed his family. He had to protect them. This, of course, is a lie. Dominique Esposito was following orders from Opus Dei through Chalepeno and

truly believes in the rightness of his actions. He'll commit suicide before revealing the truth to "witches and mind-readers." If the characters arrest Esposito or turn him over to the authorities, he'll be out on bail within a few hours. His lawyers, of course, are courtesy of Opus Dei.

- **Piero Giorie, Thomasso Scapagi, Bennetto Scholari and Pietro Cammelliri:** All four men are available for visits, though Piero Giorie refuses to see anyone. This is partially due to his debilitating illness and partially because he knows Chalepeno's plans are in full swing. Fortunately, Giorie's cancer takes precedence, and the doctors refuse all visitors. Only police investigators can actually see him, but even then, they can't stay too long. Giorie plays faint when the questions are too probing, forcing the doctors to usher all visitors out.

As for Scapagi, Scholari and Cammelliri, they stay silent on principle. They'll negotiate for their information, demanding transfer to a minimum-security prison or for an earlier parole hearing. Unfortunately, none of them know about Giorie's deal with Opus Dei. If the characters reveal too much about the money-laundering operation, the three men will negotiate with the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate, exchanging information for future considerations. See Act II for the Megasyndicate's involvement.

- **Madonna Horizons Consulting:** Madonna Horizons Consulting was run by *la Cosa Nostra* before the 2004 purge. Because the board of trustees altered their last names when they incorporated the company under forged documents, it escaped noticed when the US government seized all criminal assets. Currently, Madonna Horizons Consulting itself is a two-room operation located in a dilapidated office building. The door is locked and a sign announces "Back in Five Minutes." That was four years ago.

The interior is barren except for a secretary's desk and coffee table in the lobby, and a desk in the main office. The magazines in the reception area date back to 2000 to 2002. The building's owner claims that the business was booming several years ago but shut its doors in 2004. Once a year, the owner receives cash from a courier to keep the space rented, but he's never seen anyone use it. The courier isn't due for another few months. This trail is a dead end.

Scene Three: Mr. Genavesse's Corpse I Presume?

There are two ways of reaching Scene Three, through an encounter with Father Henry Stanislav or if the characters translated the notepad impression in Genavesse's room. The location is an abandoned church on 2383 W. Sycamore Street, as far away from the Pope's parade route as the city could manage. Most buildings in this region are run-down, abandoned or scheduled for destruction. There's talk of renovating the entire district to attract investors and spur gentrification, but discussion is all that's happened. As a result, the area is practically abandoned and completely misused. Storefronts are boarded up, and the nearby factories are decaying hulks — ugly, corroded and dangerous. Empty



warehouses hide colonies of rats, homeless people and the occasional crack house and dollar bargain brothels. Scattered throughout are tiny enclaves of destitute neighborhoods surviving under one gang's protection or another's.

Setting

2383 W. Sycamore Street is a reconverted store built to serve as the pulpit for the now defrocked Brotherhood Church of Christ and the Disciples of the Holy Spirit. The first story comprised the store, while the remaining two housed apartments of squalid condition. This was a house church that once followed a charismatic preacher but closed down following charges of tax evasion brought when the IRS discovered that he wasn't a "legitimate" church. From the outside, it looks like any one of the destitute buildings lining the street. The windows and door are boarded from the inside, and the glass is filthy. The jimmyed door lock is partially blocked by debris, allowing entry through the crack.

The storefront church is a two-and-a-half room operation, with the main store floor in front and the manager's office and bathroom in the rear. The main room is a simple affair with tattered posters of Jesus on the walls, a bulletin board with a scattering of announcements and boxes blocking the entrance, filled with molding flyers. Five rows of broken, folding chairs face the back of the store and a small pulpit. The painted wall, now fading and barely visible, portrays the cross, a golden corona and doves ascending into Heaven. The smell of wet paper and exposed sewage is sti-

fling. To the left of the pulpit is a door to the manager's office. It's half-covered by torn curtains.

The rear office smells horrible due to the adjoining bathroom that's been used by vagrants and addicts over the years. A desk adorns the Spartan room, as does a chair with the seated and dead Mr. Genavesse.

Mr. Genavesse

Mr. Genavesse sits in a swivel chair, his head lolled to the side and his eyes open but pitch black as though

Genavesse's Trail Part II

Genavesse rented a car to rendezvous with Stanislav. Upon arriving and seeing the physical condition of the address, however, he realized he had serious reservations about his appointment. He understood Stanislav's desires to meet away from the Church of the Resurrection and prying eyes, but this seemed too unlikely a meeting spot. Before Genavesse could return to his car, however, Apocrypha appeared and forced the reporter into the abandoned church.

Genavesse knew he was going to die. He first activated the recorder he kept in his pocket, then tried dissuading Apocrypha from murdering him. It didn't work. Apocrypha killed Genavesse but not before the reporter recorded the entire conversation; it's still in his pocket. Meanwhile, Apocrypha drove the rental car into a nearby warehouse and applied his deleterious power to the vehicle to dispose of it.

the eyeballs themselves were removed. His skin (and even hair) is an odd gray, almost muddy complexion, and cracked with fine web-like fractures. He looks rather like a detailed mud sculpture of his former self.

This is the effect of Apocrypha's slow disintegration abilities. It's hollowed the poor man out, leaving behind an empty shell filled with dust. Because he targeted Genavesse's flesh, the clothing (and recorder) is still intact. If touched, pieces of Genavesse crumble and fall into his scoured out interior. Contact with his shoulder or chest, however, not only topples the fragile neck, but also brings the head crashing into the empty chest cavity (or on the floor) where it shatters like an earthen pot. Disturbing Genavesse turns him into a pile of dust, which means there's no way of preserving him unless the team makes this office his tomb.

Should the characters search Genavesse's effects, they come up with his notepad and a recorder in his jacket. Now, the Storyteller can play out the clues depending on the team's abilities and their current status in this adventure.

A Party of Sleuths: If the team enjoys investigating mysteries but has yet to follow up on the clues from the hotel room, the notepad could contain cursory information (see Scene Two: Fact Finding). This would include basic contact data on the people or businesses mentioned, leaving the characters to uncover some of the remaining facts themselves (namely those of standard, +1 or +2 difficulty).

Ahead of the Game: If characters have already begun researching data, the notebook can confirm facts or fill in pieces the characters missed. Again, the Storyteller knows her group the best and should adjust the clues accordingly. If the Storyteller wants the team to uncover information on its own, she can scrap the notebook entirely; Genavesse left in the car, for example. It's disintegrated at this point.

Adventure is Served: If the team is composed of the gung-ho sort of adventuring novices who don't have time for the subtleties of investigation, the Storyteller can fill the notebook with all the relevant information. Specifically, it could contain all automatic, standard, +1 and +2 difficulty secrets.

The Notepad

As mentioned previously, the notepad can fill in missing data or add new facts to the equation. Here are addi-

tional tidbits written by Genavesse to help tie some of the clues together. The Storyteller can add further difficulty by saying the notes are written in Italian.

Genavesse's Recording

The second item of importance in Genavesse's pockets is the chip recording of his encounter with Apocrypha. The chip holds a minute or so of dialogue that offers the characters some forewarning of the deadly power that can be used against them (Apocrypha can slowly disintegrate organic and inorganic matter over several hours). Additionally, it deepens the Roman Catholic Church's involvement in the ordeal, lending sinister undertones to Opus Dei's plot.

- **Genavesse:** (English)...No please, who are you?
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin w/ a faint metallic echo) Spare me your crocodile tears, heretic.
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) You... you speak Latin?!!
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) I speak God's words, and I mete out God's judgment.
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) I work for the Vatican, I'm a reporter for Historical Society of Jesus.
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Through that door. Save your words for prayer. A true believer would not waste his last breath with feeble pleas.
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) Please, I have done nothing. I'm innocent.
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) You've betrayed your faith, and you've betrayed His Excellency. The Papacy will not tolerate such threats against its being. Sit!
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) I have done no such thing! You've mistaken me for someone—
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) You are Bertolli Genavesse?
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) Y—yes.
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Then sit down.
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) Not until you tell me who you are!
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Very well [Scuffle and then Genavesse screams]
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) What... ahhh! It hurts! What have you done to—to me?
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Sent you to God for judgment. You'll die within an hour. Do you wish me to administer extreme unction?
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) You're... you're a priest?
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Sit. It'll ease your suffering. Is that better? Ignore this façade; I am a priest.
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) Why are you... ahh! Why?
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Shh. Ask for forgiveness. Don't die with a lie in your heart. Free your soul.
- **Genavesse:** (Latin) I'm innocent! I'm innocent! Damn you! I'm [Muted scream again, then Genavesse sobbing and gurgling].
- **Apocrypha:** (Latin) Forgive me, but I had to remove your tongue lest you damn yourself further. I'm doing this to save you. Now nod. Do you beg for forgiveness? Nod! Yes? Good, good. I'll carry your pleas for absolution back to the Vatican with me. I'll ask His Holiness to pray for your soul.

The recording lapses into silence after Apocrypha administers last rites and leaves the room.

• **Piero Giorie** — Treatment for secondary cancer chondrosarcoma (cancer of the bone). Primary cancer unknown — listed as CUP (cancer of unknown origin) or metastasize. Thursday treatments at New York Presbyterian Hospital & Cornell Radiology (York and 68th) in Memorial Hospital building.

• **Is Giorie = Gae?** That means Scapagi = Scagi, Antonio = Antonelli. All three are on Madonna Consulting's Board of Trustees. Is company is a Mafia shell? Who are Benedetto Schola and Piero Cammelli?

• **Madonna Consulting to the Church of the Resurrection** (Fr. Stanislaw). The Church of the Resurrection to Banco de Madrid (Esposito). BDM to Cor Univm. Cor Univm to "T". "T" back to Madonna Consulting? Still missing links. Is "T" a contractor?

• **Madonna used New York Empire Bank pre-2004.** Why the change to Banco de Madrid?



Springing the Trap

When Angelo Chalepeno hired or petitioned the services of the characters (or their organization), he immediately warned his hired novae (Apocrypha, Fidei Defensor, Aureole, Dirge and Tenebrae). He has three novae keeping surveillance on the Church of the Resurrection and another two at 2383 W. Sycamore Street. In both cases, the instructions are to keep watch on whoever enters either building and to attack them as enemies of the Vatican. In this scene, Chalepeno left instructions that Aureole and Dirge were to collapse the store several minutes after someone entered the building. The two have kept vigil in an abandoned structure two blocks away.

Chalepeno knows a falling building will not easily kill novae. He's using two of his weaker dupes to confront the characters, believing the team will overcome the odds. This is another act in Chalepeno's play to get the characters riled up and blind to the possibility they're being misled. He's baiting them so that when they uncover the money-laundering scheme, they'll be mad enough to reveal the "truth" to him, regardless the consequences.

Before using Dirge and Aureole (their write-ups are in the *Dramatis Personae* section at the end of this act), the Storyteller should allow the characters enough time to find Genavese and to search him. Once they recover the recorder and notebook, or if they're taking too long, the attack begins.

Dirge and Aureole leave their hiding spot and use the alleyways across the street to maneuver into position opposite the "house church" (which accounts for their delay in attacking). Dirge then uses a sonic scream to bring the building down. Given its dilapidated condition, he only needs two blasts to accomplish his task. His first shot shakes the building violently and collapses 8d10 B [5 health levels instantly] worth of upper floor. The team has one action left before the structure buckles. The second blast closes the deal and deposits 16d10 B [10 health levels instantly] worth of debris the next turn. Fortunately, because the rear door is the easiest escape route, characters can retreat before the entire structure crashes down.

If the team exits through the rear of the store, they'll have a turn or two to regroup and regain their bearings. Anyone who escapes through the front meets Aureole, who kicks off combat with a Strobe flash to blind the opposition. Dirge joins in from a distance, while Aureole takes flight and peppers the area from the sky. Dirge always remains indoors during the fight. This limits the number of directions the team can attack him from, and it allows him to collapse this building if he's being overwhelmed. His Bodymorph (Sound) allows him to use Density Control (Decrease) to slip through rubble and falling debris. Aureole, on the other hand, prefers unhindered movement and will rarely, if ever, allow herself to be trapped close to the ground.

While Dirge and Aureole are convinced of the merits of their duties, they've been instructed to retreat in the face of overwhelming adversity. If possible, they should withdraw to the Church of the Resurrection, where they

are to assist Apocrypha, Fidei Defensor and Tenebrae. The characters are sure to show up there as well. If the team already visited the Church of the Resurrection, however, any escapees from that combat will show up here.

If Dirge or Aureole is captured, they remain silent unless the characters use extreme measures like Telepathy or Social Mega-Attributes to ferret out the truth. Remember, however, that Chalepeno's novae, with exception to Apocrypha, believe they are fighting to protect the Holy Roman Church from internal threats and corruption. The Pontiff himself has sanctioned their actions through an intermediary. They are Crusaders to the characters Saracens.

Scene Four: The Church of the Resurrection

Like a train gathering speed, the clues are falling into place. All that remains now is to find the connection that brings the puzzle together, and that rests with Father Henry Stanislav. Now, given the structure of this adventure, it's entirely possible the characters come here before ever finding Genavese's body. That's not a problem. If they arrived with minimal background research on the various individuals and businesses covered by Genavese, Stanislav can redirect the team back to finding the missing reporter. He says things like:

- *I'm only speaking to Bertolli Genavese, so unless you bring him to me, I have nothing to say.*

- *I'm sorry. I don't know whom you work for or why. If you can prove to me that you have an inkling of what's happening, perhaps then I'd be more forthcoming.*

- *If you are trying to help, then help me find Genavese. I was supposed to meet him, but I was being watched and couldn't go. No, I don't know who was watching me. I haven't heard back from Genavese. I was supposed to meet him at 2383 West Sycamore Street in an abandoned church. Find him.*

The Storyteller can say whatever she wants but should use the excuse least likely to offend the party and the one that'll allow them to cover the previous scenes. If team members use mental abilities or Intimidation to get Stanislav talking, let them. They'll simply miss out on the fact-finding aspects of this adventure.

Setting

The setting is the Church of the Resurrection, the heart of a small and idyllic suburban neighborhood in New Jersey. The Church of the Resurrection is of above-average means, as evinced by its beautifully manicured lawns, now a pale green from advancing winter, and protected flowerbeds. The building itself (borrowing an Anglican cross-shaped floor scheme) has a Gothic Revival façade with a sloped roof, arched windows and age-faded brownstones. The stonework steeple and cross are reminiscent of early 1900's charm but also add a conservative touch to the already quiet community of upper middle-income

homes. The church has no parking lot. Instead, parishioners park on the street or simply walk to services.

To the rear of the Church of the Resurrection is a small home for the two priests (Father Henry Stanislav and Father Paul Ackers) and a small community center with one classroom for Sunday school and a fenced off playground. Currently, Apocrypha, Fidei Defensor and Tenebrae are hiding in the community center, waiting for Stanislav's signal (see the Fought on Faith section for more information).

Father Henry Stanislav

Father Stanislav is on church grounds when the characters arrive. His reaction to them depends on how blatant they are in presenting themselves. Obviously, he won't be pleased should they appear in broad daylight and demand: "Father Stanislav, account for yourself." Regardless, he escorts the team into his office where he can speak to them privately.

Despite Stanislav's initial reactions, he'll still cooperate for two reasons. First and foremost, he can't risk anyone reading his thoughts too deeply or charming the truth from him. Secondly, the story must get out, and Stanislav isn't concerned with its messengers. When the characters arrive and confront Stanislav, he'll confirm whether or not they know at least part of the story. If they don't, he'll send them looking for Genavese. This way, he can confirm suspicions and validate theories rather than filling in all the gaps. Stanislav knows this is a harder path, but it is necessary. Should the characters learn the facts from him alone, it'll increase suspicions against him and his story. Doubt always works against the accuser in these situations. If Stanislav confirms rather than condemns, however, the impetus of doubt is no longer against him. He can't be suspect of divulging erroneous facts when the characters uncovered the information on their own.

If the team has investigated the matter and approached Stanislav, he'll first ascertain what they know. After hearing their data, he'll do his best to fill in the blanks.

The Money-Laundering Operation

For years, Father Stanislav sinned against the Church by helping the DeCavalcante family in a massive money-laundering scheme. The Mafia owns Madonna Horizons, which it used as a consulting firm for clientele, charging a pretty penny for its services. In truth, however, Madonna Horizons is a dummy corporation designed to handle money gained through illegal operations (drugs, gun smuggling, prostitution, etc.). Madonna Horizons channels these illegal funds into charitable donations through churches like the Church of the Resurrection.

In turn, the Church of the Resurrection uses "Smurfs," or carriers, to deposit the donations into institutions like Banco de Madrid in installments of \$8,000 (transactions of \$8,200 have to be filed by law) into multiple accounts. Bank complicity comes in the form of Dominique Esposito, who hides the paper trail and maintains these different accounts. From Banco de Madrid, the money is wired over to Vatican City as donations for the Foundation for the Sahel

(Vatican City is ranked eighth worldwide in money-laundering schemes as source or destination).

The Pontifical Council Cor Unum then sets aside the Banco de Madrid transfers for "contractual work" to fight the advance of the Sahara. In this case, the contracted company is Puzzo International Construction Ventures. Rather than building, however, PICV uses its appropriated funds to pay multiple credit card bills and establish a positive line of credit through a Swiss family bank (none of which have shareholders or need to provide books or stock reports to the government due to Switzerland's strict Secrecy Acts). This excess credit is then turned into a wire transfer and sent overseas for deposit in the accounts of companies like Madonna Horizon Consulting for "services rendered."

Although this might seem complicated, it is necessary to hide the movement of funds in an electronic shell game. Over one million transactions go through the OpNet every day, so tracking this shifting trail is exhaustive. Additionally, because few people will go to Africa to confirm PICV's construction work in the Sahel, it's near impossible to verify the money is not being used for humanitarian purposes.

After Stanislav finishes with this explanation, he allows the characters a few moments to ponder and discuss the significance of what they've just heard. He's saving the best for last.

Antonio Bardi, brother to Mario Bardi (better known as Pope Benedict XVI) is president of the Board of Trustees for PICV. Stanislav claims he recently learned this through a contact at Cor Unum. Antonio Bardi has never received any money directly from the company, but he has a home and boat in his name on Lake Geneva in Switzerland as a gift from PICV. Additionally, he owns eight credit cards as Board of Trustees president that are attached to Swiss family banks. These are used to overpay on credit limits for the purpose of sending wire transfers back to Madonna Horizons Consulting. This all began right after Benedict XVI's ascension to the Papal Throne and could not occur without his blessing. Antonio has no contacts within the Vatican as a construction engineer and needed someone of power to facilitate the transactions through Cor Unum, the Pope's own charity organization. Benedict XVI is responsible for appointing Cor Unum's president, under-secretary, members and consultants. The operation began just after their appointment, and anyone helping Antonio was handpicked by the Pope.

Stanislav claims his decision to recant his sins and reveal the truth to Genavesse came when he discovered the Pope's potential involvement in the money-laundering operation. Stanislav can accept and regret his own weaknesses, but the Papacy is more important than any individual. It's the infallibility of God through His spokesman on Earth. Were this scandal ever to come out, it would rock Catholic faith to the core. Stanislav wanted to report this to his superiors and needed an honest man within the Vatican in the form of Genavesse to help him and to protect him from the potential backlash. Unfortunately, someone tipped the Vatican off, and Genavesse (if Stanislav was told of his fate) has paid for his help. Father Stanislav fears he is next.

What Father Stanislav Keeps Hidden

What Father Stanislav knows, but does not say, is that the Cor Unum laundering scam ended with the fall of the DeCavalcante family. There is indeed corruption within the Vatican but not where Opus Dei expects. Because the laundering network escaped investigation in 2004, it remained mostly intact when Angelo Chalepeno approached Piero Giorie. Once Giorie gave Chalepeno all the vital information, Opus Dei then enlisted Stanislav to play the role of reformed criminal. If he refused, Chalepeno threatened to turn him over to the authorities. Stanislav would sooner screw over novas than run afoul of the Vatican's Holy Mafia.

To reactivate the old network, Chalepeno arranged for the money to move through Banco de Madrid instead of New York Empire Bank, the original financial institution in the money-laundering cycle. Opus Dei controls Banco de Madrid at nearly every level and often uses the bank to make it appear as though Opus Dei is still a non-profit organization. Next, Giorie's overseas holdings and credit cards were placed in Antonio Bardi's name to frame him for accepting bribes and gifts. Backtracking financial records and writs of ownership, however, will reveal Giorie's original proprietorship.

Finally, to make it appear as though the money-laundering operation was still active from 2004 to 2010, Opus Dei and Banco de Madrid did some creative editing to alter computer records for that period of time. Specifically, Dominique Esposito reactivated voided transactions and order numbers from the last five years and reentered them in the system as donations from the Church of the Resurrection to Cor Unum. The wire transfers are therefore spread out over several years. Opus Dei sympathizers in Cor Unum then altered deposit dates to reflect Banco de Madrid's records. The only portion of this cycle that remains lost, however, are the Swiss credit cards. Switzerland's stringent privacy protocols make it nearly impossible to retrieve that information. Interestingly enough, however, the money transferred by Banco de Madrid vanished behind Switzerland's fortified electronic vaults. None of the money made it back to Madonna Horizons Consulting, thanks to Opus Dei reclaiming its investment.

Fought on Faith

Father Stanislav has one last trick up his sleeve, and that's a beeper in his pocket that will alert the three novas waiting to ambush the characters. Once Stanislav gives the signal, the three novas, Apocrypha, Fidei Defensor and Tenebrae spring into action (if either Dirge or Aureole escaped the Sycamore fight, they'll be there as well). Tenebrae instantly creates three shadow clones and sends them with Apocrypha. Fidei Defensor takes to the air.

The beeper, which Stanislav can activate simply by pressing his thumb against his pocket, ensures Apocrypha doesn't attack the characters before they uncover the truth. Apocrypha, of course, is the only member of the trio who knows that. The remaining two believe Stanislav is playing evil to uncover the team's plans to

undermine the Church. Apocrypha won't betray Stanislav's "role" in this and will even attempt to "hit" him to make the attack look convincing to the characters. Again, Chalepeno divided his novas so that the team is challenged and possibly hurt but not entirely beaten.

The ambush occurs in the churchyard simply because these religious novas will not fight in the house of God. When the characters emerge from their meeting, Tenebrae strikes first by targeting the largest cluster of novas and blanketing the area under a shroud of semi-tangible darkness. Fidei Defensor then lands near the shroud and uses Shockwave to knock his opponents off balance. In the next turn, Tenebrae's three shadow clones enter the darkness and start fighting the team while Fidei Defensor and Apocrypha attack anyone outside the shroud.

If the characters are overwhelming the three novas, Apocrypha and his allies retreat to the best of their ability. Fidei Defensor takes flight, and Apocrypha teleports away, while Tenebrae uses his pliant shadow-form to slither off. Regardless of the outcome, the street quickly fills with witnesses who report the battle and its participants to the police.

Aftermath

Obviously, Chalepeno engineered the scenario to go his way, but events rarely go the way we plan them. A

number of things can happen, all of which are valid, and all of which are potentially temporary in the light of Act II. The characters, for one, now have a disturbing bit of news concerning the Pope. They must decide whether to give the information to Chalepeno so that the Vatican handles it quietly or to keep the news to themselves. Terats and Aberrants, in particular, are likelier to use this news to their advantage. Whether they curry favors from it or hope to use the money-laundering network themselves is their choice. Chalepeno will pester the characters for the facts but to no avail. There's nothing he can do before the events of Act II throws everything into turmoil.

If the plan progresses as predicted, the characters earn Chalepeno's wedge of cheese at the end of the maze and quietly hand him the information. Opus Dei can now make Benedict XVI a Babylonian captive in his own administration and use him as a figurehead. Act II might be the only chance for the characters to rectify this situation.

A third outcome is that the characters actually uncover the plot to frame the Pope. In this case, Opus Dei assassinates Chalepeno immediately, severing any ties to it. Before it can use its US operatives to off Dominique Esposito and Father Stanislav, however, Act II swings into full gear. Another, far messier option is that, somewhere along the way, the media got a whiff of the story and it goes public. Suddenly, the Pope's visit to New York takes on an entirely



new twist. Opus Dei assassinates Chalepeno and tries swinging the College of Cardinals to its side. While the Vatican might publicly support the Pontiff, the Holy Father is still an exile within his own administration for the time being.

Dramatis Personae

Apocrypha

Background: Marcus Tischendorf was a missionary and recruiter for Opus Dei, enlisting supporters from among Africa's affluent and influential ruling elite. This set him squarely in Khartoum when the Equatorial Wars swept through Sudan. To his credit, Tischendorf imperiled his life by helping civilians escape the fighting. Unfortunately, witnessing a thousand atrocities best left to the ninth circle of Hell took its toll on his psyche. He questioned God but continued saving lives. It was this heroic gesture that brought about his eruption as a nova at a detriment to his sanity. Suddenly, Tischendorf became a monster to the people he was helping. Even his attempts to administer last rites abandoned him, when his touch brought about nothing but slow death. Tischendorf believed he was being punished for forsaking God. He failed whatever test Heaven had asked of him during this crisis, and he now bore the brand of nova as sure as God had marked Cain for his sins.

Initially, Tischendorf surrendered himself to Opus Dei for judgment, hoping it would kill him as an abomination. Better death than novahood, but better novahood than suicide, the ultimate offense against faith. Opus Dei, however, recognized a serviceable tool when it saw one, and refused Tischendorf's pleas. Instead, it renamed him Apocrypha and set him to work accomplishing Opus Dei's will. After all, Opus Dei's leadership convinced him, it would be a sin for them to pursue misdeeds when their hands were unblemished by blood. He, however, who had already killed and become an abomination, could easily accomplish the Vatican's dirty business. What had he to lose? Besides, his sacrifice would ensure Opus Dei remained virtuous. He would be its sinner,

and in doing so, redeem himself. He trained with Opus Dei missionaries supporting various rebel camps throughout Africa and learned how to kill without compunction.

Image: Apocrypha is a well-built man, cut to definition and sheathed in a glowing silver-white shell. He exudes a crackling silver-blue flame. His face, covered and shielded, bears a black cross through which he can see and breathe, though no features are evident. He never walks but glides about like a ghost. His voice echoes with a faint metallic resonance.

Roleplaying Hints: You once questioned your faith. Now you have this form as a reminder of your disloyalty. You are silver like the Lord's blade; you are not the guiding hand but the arc that slays all in its path. You kill, because it is a Crusader's right. You commit atrocities that you would otherwise question, because it is a Crusader's duty. You will never doubt God again or dispute the wisdom of Opus Dei. Who are you to debate your place?

Gear: Apocrypha's vow of poverty precludes the accumulation of worldly goods.

Nature: Visionary

Allegiance: Opus Dei

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 4, Manipulation 3, Charisma 2

Abilities: Academics 4, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 3, Endurance 3, Interrogation 4, Intimidation 3, Linguistics 3 (Native: English; Arabic, Latin, Spanish), Martial Arts 2, Rapport 2, Resistance 3

New Extra: Sustained

This Extra allows a nova to spread the damage from one attack over a period of time rather than instantaneously, much like Poison. For example, a nova with a Quantum Bolt radiation blast uses Sustained to hit a target once. Although he rolls damage immediately, there is little evident effect. The target, however, slowly suffers radiation poisoning at a rate of 1D L (for example) at the time of the attack and 1D L per hour after that until the damage levels are used.

A target's resistance against this Extra is determined when he is hit and not with each individual wound level. That means once the adversary is hurt, the effects manifest every hour until all the unsoaked damage is burned through. Fortunately for novas with the Mega-Stamina enhancement Regeneration or the Healing quantum power, they can treat their manifested injuries immediately. They cannot treat the wounds yet to come, however.

The character can control how much damage the target suffers every hour. Bear in mind, however, that the more damage a target takes in one shot, the shorter his duration of suffering. At minimum, the attacker must divide his attack for two separate occasions. That means the target can suffer half-damage at the point of the attack and the remaining half an hour later.

This Extra is easily partnered with various powers; Claw attacks that secrete anti-coagulants like warfarin; radiation-related blasts; fat-storage drugs that manifest when the target burns calories; Holo that cause repeated synaptic discharges to replay the same images and minor Domination commands that sound like voices inside the victim's head.



Backgrounds: Allies 2, Attunement 4, Backing 3, Contacts 2, Eufiber 3, Node 2, Resources 1
Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 8, Taint 4 (Resonant Voice)

Powers: Mega-Dexterity ●●● (Accuracy, Rapid Strike), Mega-Stamina ●●● (Durability, Regeneration), Mega-Perception ●● (Ultrapерipheral Perception), Armor ●●● (Impervious), Bioluminescence ●●, Disintegration ●●●● (Sustained), Flight ●, Quantum Bolt (Holy Fire — Lethal) ●●●● (Burning), Teleport ●

Aureole

Background: Lilia Deriada was a prostitute in Manila when she erupted. Branded a criminal for killing the men who'd tried to rape her, the young nova found sanctuary in the local mission. Of course, when the nuns there offered Deriada an escape from Manila and the Philippines, she couldn't refuse such generosity. Certainly, she had never heard of Opus Dei before, but these kind men and women had rescued her from certain death.

Older and now beautiful by any standard, Deriada works quietly for the Vatican, eliminating heretics for the Pontiff himself (or so Opus Dei would have her believe). She understands that by trying to meet the Pope, she would endanger the Holy Father's reputation, so she's satisfied to work from the shadows. She won't betray his trust. This New York job, however, is the first time she's had to battle other novas in the open.

Nature: Survivor

Allegiance: Roman Catholic Church

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Perception 2, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Appearance 5, Manipulation 2, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Brawl 3, Endurance 3, Intrusion 2, Legerdemain 3, Linguistics 1 (Native: Pilipino; English), Resistance 3, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2
Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 4, Taint 1

Powers: Mega-Dexterity ●●●● (Accuracy, Enhanced Movement, Physical Prodigy), Mega-Wits ●● (Quickness x 2), Mega-Appearance ● (Seductive Looks), Flight ●●●●, Force Field ●●●, Quantum Bolt (Laser — Lethal) ●●● (MIRV), Strobe (Light) ●●●●

Dirge

Background: Aggie Zylinske was nearly run over by a truck while crossing the street, but in the moment it took him to scream, he erupted, becoming living sound and shattering the truck's lights and windows while passing through it. Thus, Dirge was born. If Zylinske was a good man before the eruption, he quickly changed afterward. A devout Catholic man, Dirge tried to use his sonic abilities to become "a force of good" for the Church in Warsaw, but his own priest balked at the idea. Catholicism wasn't about creating new Crusaders. It was about compassion.

Zylinske repeatedly approached the religious leaders of his city, his country and, eventually, the Vatican itself. They all refused the idea of a Catholic-sanctioned team. Angelo Chalepeno, however, thought otherwise. Chalepeno convinced Dirge that to get what he wanted, he'd have to prove the Catholic Church needed protecting. What better way to do that than to eliminate the threat that was unfolding in New York City. Dirge, perhaps blindly, was all too eager to agree.

Nature: Follower

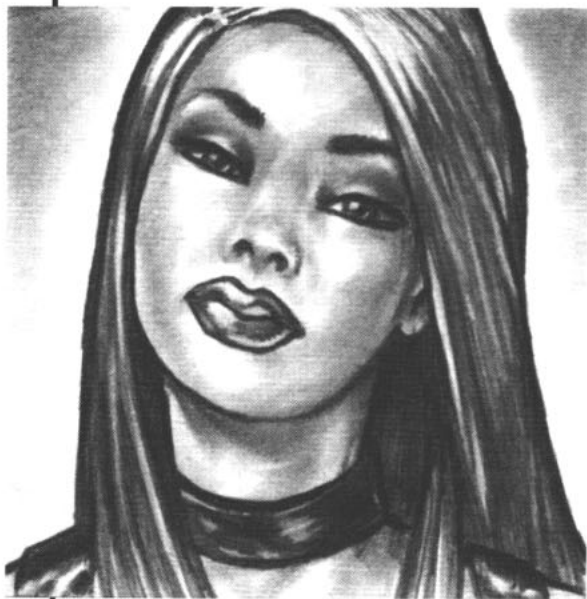
Allegiance: Roman Catholic Church

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Appearance 2, Manipulation 2, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 1, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 2, Linguistics 3 (Native: Polish; English, Latin, Russian), Melee 3, Might 1, Resistance 2, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 2

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 4, Taint 1

Powers: Mega-Strength ●● (Thunderclap), Mega-Stamina ●● (Adaptability, Regeneration), Mega-Intelli-



gence • (Analyze Weakness), Bodymorph (Sound — Density Control [Decrease] •••, Hyper-Enhanced Hearing, Immolate [Bashing] •) •••••, Disorient ••, Quantum Bolt (Sound — Bashing) •••• (Area: Cone), Sensory Shield •••, Strobe (Hearing) •••

Fidei Defensor

Background: The quiet Fidei Defensor came into this world as Joseph Bakilo of Nigeria. Bakilo, a social worker and Opus Dei supporter, watched his government squander fortunes on nova mercenaries, when the money was better suited for reform and education. One night, Bakilo erupted after a bad car accident that killed his wife and child.

The Nigerian government tried forcing Bakilo into military service, but he wouldn't have it. He'd spent the last five years watching elites drain his country's finances and swore he wouldn't be counted among them. Matters came to a head when the government sent the army and other elites after Bakilo. Fortunately, he had allies in Opus Dei. They helped smuggle him from Nigeria in return for his service. Since then, Bakilo has served Opus Dei and the Catholic Church loyally as Fidei Defensor, Defender of the Faith.

Nature: Traditionalist

Allegiance: Opus Dei

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Appearance 3, Manipulation 2, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Command 1, Endurance 3, Firearms 2, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 2, Linguistics 2 (Native: English; Hausa, Yoruba), Martial Arts 3, Might 4, Resistance 4, Survival 3

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 7, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Strength •••• (Crush, Shockwave, Thunderclap), Mega-Stamina •••• (Durability, Hardbody, Resiliency), Mega-Perception • (Quantum Attunement), Flight •••, Invulnerability •• (Broad Category: Physical Attacks)

Tenebrae

Background: Tenebrae remembers nothing of his life before he wandered into a Cistercian Abbey in Fossanova, Italy. The local priest hid the young man who pulsed with dark energy, even when Project Utopia announced a prisoner had escaped their custody. Father Marconni, Tenebrae's savior, unfortunately, could not house the young man indefinitely within a community as small as Fossanova. He arranged to transport Tenebrae to Abbazia Cistercense di Casamari (The Abbey of Casamari) in Cerrate. Father Marconni didn't realize the abbey had become an Opus Dei stronghold.

Since then, Tenebrae has forged a new identity for himself, one revolving around Opus Dei's version of Catholicism. While he finds their strict ethics chaffing, he appreciates their Machiavellian tactics and even admires the use of murder to further a cause. Tenebrae may not remember his former life, but he realizes the skin of a murderer and criminal fits him well. With religion, he's also discovered a justification for it.

Nature: Explorer

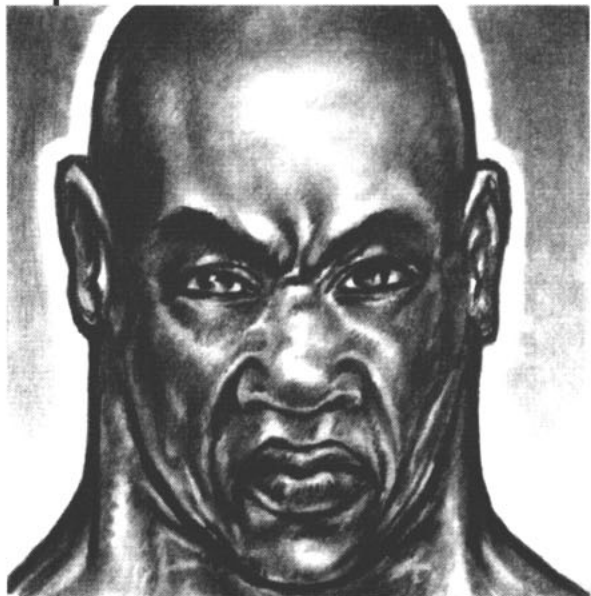
Allegiance: Roman Catholic Church

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Appearance 2, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics 2, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Endurance 3, Intimidation 3, Intrusion 4, Linguistics 2 (Native: Italian; English, Latin), Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 6, Taint 4 (Black Aura)

Powers: Mega-Dexterity •• (Accuracy, Catfooted), Mega-Stamina • (Resiliency), Mega-Perception • (Electromagnetic Vision), Mega-Wits ••• (Enhanced Initiative, Quickness), Bodymorph (Shadow — Clone •, Density Control [Decrease] ••, Flatform, Invisibility [only in shadows] •; see **Aberrant: Teragen**, p. 130 for more information) ••••, Immobilize ••, Quantum Bolt (Shadow — Lethal) •••, Shroud ••• (Semisolid)



[Encoded OpNet conference call between Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate Lieutenants.]

- **Voice 1:** Good morning gentlemen. We have a situation.
- **Voice 2:** We'd better. It's 3:00 AM here.
- **Voice 1:** Adapt. It's currently 7:00 PM Eastern Standard Time. That's the time you have to worry about.
- **Voice 3:** Can we get going? What was so important that it couldn't wait till morning?
- **Voice 1:** Two weeks ago, we detected high volume activity moving through a supposedly defunct money-laundering operation in New York.
- **Voice 3:** Which one?
- **Voice 1:** Your brainchild Eduardo. The Madonna Horizons Consulting scam.
- **Voice 2:** I don't know that one.
- **Voice 3:** Before your time. It was a *Cosa Nostra* operation, a sweet deal to launder money through the Vatican. When T2M bagged the five families, it escaped notice. We abandoned it just in case the Feds were using it as bait.
- **Voice 1:** We abandoned it. Piero Giorie and his boys didn't.
- **Voice 3:** Aren't they serving time.
- **Voice 1:** Till they turn to dust. Problem is, they set up a fund to keep Madonna Horizons Consulting operating for a rainy day. Well, it's pouring now.
- **Voice 3:** Why did it take you two weeks to contact us?
- **Voice 1:** I needed to confirm some facts. As of a month ago, Giorie and some outside players started laundering money through the Vatican. Only, a couple of things have changed. Banco de Madrid is now handling the placement stage of the financing, and the cash flow is stopping in Switzerland. They're also changing dates to make it look like it's been in operation for the last five years.
- **Voice 3:** That bitch! That was my deal. I'm gonna rip off Giorie's arm and fuck him with it!
- **Voice 1:** Good. As long as we get some answers. They're still using the old Swiss network, so I was able to get some information out of our old friend Nicholas.
- **Voice 3:** Hey, how is that prick doing?
- **Voice 1:** Dead. He did tell Jimmy the Pliers that somebody shifted Giorie's holdings on Lake Geneva to... get this... Antonio Bardi.
- **Voice 2:** Holy shit!
- **Voice 1:** Now you know why I woke you up. Eduardo, I need you to figure out this new network and track it to its source. Start with that priest Stanislav. He's involved.
- **Voice 3:** On it!
- **Voice 1:** Toni. Monitor things Europe-side, and find out who's holding Banco de Madrid's dick. I want to know who's bankrolling Giorie and why they're trying to frame the Pope's brother.
- **Voice 2:** You got it.
- **Voice 1:** Eduardo, one last thing. I also delayed telling you about this until after I sent somebody to keep an eye of Stanislav.
- **Voice 3:** And?
- **Voice 1:** Whomever he's working for has novas to spare. My source saw Stanislav talking to five M-R jobs.
- **Voice 3:** Got it. I'll use ScarCrow and his boys. This is right up their alley.
- **Voice 1:** Tell them to be careful. The Pope's landing in New York this week, and T2M is all over the place. I want this operation eliminated. Tell your boys to be as brutal as they can. We need to set an example.



Act II: Introduction

No plan ever proceeds without a snag, and Opus Dei's plot to frame Benedict XVI just hit a quantum-sized Murphy's Law. The Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate is now involved in the situation and has sent its novas to close down the money-laundering operation. Unfortunately, that means everyone who the characters have communicated with or know about are dead or on the kill list. Someone destroyed the Church of the Resurrection (leaving Stanislav in intensive care), murdered the jailed Mafia lieutenants in prison (Giorie is still alive, however) and burned both Banco de Madrid and Madonna Horizons Consulting to the ground.

Act II is a rescue operation. The characters must backtrack through their clues and information and figure out who's killing the principles in the money-laundering scam. Unfortunately, the Pope's arrival convolutes matters further. The high-profile murders and bombings are doing nothing to ease T2M's anxieties of a hidden threat against the Pope, though few people know the direct link between the incidents. This means one major slip-up on the team's part and there could be a four-way battle be-

tween the remnants of Apocrypha's forces, the Megasyndicate, the characters and T2M.

This is the culmination of Opus Dei's plot to wrest power from the current Pontiff. With the Megasyndicate's involvement, however, it's now a Mafia vs. Holy Mafia war, with New York as the battlefield. The characters are the only outsiders who know enough to stop the fighting before it kills too many innocents. They are also the Pope's best hope to clear his name before the College of Cardinals gets wind of Opus Dei's allegations. Unfortunately, regardless of their success, this is only the beginning of the Camparelli-Zukhov and Opus Dei friction.

Scene One: The Swathe of Destruction

The following list is of ScarCrow's terrorist actions as well as what the authorities have pieced together thus far. Characters using contacts or allies in the police department, media or medical services can also gain these bits of data. Again, if the team is into pure action, the Storyteller can arrange for the characters to learn these clues through their superiors.

As before, information is designated **Automatic**, **Standard**, +1 or +2, depending on the sensitivity of the data. The Storyteller should allow the characters to earn clues using their resources, Abilities or contacts. Reward them for having the foresight to spend their points on non-combat oriented Abilities and Backgrounds. As a rule of thumb, **Automatic** data is available through the general press and wire services. **Standard** or +1 comes through Abilities or low-level contacts. Information of +2 caliber should be higher-level contacts or data accrued using the character's forte.

On a quick side-note: If the characters handed either Stanislav or Esposito over to the authorities, both men will be released on bail given their upstanding positions within their communities. Their high-priced lawyers and bail arrangements are provided through Opus Dei, giving the characters an inkling of the real puppeteers behind this entire scam.

• The Church of the Resurrection Bombing

Automatic: On Monday the 16th, 8:50 PM, residents bordering the Church of the Resurrection heard a high pitched whine, like a falling bomb. Suddenly, an explosion decimated the church. One witness saw a heavily armored nova emerge from the wreckage and fly into the night sky. Immediately, the neighborhood gathered in force and dug Father Stanislav from the debris. Badly burned, he's in intensive care at the Critical Burns Unit of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center. He's been asking for the characters.

Standard: The police know more than they're saying. Details of Stanislav's troubles with the IRS, his reputed ties to *la Cosa Nostra* and the nova battle two days ago have the authorities examining every shred of his background. This means that if any character openly ap-

Re-Involving the Characters

Approximately two days passed between the meeting with Father Stanislav at the Church of the Resurrection and the Megasyndicate's first assassinations. Now the Storyteller must figure out how to involve the characters in this new set of problems. Merely mentioning that the main players in the money-laundering scam are being killed off should be enough to get most teams back on the job. If that doesn't work, however, here are additional suggestions.

- **On Orders:** Most organizations would be curious as to who murdered these individuals. The general assumption would be that it's the Vatican trying to cover its tracks, but the attacks are deliberately overt and attention grabbing. Their organization reassigns the characters to uncover who's sending the bloody message and why.

- **To Clear Their Name:** With the destruction of the Church of the Resurrection, the police's only lead is that some novas were fighting there two days ago. Vague descriptions of the characters are released to the media. They are to be questioned in conjunction with the bombing and the attempted murder of Father Stanislav. For the Teragen or DeVries, specifically, this is an intolerable situation. Terats don't take kindly to being set up, and DeVries has a reputation to uphold. The characters must investigate, if only to clear the reputation of their organization.

- **A Cry for Help:** Father Stanislav is in intensive care at the Critical Burns Unit of Newark Beth Israel Medical Center. He isn't expected to live, but he has been asking for one of the characters by name (according to how they introduced themselves). If the authorities don't know who this is, they'll ask the media to broadcast the name over the news. The team is now publicly linked to what's happening.

proaches the hospital to speak with Stanislav, the police will detain him for questioning. To see Stanislav privately, the characters must sneak into the hospital.

+1: Through Interpol and Project Utopia's nova criminal database, the Church of the Resurrection bomber has been identified. He's an elite known as Z-T or Zulu-Tango, a military call-sign for artillery support. Z-T is a fast flyer and damn-near invulnerable. He gains momentum while airborne, then flies into people and objects, transforming kinetic energy on impact into a firebomb explosion. Additionally, rumor also has it T2M is bringing in a telepath to scan Stanislav's mind. Given the unusual circumstances of the attack and their proximity to the Pope's arrival, T2M fears some sinister undertaking.

+2: Z-T is reputedly working for an organized crime family now, possible Camparelli-Zukhov. He never works alone. If he's on assignment, then his employers are expecting nova-led opposition.

- Assassinations of Thomasso Scapagi, Bennetto Scholari and Pietro Cammelliri

Automatic: Three men linked to the DeCavalcante family were murdered in prison over the last two days. Prison officials have yet to comment whether these were gang-war slayings or not.

Standard: The three murders were not related to gang tension. In fact, two of the three hit men were ex-Mafia enforcers for *la Cosa Nostra* serving time in prison. None of the other ex-Mafia members will break the code of silence (*omerta*).

+1: Before Scholari was murdered, he appealed for a prison transfer. He told the warden he feared for his life. Some big hitters were in town to "clean house," and he thought he was next. Scapagi and Cammelliri, his two ex-partners, were already dead.

+2: Word is Scapagi's, Scholari's and Cammelliri's executions came down from the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate, which maintains ties to *la Cosa Nostra* and Russian *Mafiyah* prison-gangs. It was an internal matter concerning the betrayal of secrets.

- Torching of Banco de Madrid and Madonna

Automatic: These are two separate incidents that the general media hasn't linked together yet, though they will by evening's end. "An unnaturally destructive inferno" razed both buildings to the foundations, leading to speculation of arson.

Standard: Arson investigators have linked the two fires together and are certain they were nova-induced. Both Banco de Madrid and Madonna Horizons were the focal points of a blaze that radiated outward like a flood. Arson investigators found scorched footprints in Banco de Madrid's cement floors, indicating somebody capable of generating extreme heat. The police issued an APB for the questioning of Dominique Esposito, the bank manager.

+1: Due to potential nova involvement in these cases and the Church of the Resurrection bombing, the police are searching for a link between the two incidents. They haven't discovered Banco de Madrid's handling of the Church of the Resurrection donations, but they will within

the day. Once that happens, they'll ask T2M to investigate the matter directly.

+2: A private alarm and security firm for Banco de Madrid registered Dominique Esposito as entering the premises 15 minutes before the blaze. Police are currently looking for him, but neither he nor his family is anywhere to be found.

- The Espositos

Automatic: The police have issued an APB for Dominique Esposito, but nothing's come up yet.

Standard: After talking to the Esposito's neighbors, the police discovered that the family left their homes with suitcases packed (just after the Church of the Resurrection bombing). Dominique Esposito returned an hour later, without his wife and children. He supposedly never left the house after that. When police came to question him concerning the blaze at Banco de Madrid, they found the house empty and the car still in the driveway. Nobody saw him leave.

+1: Police believe Mrs. Esposito and the children are hiding at their church. Father Cruz, however, won't allow the police to search the premises regardless of their assurances that they only want to speak with the family. By all indications, Dominique Esposito is not with them.

+2: Dominique's home computer had its hard drive erased. His OpNet account, however, reveals he accessed work files from home and downloaded them all, presumably onto a DVD or chip.

Optional Scene: Locating Mr. Esposito

Unfortunately, Dominique Esposito is dead. When Z-T bombed the Church of the Resurrection, Dominique grabbed his family and took them to Iglesia de la Santa Virgen. He then returned home, hoping to eliminate his personal files before proceeding to the bank to do the same. Two novas working for the elite ScarCrow, however, were waiting for him.

Spook and Phosphorus tortured Dominique for information, pass codes and important data. They forced Dominique to retrieve his work files over the OpNet before killing him in the basement. Essentially, Spook turned Dominique intangible, pushed him into the floor and drowned him in concrete. The two novas then downloaded all their information and went to Banco de Madrid. Using Dominique's personal codes for entry, they accessed all his hard copies (receipts and printouts) and burned the building down to hide what they'd stolen. All the information, including some marginal links to Opus Dei, is on its way to Europe.

If the characters decide to search Dominique Esposito's house, they have a chance to uncover his fate. They first have to sneak past the patrol car waiting for the Espositos to return (use the Police template in Act I: Scene One). Inside the house, there's evidence the family left quickly. Most of their clothing is still in drawers, while toys litter the children's room. In Dominique's study rests the

computer and some overlooked clues. An Investigation roll at +1 difficulty reveals tiny blood splatters on the arm and back of the computer chair. There are also droplets on the keypad. The blood is Dominique's; evidence that Spook and Phosphorus forced him to cooperate.

If the characters spotted the blood, they may make either an Awareness or Investigation roll at +1 difficulty to follow the tiny splatters across the hallway and down the basement steps. Once there, Dominique's cruel fate slowly surfaces. There's a crack in the floor where the cement has swelled. Characters with Bloodhound can smell blood in the air. In fact, Dominique's presence displaced the cement, causing it to crack. Characters with High-End Electromagnetic Scan or ESP will see a diffused skeletal outline less than an inch below the floor.

If the characters tear up the concrete, Dominique's fate becomes gruesomely evident — the characters haven't been digging to find Dominique, they've been digging into him.

Scene Two: Visiting Hours for Stanislav

By now, New York City is buzzing with rumors and conspiracy theories. At the center of this storm is Father Stanislav, a man dying painfully in Newark Beth Israel Medical Center's Critical Burns Unit. There's already talk that Benedict XVI will make a special detour to visit the ailing priest. Before he can do that, however, T2M insists on using a telepath to scan the patient's mind. Utopia wants to make sure he isn't part of some elaborate assassination plot against the Holy Father.

If the characters are to act, it must be now. Stanislav has been calling them by name, fueling everyone's suspicions. Unfortunately, the team can't simply stroll in and visit Stanislav. The police have orders to question the characters concerning the events of the last four days, and when the cops are finished, in steps T2M. If the characters aren't afraid to take this approach, let them. The Storyteller should bear in mind, however, that the authorities and T2M would hold the characters for 48 hours, trying to discover if they're involved in the events of the last few days. If the Storyteller wants to be nasty, several witnesses will testify that the characters were fighting on church grounds. At the very least, the police can charge them with disturbing the peace, destruction of private property and endangering lives. When all is said and done, the characters are better off sneaking into the hospital.

Setting

Newark Beth Israel Medical Center is a well-respected community hospital and the focus of unwanted attention. Reporters wait outside for word on Stanislav's condition, while the police guard the third floor against unwelcome visitors. If the characters can pass for baselines (again, Dormancy can be a character's best friend in these situations), they shouldn't have a problem entering. All traffic on the third floor is heavily supervised by two policemen at the

nurse's station (which rests across from the elevators). Another officer waits by Stanislav's door, while a fourth sits in his room, reading. The police make radio contact every hour with a disguised van sitting in the parking lot. Three more officers in plain clothes wait there, ready to call for back-up (use the Police template from Act I: Scene One). At the first sign of trouble, seven officers and 10 security guards scattered throughout the hospital converge on Stanislav's room.

Assuming the characters won't attract attention, entering the hospital is easy, as long as it's during visiting hours (7:00 AM to 8:00 PM, after which a security guard ensures nobody ventures beyond the Walk-In Emergency Clinic). Getting to Stanislav is another story. To begin with, the characters must discover where he's being kept. Simply asking a guard or staff member is a red-flag maneuver that brings the character under scrutiny. The questioned individual will immediately notify the police on the third floor, unless the character was so handsome or persuasive that he beguiles the individual. Other methods include using the OpNet to break into the hospital's records, speaking to the reporters parked outside or somehow stealing a doctor's duty roster.

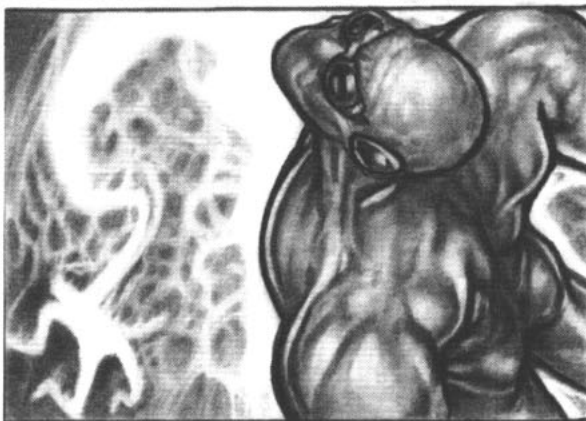
Once the characters know Stanislav's location, they still have to get to him. As mentioned previously, nobody gets off the elevators without being spotted by the two police officers. The stairwells, on the other hand, are for emergency use only. Using them triggers a silent alarm that puts all nurse stations, security guards and police officers on alert. Characters can bypass the alarm through an Intrusion roll at standard difficulty. Once out of the stairwell, however, there's the policeman standing in front of Stanislav's door and another waiting inside. How the characters get past either depends on their ingenuity, whether they draw the officers away or use subtle means to incapacitate them.

Other options to sneak in include using windows of unoccupied rooms or entering the rooftop ventilation system. In the latter case, the character must circumnavigate an unfamiliar duct system to search a hospital with 596 beds and 800 medical staff. The character's better off using the hallways.

Action: The Dupes of Hazard

Hopefully, at least one character made it into Stanislav's room long enough to speak to him. Stanislav himself is badly burned and swathed head to toe in bandages. Tubes run up his nose, into his arms, between his legs and down his throat. An EKG unit monitors the beating of his near-torpid heart while the few gaps between his bandages reveal burnt and charred skin. Death is a welcome inevitability for this man.

Now comes the fun part. The man in bed is Stanislav — but with ScarCrow riding shotgun. ScarCrow is using Parasitic Possession (a Domination variant) and keeping Stanislav alive by boosting his Stamina. This means the painkillers are having limited effect, but ScarCrow's used to this kind of punishment.



Stanislav was a decoy to bring either the characters or Apocrypha to ScarCrow, so he could scan their thoughts. At the Church of the Resurrection, Phosphorus tortured the priest by roasting him while ScarCrow read his mind for information. They learned of the characters and Apocrypha through Stanislav. ScarCrow, however, wanted to find out what the team members had discovered through their investigation and what they might have kept to themselves. When ScarCrow was sure Stanislav wouldn't die immediately, he took possession of his body and kept him alive. Z-T then hit the church to draw the most media exposure, leaving the concerned parishioners to dig out the sheltered Stanislav.

ScarCrow cannot use Telepathy without losing his control over Stanislav's body. Fortunately, that serves his purpose. As soon as a character is close enough to Stanislav, ScarCrow uses his Telepathy in a mental blitz. His first concern is to learn what the characters uncovered during their investigation. He needs to know if they represent a threat to his future plans. Of course, as soon as that happens, ScarCrow evacuates Stanislav's body in a burst of electricity. He reappears eight meters outside the shattered hospital window before dropping to the ground three stories below. Stanislav, deprived of ScarCrow's heightened physiology, immediately goes into cardiac arrest. The characters can go after ScarCrow, help the dying Stanislav or divide the group to do both.

ScarCrow may be a risk taker, but he is smart. His actions allowed him to ambush the characters, and hopefully come away with some information. In addition, by evacuating Stanislav's body in such a messy fashion, ScarCrow knew he would kill the priest. This now establishes the characters' presence at the scene of Stanislav's death and, hopefully, calls their motives into question. Essentially, ScarCrow is undermining the team's reputation. Their claims are now suspect against evidence of a fight at the Church of the Resurrection and their presence at the priest's deathbed.

Meanwhile, Zulu-Tango, who's been waiting nearby, sees and hears the window shatter. In two turns, he swoops to within seven meters of ScarCrow, allowing his team leader to inhabit his body. Z-T then kicks on his Hypermovement Flight and exits the area at top speed. If the characters reach ScarCrow before he can evacuate, he stalls them by saying: "Wait! Let me explain. I needed to know if you were the good guys." This hopefully gives Z-T the few seconds he needs for the pick-up.

Aftermath

It's a messy situation, especially if things went according to ScarCrow's plans. Stanislav will die unless somebody uses Healing to save him. Additionally, depending on how the characters dealt with the security in and out of the room, police will arrive in as little as two turns after ScarCrow shattered the window and sent Stanislav into cardiac arrest.

This doesn't bode well for the team, especially if it is spotted in the room or outside the window. Security and police will try and detain them for questioning, but

the characters can escape if they choose to. If they do, the police issues an APB for their arrest on charges of murder (if Stanislav dies), resisting arrest and flight.

The optimal situations are if the characters escape unnoticed or save Stanislav from dying. The former is the simplest, while the latter the most heroic. If the team allows the police to question them, this goes a long way in helping to clear the characters of any wrong doings. Unfortunately, the police will hold the characters for the full 48 hours, thus eliminating their window of opportunity to help Piero Giorie (the last survivor of this fiasco).

A Side Note

If the characters did not visit Stanislav, the Storyteller can use Apocrypha to play the scene out. Apocrypha visits Stanislav to eliminate him before T2M's telepath arrives. This time, however, there's a battle between ScarCrow's forces and what's left of Apocrypha's. Both sides withdraw, licking their wounds, but are otherwise unharmed. Stanislav dies, deepening the mystery surrounding the attacks. Reporters at the scene record the skirmish for CNN, allowing the characters to see Z-T and ScarCrow for the first time. Now the team should suspect that more heavy hitters are in town.

Scene Three: Piero Giorie Cancer Treatment — Part I

On Thursday the 19th, Benedict XVI landed at LaGuardia Airport amidst heavy security. Police presence has increased dramatically in the Big Apple, and T2M Americas keeps a ceaseless vigil over His Holiness. Emergency response teams and Auxiliary T2Ms are ready to handle most emergencies quickly and quietly.

Getting to Scene Three requires deductive reasoning on the characters' parts, though the Storyteller can certainly push things along. Piero Giorie is the last member of Madonna Horizons' Board of Trustees. He's the last obstacle in ScarCrow's way. Additionally, Giorie changed prisons recently and spends his days in Bayview Correctional Facility's medical ward. The only way to reach him is to break into prison (not recommended) or to wait for his weekly treatment and overnight stay at the New York Presbyterian Hospital on Thursday. That's the likeliest time he'll be exposed to danger. If the characters don't think to try Giorie next, the Storyteller may allow them either an Investigation or Awareness roll at standard difficulty.

The characters should have a day before Giorie's visit to the hospital. While it may make sense to reach him before then, it isn't the wisest bet. Giorie still refuses visitors, given he's the last survivor of the Madonna Horizons' scam. Trying to intercept his car or break into Bayview Correctional Facility is a mistake that could aggravate the situation horribly. Bayview, like most prisons, recently underwent renovations to deal with novas. While it can't handle nova prisoners or powered individuals

smashing their way through walls, Bayview does have an increased security net. Now, security protocols include air motility sensors, pheromone scanners, palm-print pads, vibration-differential recorders and quantum spectrographs. Attempts to bypass security protocols require Intrusion rolls at +3 difficulty.

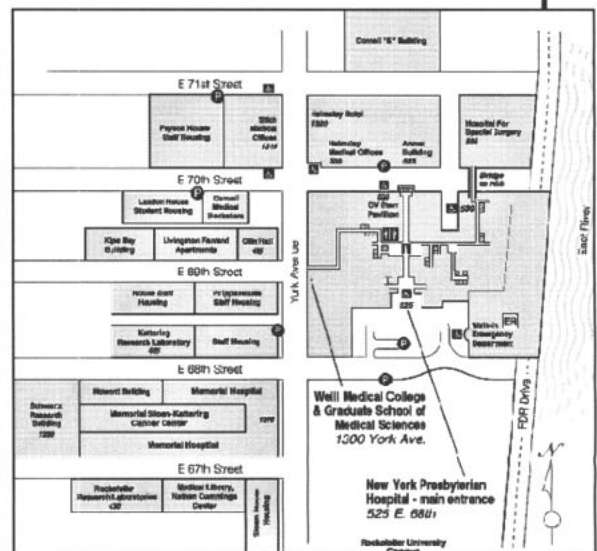
Meeting Giorie at the New York Presbyterian Hospital is the team's best bet, though isn't without its dangers. The police aren't expecting any problems with Giorie's visit, but if the characters have a warrant on their heads, they're not going to be welcome at the hospital.

Setting

New York Presbyterian Hospital became the world's first super hospital after combining Cornell and Columbia under one helm in the 1970s. Facing the now-pristine East River, it is New York's foremost medical complex. In particular, the Cornell Radiology Department is still researching the few incurable cancers left in the world. Unfortunately, the department has lost students to booming nova-related fields including cellular hyperbiology and exotic biochemistry. As such, its size has shrunk in relation to its slashed funding.

The Cornell Radiology Department has recently moved to 68th and York Avenue, sharing space with the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and Memorial Hospital. They're situated across from New York Presbyterian Hospital and Weill Medical College, but most people have come to see radiology as quaint — this millennium's medical equivalent to phrenology.

Memorial Hospital is a horseshoe-shaped building pulled short along one side (68th street) because of the Howard Building. Cradled in the groove of the "U" is the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. The Memorial's interior is like any other hospital the characters have visited, whether last night or in the more distant past. The floors are pristinely clean, and the faint smell of disinfectant hangs in the air. The staff moves about with purpose, while



patients drift around in wheelchairs and walkers trying to kill the hospital-induced malaise.

As with the Newark Beth Israel Medical Center, Memorial Hospital and Cornell Radiology Department are easily accessible during visiting hours. Unless the characters are wanted on charges, they should be able to find their way around unmolested. The only exceptions are obvious novas. While the hospital does not discriminate, the staff fears the presence of novas will disturb or unduly panic convalescing patients. Some deception or disguise, in this case, may not be a bad idea.

Locating Piero Giorie might require some work. The Cornell Radiology Department does not divulge appointment information about their patients, but a quantum-backed smile or crafty word can easily charm most deskbored receptionists. The subtler option is to hack into the system using a Computer roll at standard difficulty (the information isn't valuable enough to encrypt). This enables the team to uncover Giorie's room number for his overnight observation stay.

Giorie's Agenda

Thursday is wide open for the characters. Giorie arrives early in the day and stays overnight due to the debilitating side effects of the treatment. He's escorted by two plain-clothes officers, but because they aren't expecting problems, they're relaxed. Unless otherwise hindered, Giorie's timetable is as follows:

10:52 AM — Park in the Staff Housing garage across the street, and proceed to Cornell Radiology.

11:00 AM — Register at the nurse's station, and wait for the doctor.

11:25 AM — Radiology treatments begin. The two escorts stay in the waiting room.

11:55 AM — Orderly and two escorts wheel the now weakened Giorie to adjoining Memorial Hospital.

12:02 to 5:22 PM — Arrival at Room 206, where the orderly helps Giorie into bed. The two officers then alternate shifts, with one sitting outside the room, while the second goes for food and other distractions. Nurses intermittently check up on Giorie.

5:22 PM — Giorie wakes up and uses the telephone to dial out, despite his weakened state. He calls the Opus Dei Manhattan Headquarters to speak with his son Matteo. When he's told his son is busy, he asks to leave *another* message, saying it's an emergency. He finally hangs up the phone and collapses back into bed. He tries again unsuccessfully at 8:40 PM when he reawakens and his escort is out of the room.

9:00 PM till 11:40 PM: The two officers alternate shifts. One takes a nap on 206's spare bed while the other stands guard.

11:40 PM or Midnight — All hell breaks loose (see Act II: Scene Five: Piero Giorie Cancer Treatment — Part II)

Giorie's Request

Piero Giorie has no illusions about what's happening in his life. Somebody ordered the murders of his three Mafia friends and sanctioned the hit on the Church of the

Resurrection. He knows the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate is eliminating all trace of the Madonna Horizons laundering scam for whatever reason. That means he's last on their list. While Piero Giorie is not scared of death, he's afraid his son Matteo will suffer reprisals meant for him. Piero Giorie's been trying to leave messages for Matteo without jeopardizing his son's location but to no avail. Opus Dei is not known for encouraging its disciples to stay in touch with loved ones.

Piero Giorie is desperate to reach his son. His only hope lies with the characters, if they make their presence known to him. If the team is using the ailing mobster to lure ScarCrow, the Storyteller should play up the phone call and the desperation in his voice. The characters should feel that more lives are at stake than what they originally believed.

If the characters approach Piero Giorie, he'll negotiate his information for their help. He'll tell the team what they want to know if they rescue his son from Opus Dei, regardless of whether he wants to leave or not. Only when he sees his son at the hospital will the mobster cooperate. He's very adamant on that point, despite his weakened condition. To facilitate their search, Piero Giorie hands the characters his only picture of Matteo, taken a few years ago, before he joined Opus Dei.

Scene Four: Rescue Mission

Matteo Giorie is a numerary of Opus Dei, a rank comprising 30 percent of its total membership and perhaps the organization's most ardent followers. In exchange for religious fulfillment, Giorie practices corporal mortification and celibacy. He relinquishes all income to Opus Dei and surrenders privacy to the director, who reads his mail, monitors his phone calls and regulates every moment of his life. Matteo Giorie is a member of a Catholic-sanctioned cult; he's also willing bait.

Opus Dei knows that the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate is employing novas against it. In retaliation, Opus Dei, through Angelo Chalepeno, is using Matteo Giorie to draw out the individuals who destroyed the Church of the Resurrection, firebombed Banco de Madrid and accessed their computer records in Europe. Because Piero Giorie is near death, murdering him won't deliver satisfaction. Chalepeno is sure, however, that the younger Giorie will be the next target, given he's his father's sole reason for living. As such, Opus Dei has left Matteo Giorie unguarded for anyone to find him, along with a little surprise.

Opus Dei Headquarters

The Manhattan Opus Dei division is its most active and successful branch in North America after Boston. It includes segregated dormitories for live-in numeraries, a recruitment center, church, classrooms for religious studies and the offices for the regional director. At the back of the school is an enclosed garden that's surrounded on all four sides by tall buildings. People often come to the

garden for meditation, quiet seclusion, occasional outdoor lessons or simply for a breath of fresh air.

Normally, visitors and workers are not allowed on the premises after 6:00 PM. Today, however, the entire building is closed in preparation for the special dinner reception for the Holy Father at the Kennedy Center. Regardless the emergency or situation, visitors may not speak with numeraries for fear it'll interrupt their spiritual focus for this special event.

Should any character walk through the facilities unseen, she'll notice the headquarters offers a contemporary, but austere façade, very much like a high-tech monastery. There are no pictures of loved ones hanging in the rooms, and corporal mortification is a very real practice. There are no televisions, radios, newspapers or magazines save those printed by Opus Dei itself. Daily life focuses on prayer, education and learning. The numeraries also speak Spanish to one another, as it is the language of their founder.

If an intruding character makes an Awareness roll at standard difficulty, she'll spot an announcement on the bulletin board reminding people of the special dinner in the Pope's honor this evening. There's also a list showing who's traveling on which bus and the various departure times. Strangely enough, Matteo Giorie's name has been scratched off.

At 6:00 PM, numeraries and Opus Dei staff gather in the building's lobby before heading outside for their once-in-a-lifetime dinner. Characters observing the proceedings do not see Matteo Giorie boarding any shuttles. He's apparently not going. Once the final bus leaves at 6:30 PM, the building is virtually empty, allowing the characters near unlimited access. The team should still be careful, however. An Intrusion roll at +1 difficulty reveals internal and external security cameras. Doors and elevators leading to the offices above the fourth floor are key-card activated and require an Intrusion roll against +2 difficulty.

Characters trying to charm or persuade their way past Opus Dei Numeraries or priests will find it hard to do so (+1 Difficulty on related rolls). Opus Dei doesn't (publicly) condone the existence of novas, teaching its members that these creatures are no different than witches and heretics. Anything a nova says is treated as a lie. If a numerary finds himself believing one, he'll press his cilice deeper into his own skin rather than succumb. The numeraries convictions are their lives, and characters shouldn't take this lightly. The Storyteller should stress how an Opus Dei member is willing to injure himself and draw blood rather than fall to temptation. What a nova sees as a simple trick to get her way, the Opus Dei member sees as a gross violation, tantamount to spiritual rape.

Finding Matteo Giorie

Following the events of the last few days, Opus Dei believes its enemies will come after Matteo Giorie. That's the reason he's not seeing the Pope tonight. In fact, Giorie's been so heavily brainwashed that Chalepeno's convinced him that his father failed at his one chance for redemption. Matteo

Giorie, of course, can save his father's soul by dying a martyr, if he can take novas along with him. That's what the 20 pounds of plastique hidden beneath his loose-fitting sweats and jersey are for. Of course, this provides a media-sound story for Opus Dei, when they claim Giorie "went postal" after discovering he couldn't see the Pope. Additionally, this eliminates one of Chalepeno's loose ends.

During the day, Matteo Giorie spends his time in the chapel, preparing himself and making his peace with God. Opus Dei told Giorie that sacrificing himself ensures his father's and his redemption by striking a blow of the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the "Hammer of Witches," against novas. Unfortunately, Chalepeno let it slip that Piero Giorie's time on this world was drawing to a close, hence his son's sense of urgency in the matter. Matteo Giorie suspects Chalepeno has sent someone to punish his father for his betrayal and wants to redeem the man's soul through sacrifice before he dies. Faith, for Matteo Giorie, is a blind parrot that repeats but does not see.

After 6:00 PM, Matteo Giorie goes to the rear garden and reads passages from the New Testament concerning Jesus' last night in the garden of Gethsemane and from the writings of Josemarie Escriva. He spends the evening there, expecting tonight to be his final one on Earth. At all times, he has a double-switch remote trigger in his pocket that he touches and fumbles with.

If the characters approach Matteo Giorie, he believes them to be the enemy. Any story they mention about taking him to see his father is obviously a lie as far as he's concerned. They're trying to murder him outside of the headquarters. He'll go along willingly, however, nodding and acting as though everything is normal. When he's far enough away from the Opus Dei building, he says, "Forgive me Father," then flicks the double switches in his pocket. Anyone within three meters takes 15D10 L [12] worth of explosive damage. Characters up to six meters away take half-damage.

Hopefully, the characters realize something is amiss well before Matteo Giorie explodes. Some warning signs rely on the characters' powers of observation or their abilities.

- Awareness roll, standard difficulty: Giorie keeps one hand in his pocket, like he's fidgeting with an object.
- Awareness roll, +1 difficulty: When Giorie walks, something stretches against the fabric of his jersey. His chest and stomach looks quilted or padded.
- Awareness roll, +2 difficulty: Giorie is fiddling with a device in his pocket. The character caught a glimpse of a switch briefly sticking out.
- Rapport roll, standard difficulty: Giorie looks anxious and jittery, like he's preparing for something to happen.
- Rapport roll, +1 difficulty: The character catches a glimpse of Giorie muttering something to himself. He looks like he's praying.
- Rapport roll, +2 difficulty: Giorie is screwing up his courage to do something drastic. The prayer he continues muttering is a chant to put him in a religious frenzy. He's getting ready to die!

These, of course, are simple suggestions for characters without Premonition. The Storyteller shouldn't discount characters with Enhanced Initiative leaping away when Giorie apologizes or those with Natural Empath detecting the agitated and suicidal trance he has entered. Additionally, characters who pick Giorie up to fly him to the hospital or otherwise brush up against him through incidental contact should feel the plastique packets beneath his clothing. Even using *your-danger-sense-is-tingling-type* clues are all viable ways to save the characters. The Storyteller should allow the team some hope of escaping the explosion or to break Giorie out of his decision through good roleplaying.

What Matteo Knows

This scenario assumes that, whether of his own volition or not, Matteo Giorie didn't flick the switch. How the characters obtain this information is up to the Storyteller, but it obviously depends on what methods they use to question him. Just remember that Matteo Giorie's will has been warped by Opus Dei's vision. He's easier to manipulate, even though he's dead set in his convictions.

Matteo believes, thanks to Chalepeno, that his father failed to redeem himself in the eyes of God. Although he's unsure of the arrangement between Chalepeno and his father, he knows it had to do with Piero Giorie's old Mafia contacts. After the arrangements were made, everything appeared fine. Then Chalepeno informed Matteo Giorie that his father had betrayed Opus Dei to old allies in organized crime. Chalepeno arranged to deliver plastique into the young numerary's hands with specific instructions. He was to kill the novas who'd been attacking Opus Dei, novas with links to organized crime who'd surely come to take him back to his father. Matteo Giorie believed the characters to be these novas.

Regardless what the characters tell him, the man is emotionally distraught over his father. Matteo Giorie wants to save his father's soul but hates him nonetheless. Part of the young man's suicide-martyr mentality is also itching to strike back at his father by saying "see what you've pushed me to do." Matteo Giorie's hoping his sacrifice will finally shock his father out of his wicked, self-involved ways. While it's easy to blame Opus Dei for this situation, Matteo Giorie's love-hate relationship stems from his hard childhood and from his father's illegal pursuits. Opus Dei merely capitalized on his condition and deepened his confusion.

During his discussion with the characters, Matteo Giorie refuses to see his father, then lets it slip, without some measure of bitterness that: "He's made his choices in life and turned his back on my mother and me. He deserves whatever fate befalls him tonight." If pressed, Matteo Giorie will eventually admit to his suspicions that Chalepeno is going to do something about his father's betrayal. He's not sure what, but given that his father is out of prison and at his most vulnerable, whatever happens, happens this evening.

Scene Five: Piero Giorie Cancer Treatment Part II

Scene Five is the culmination of Acts I and II and could yet be the bloodiest battle in the entire scenario. Chalepeno has sent Apocrypha and his surviving allies to eliminate Piero Giorie once and for all. ScarCrow and his people, however, have other plans. While they wait to kill Giorie later that night, Apocrypha's intervention kicks off the party early. Hopefully, the characters are either present or just walking into the situation. This sparks a three-way brawl in a hospital district comprising nine city blocks and several thousand innocent students, patients and medical personnel.

Before that happens, the characters should have enough leeway to speak with Piero Giorie a second time. Now, one of three things can happen, depending on whether Matteo Giorie died in the explosion, refused to come (and the characters let him go) or was forced to come here.

- **Matteo Dies:** This devastates Piero Giorie, who has lost his sole reason to live. He knows Chalepeno was responsible for his son's actions and reveals what he knows to the characters out of spite. He tells them of Chalepeno's plan to discredit the Pontiff, from the money-laundering scam to changing all his Swiss holdings to Antonio Bardi's name. He also tells them that the recent attacks were probably ex-Mafia in the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate who uncovered his betrayal of the *omerta*. Unfortunately, all the evidence Piero Giorie has is against Chalepeno and not Opus Dei itself.

- **Matteo Refuses:** Obviously, Piero Giorie is disappointed but not deterred. He vows to regain his son's trust but is still reticent about betraying his secrets. The characters can cajole the truth from him if they promise to leave his son out of any accusations or reports. Piero Giorie wants the blame resting firmly on his shoulders, though he isn't above making off-hand remarks about Chalepeno.

- **Matteo Sees His Father:** Matteo Giorie wants to return to Opus Dei and redeem himself for his weakness. He's too lost to ever be found again. Any attempt to reunite him with his father fails miserably. Matteo Giorie believes his father already dead and rotting in some forgotten layer of Hell. He refuses to acknowledge Piero Giorie, telling the characters all the horrible things his father's done in life. Piero Giorie accepts the accusations because they're true and lets his son go with a heavy heart. He knows Matteo Giorie will only forgive him when he dies. Bound by his word, the mobster tells the characters everything but uses the same stipulations about his son as mentioned above.

Set-Up #1: Mixing it Up

This is assuming both Apocrypha (or his team) and ScarCrow (or his team) are both active. The location remains the same as Act II: Scene Three. The map provides a good overview of the area involved, but now there are



several factors at play. First and foremost, after 10:00 PM, ScarCrow's henchmen are waiting on the rooftop of Weill Medical College, around the corner from Memorial Hospital. ScarCrow himself enters Memorial Hospital and locates Giorie's room (Room 206, facing York Avenue). He returns to his team at approximately 11:00 PM and waits with it. The plan is for ScarCrow to enter the hospital after midnight, possess one of Giorie's escorts and kill the officer's partner and the ex-Mafia racketeer with a bullet to each of their heads. Z-T, Phosphorus and Spook provide back-up in case the characters' team appears. If the characters are already with Giorie, however, then Z-T carries out the assassination by dive-bombing the room, regardless the collateral damage.

Apocrypha, on the other hand, has planned his strike earlier, at 11:40 PM. Thanks to Piero Giorie's messages to his son, Opus Dei has his room location (though this is easily obtained through other methods). Apocrypha carries out the assassination himself. Flying outside the window, he plans to direct a Quantum Blast straight through the glass, into Giorie's chest. If Fidei Defensor and Aureole are present, they'll provide air-support for Apocrypha and protect him from potential nova attacks. If Tenebrae is present, he'll most likely be on York Avenue (on Rockefeller University grounds) with three clones standing by. He provides ground support for his team. If he's still active, Dirge is atop the Staff Housing building across 68th Street. If not, it's either Tenebrae or Aureole hiding on that roof. Should Apocrypha get in trouble, he knows to fly north on York Avenue, where Dirge (or Tenebrae or Aureole) can blindside his pursuers.

The attack begins once Apocrypha appears at the window and opens fire. At that moment ScarCrow gives his team the order to attack. ScarCrow's been hunting for Apocrypha and doesn't know when he'll get another chance at him.

- Phosphorus cuts loose with his flame, striking targets from his perch on Presbyterian Hospital's rooftop.
- Zulu-Tango takes to the air and goes after aerial opponents, sparking a dogfight between the buildings.
- Spook attacks any non-aerial foes by using Quantum Leap to reach them.
- ScarCrow goes after Apocrypha.

Of course, these variables change according to the team's presence and reactions. Any character in Room 206 will see Apocrypha hovering right outside the window. If Apocrypha spots the character, he'll likely target him first, kicking off the three-way fight. Some characters might also try and stake out the hospital from vantage points across the street. In that case, they'll encounter their adversaries, who hit upon the same idea. If the combat begins earlier with the team uncovering ScarCrow's rooftop hiding spot, let it. The Storyteller can always bring in Apocrypha, who'll try and assassinate Giorie a couple of turns later during the confusion. The last combat scene is open-ended enough to throw almost anything at the characters. If the Storyteller wants to throw *everything* against the team, however, then she can use Set-Up #2.

Set-Up #2: Everyone's Invited.

This set-up covers one of three situations but with the same result. If the characters already dealt with Apocrypha's novas or somehow unraveled ScarCrow's elites, then there's a third option for the attack on the hospital. One of the two factions (most likely ScarCrow's) should still be present to assassinate Giorie, in which case it proceeds with its strategy as laid out in the previous section. Once the attack begins, however, a T2M Auxiliary steps in to stop the fight and arrest those involved. Of course, the third option is to involve the T2M team in the fracas covered in Set-Up #1.

In this situation, T2M discovered the link between Piero Giorie and the men killed in prison and realized he was the next target. Now T2M could have kept him out of harm's way by changing his treatment for another day or even for another hospital, but Giorie made a great target to draw out the novas responsible for the murders and bombings. Because this is the same evening as the Pope's dinner at the Kennedy Center, however, T2M sent in its Auxiliary to handle the matter. They were expecting two or three novas, not a multi-front battle.

This scenario is great for pairing unlikely groups together, especially if the fight breaks into teams like ScarCrow and Apocrypha vs. the characters' team and T2M. Conversely, the Storyteller can always include potential T2M rivals who've fought the characters before. This turns the fight into a free-for-all in New York's largest hospital complex. The Storyteller can use Delaney "Firefly" Croft-Martin, Melissanda Esteves (see **Aberrant: Project Utopia**, pp. 133-135 for more information) and It (see **Aberrant: Year One**, p. 49). If the Storyteller needs some quick novas for the fight, then use this T2M Auxiliary Template:

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Abilities: Awareness 1, Brawl or Martial Arts 2, Endurance 3, Might 2, Resistance 3, Style 2, Subterfuge 3; 10 other dots, divided as necessary

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Crush, Shockwave), Mega-Stamina •• (Resiliency, Regeneration); Four dots in other Mega-Attributes or one Level Two power at three; four dots in Level One powers.

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 6, Taint 2

Dancing Among Corpses

In either set-up, the nova battle will undoubtedly affect the New York Presbyterian Hospital and the adjoining blocks. Every time a character evades a blast, a building with hospital rooms gets hit. Whenever somebody uses Shockwave or Thunderclap, dozens of windows shatter. When a nova gets knocked through a wall, there are probably two or three patients, tenants or students who died from collateral damage. Dirge, Phosphorus, Z-T and Fidei Defensor are not precision novas. Their powers are most effective when fully unleashed.

As the battle plays out, the Storyteller should make reference to the doctors, nurses and ambulance technicians weaving in and out of the fight to help the wounded. The characters came here to save one life and are now trying to stop a war. Allow the players to act this situation out. The Storyteller should play up the surrounding suffering and force the characters into a decision, whether they help save people or help stop Apocrypha and ScarCrow. Both are valid endeavors, and both carry a price.

Dramatis Personae

ScarCrow

Background: Franco DeVincelli was one of the lucky capos to evade T2M in its war on crime. Actually, lucky isn't exactly correct, since Franco was badly burned while escaping. T2M had launched a raid against a New York drug laboratory that Franco was overseeing. Local hero Hiram "Slag" Goldberg accidentally hit a methane tank and up went the floor. Franco, severely burned, was pulled out by friends and taken underground. Unfortunately, "underground" doesn't include good medical facilities. Franco spent the next few weeks screaming in horrible pain. To his friends' credit, they didn't cap him when they couldn't stand the screaming anymore. To their discredit, they pumped him full of barbiturates instead of actual painkillers.

Franco's salvation came with his eruption, but not in the way he expected. At one point, when the pain was too much, he simply dematerialized and possessed one of his friends. That's when the agony stopped. Franco spent the next few months leaping into people's bodies when he couldn't stand the hurting any longer. Knowing he had a way out, however, strengthened his resolve. It became a test to endure the suffering longer and longer before rewarding himself by possessing somebody. Eventually, the pain stopped altogether, and Franco became ScarCrow.



Using his new abilities, ScarCrow escaped to Europe, where the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate was forming. By that point, Slag was already dead, allowing ScarCrow to focus on matters beyond simple revenge. He went to work for the newly organized crime family, working as its nova enforcer and, eventually, nova trainer.

Image: ScarCrow is a horrible mess of burn scars; he's a walking effigy already spent by flame. The skin of his head appears to fit too tightly over his skull, and his eyes are completely black. His nose and ears are gone, melted away. ScarCrow sports a leather, clasp-over vest jacket and eufiber black tights with red trim. He also wears jackboots and a metal belt.

Roleplaying Hints: You're a scary motherfucker, and you know it. In fact, it's no longer an attitude, it's the truth. You don't mourn your disfigurement because you prefer the power you have. If you ever want to get laid, you just possess somebody and go after his partner. Hell, you've caught a lot of lesbian action that way. Who wants their face back when they can have anybody else's? Why risk your neck when you can risk somebody else's for that matter?

Gear: Cell phone, Chap-stick, heavy pistol.

Nature: Thrillseeker

Allegiance: Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 0, Manipulation 3, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Biz 3, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 2, Command 4, Endurance 4, Firearms 2, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 4, Investigation 3, Rapport 3, Resistance 4, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Backing 3, Cipher 2, Eufiber 2, Node 2, Resources 4

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 10, Taint 4 (Aberrant Eyes)

Powers: Mega-Stamina ••• (Regeneration), Mega-Perception ••••• (Analytical Touch, Blindfighting, Electromagnetic Vision, Ultraperipheral Perception), Mega-Wits • (Lie Detector), Mega-Manipulation •• (The Voice), Boost (Stamina) ••• (Other Person), Domination ••••• (Parasitic Possession), Mental Blast ••, Telepathy •••

Phosphorus

Background: Mahmud Abdelkader was a courier for the joint Turkish-Sicilian heroin trade. When the assault against organized crime began, Abdelkader was delivering a shipment into Bulgaria and thus missed the crippling raid that decimated the Istanbul criminal empire. Instead, Abdelkader ran into a police barricade meant to intercept his shipment. He erupted during the shootout and made quick work of the local authorities. The remaining Mafia families heard about Abdelkader and helped him vanish underground, since he could no longer return home. Later, when the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate



formed, his contacts put him touch with the organization. The New York job is his first assignment for them, and he's eager to prove his worth.

Nature: Bravo

Allegiance: Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Appearance 4, Manipulation 3, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Command 2, Endurance 3, Firearms 3, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 3, Linguistics 2 (Native: Turkish; Arabic, English), Melee 2, Resistance 3, Survival 3

Quantum 2, Quantum Pool 24, Willpower 6, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Dexterity •• (Enhanced Movement), Mega-Stamina •• (Adaptability) Mega-Wits •• (Enhanced Initiative), Mega-Appearance ••• (Appearance Alteration, Face of Terror), Immolate (Fire) ••••• (Aggravated), Invulnerability (Fire) •••, Quantum Bolt (Fire — Lethal) ••••• (Spray/Jet)

Spook

Background: Most people assume Terra Verhooven is called Spook because of her powers. Actually, her name is a reference to the effect she has on people. She's a creepy woman with a quiet appreciation for murder. Ms. Verhooven was a DeVries Elite when she was contracted to retrieve documents from a company with suspected ties to organized crime. After breaking into the building, however, she encountered the owner, who made her a counterproposal: Work for his organization for better payment and no restrictions. After negotiating her fee, she agreed to his terms and started her new job as a Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate enforcer. DeVries has a bounty on Verhooven's head for breaking contract and damaging its reputation.

Nature: Analyst

Allegiance: Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate



Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Appearance 4, Manipulation 3, Charisma 2

Abilities: Academics 3, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Computer 4, Endurance 3, Firearms 2, Intrusion 4, Investigation 3, Linguistics 1 (Native: English; Afrikaans), Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 6, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Lifter, Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity • (Catfooted), Mega-Stamina • (Adaptability), Mega-Perception ••• (Quantum Attunement, Ultrapерipheral Perception), Mega-Appearance • (Face of Terror) Density Control (Decrease) •••• (Affect Others; Spook uses this in conjunction with asphyxiation attack, drowning her opponents in solid objects), Quantum Vampire ••

Zulu-Tango

Background: Josh Carrieres is a walking artillery shell. He's tough and decimates objects by flying full-tilt into them. Carrieres is ScarCrow's right-hand man and, most often, his back up on assignments. He's the only member of ScarCrow's nova team with military training and the only one who'll follow orders without question. ScarCrow also uses Carrieres as a drill sergeant when training the Megasyndicate's elites.

Nature: Bureaucrat

Allegiance: Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 3, Manipulation 2, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Command 4, Endurance 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Martial Arts 2, Might 3, Pilot 2, Resistance 4, Stealth 2, Survival 2 Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 7, Taint 3

Powers: Mega-Strength •••• (Crush, Shockwave, Thunderclap), Mega-Dexterity • (Accuracy), Mega-Stamina ••

(Hardbody), Armor ••••, Flight ••••, Hypermovement (Flight) •••• (Explosion: Only for the purpose of Aerial Slam and Hyperspeed Slam maneuvers; Z-T's explosion is the energy converted from kinetic energy to heat).

Wrap-Up

As mentioned before, this scenario can degenerate quickly if the characters screw up too often. Fortunately, there are several safety nets to ensure that faith in Benedict XVI is eventually restored. Regardless, three matters remain the same.

First and foremost, the characters have now made enemies of Opus Dei and its supporters. The team shouldn't be surprised if religious extremist novas appear from time to time to attack them. Secondly, Chalepeno dies. Unfortunately for the team, Opus Dei's involvement starts and ends at Angelo Chalepeno. After the hospital battle, the good Assessor for General Affairs will have passed away in his sleep, another victim of the heart-attack bug that passes through the Vatican annually. Opus Dei can then deflect attention from itself and claim Chalepeno didn't represent the organization. He broke away from its doctrines several months ago, as attested to in his dated and signed letter to Bishop Dionogi Tettamanzi. Thirdly, Opus Dei and the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate are in a war of attrition. It never manifests overtly as a gangland struggle, but there is an increase in quiet deaths on both sides.

The optimal scenario is for the characters to foil Opus Dei's plot before it instigates its coup against the Holy Father. In this instance, there's talk of Opus Dei's secret involvement, which sparks a purge in the Vatican. Meanwhile, the characters and their organization made some secret friends in the Holy See. While not publicly declared, the team occasionally receives unexpected and mysterious help

in the form of premonitions. It's the Storyteller's prerogative to decide who's sending the characters telepathic warnings and why. Chances are, however, that the Pope has hidden allies who appreciate the team's efforts.

Among the worst-case scenarios, the news media discovers the money-laundering scam and links the Pope to organized crime. Although the accusations are eventually disproved, this still weakens Benedict XVI's position among the College of Cardinals. Opus Dei manages to wrest some control away from the Vatican and strengthen its position.

Another matter to consider is T2M, even though it barely influenced this scenario. If the characters are implicated in any of the skirmishes or attacks and refuse to sur-

render themselves for questioning, T2M considers them a threat. This may not affect Terats or Aberrants greatly, but this does mean Project Utopia is now after the team specifically. They've become a liability, and some people are willing to mention that to their faces. If the characters are with DeVries, the nova talent agency will cooperate with NYPD to ease the situation. It allows detectives to question the team but only with a lawyer present.

Last, but not least, the characters have made enemies of any surviving novas from this scenario. Apocrypha and ScarCrow, in particular, are resourceful enough to launch punitive missions against the team. They know what the characters can do, and they know how to draw them into the open.

Epilogue

[Encoded OpNet conference call between Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate lieutenant and superior.]

- **Voice 1:** Good morning sir. Our problem in New York has been resolved.
- **Voice 2:** Are you certain D'Ana? If this crops up again, it'll be your ass.
- **Voice 1:** I'm well aware of that sir. All the principles in the money-laundering scam are dead, with the exception of Piero Giorie, who's at death's door now. Giorie knows we can eliminate his son if we choose to. He'll stay quiet to protect the boy.
- **Voice 2:** Even though the kid turned his back on him?
- **Voice 1:** Strange, isn't it?
- **Voice 2:** And Opus Dei?
- **Voice 1:** They've got teeth sir. Our contacts in Madrid were found dead. Heart attacks, I believe, was the official cause of death. Might I suggest we warn our lieutenants in Spain and South America? Opus Dei seems to have the run of the governments there.
- **Voice 2:** Well D'Ana, start drawing up battle plans for these fucks.
- **Voice 1:** Already on it sir, but it could get bloody.
- **Voice 2:** That's fine. Opus Dei is too dangerous to have running around. It jeopardized nine years of our blood and sweat in the Holy See campaign, and I can't allow that. Just remember D'Ana, small steps. That's what got us the Papacy.
- **Voice 1:** Yes sir, of course.

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England

I Loathe My Country, Edward Phillip Rourke, 26/02/12

Today, I want to talk about crime in London. What's happening to us? The city's falling apart, gangs practically *rule* entire postcodes in the bad side of town? What causes this? Poverty. Certainly, you can lay the blame at any number of causes — the Camparelli-Zhukov Megasyndicate smuggles guns into the country, or perhaps, the Colombian cartels bring in soma and other drugs. Maybe, you say, the shiftless poor don't want to work for a living.

Bollocks!

This country is a mess, and London is the jewel in *that* crown. The poor turn to crime because we *don't give them any other choice!* Public education is a joke, medical care is Stone Age compared to the rest of the world, and the economy slides ever faster into oblivion. And what does our beloved government say? "We intend to bring ourselves into the new millennium on the strength of our own resources and our own people." Too bloody bad the resources are shite and the people don't give a damn anymore.

The next time you walk through Piccadilly, tripping over men and women who can't afford a flat on the nation's average salary, remember how much the government pays the King to live in comfort. The next time you see a pack of knives roughing one of the elderly up for a few more pounds, just remember the last time you saw a police officer in that neighborhood.

Then look up your local Megasyndicate representative and buy a black-market gun from him. You might — scratch that, you *will* need it.

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From the June 15, 2012 issue of the *London Times*

Seven Killed in Night-club Shooting

Last night, three men later identified as gang members strode into Club 414 and fired into the crowd with automatic weapons. At this time, police detective Jonathan Cole speculates that they'd come in expecting to find members of a rival gang. "We've found that there was some kind of territorial dispute over the club," the detective revealed to the *Times* earlier today.

The three assailants — identified as Joshua Guillory, Scott Moore and Paul Hadley — fled the scene immediately after firing the hail of bullets. Detective Cole assures us that the police are even now searching their known boltholes.

Moore, Guillory and Hadley's victims include five men and two women killed and another six clubgoers injured. One remains in critical condition. (cont'd page 4)

Society Ball Raises Money for Housing

In a gala celebration, running at £250 per plate, London's finest rubbed elbows with each other in what was the social event of the season. Industrialists, nobility and novas all attended the auspicious occasion intended to raise money to house the increasing numbers of homeless living on London's streets.

London Fog made an appearance and publicly donated £100,000 to the cause. Violet Mayhew, our own Silvery Voice of Albion, regaled the attendees with several musical pieces that evoked a sense of wonder and renewed patriotism in this reporter.

All told, the charity event raised nearly £2,000,000 for the purpose of building new housing. Here's to a warm winter for more families this year!



PROTEUS COMMUNIQUE

Director Ozaki:

I've enclosed what little information I could get about England's nova-management policies. They're certainly not as advanced as our Rashoud facilities, but they may already know too much about the harmful effects channeling quantum can have on the human body.

I've found no evidence of heavily deformed or insane novas in English custody, but this is indicative of nothing. Were I in their position, I'd bury them as deeply as possible, just as we do in Bahrain. My recommendation in this case is to install the new detectors at the points I've marked out on the accompanying map. You won't get them in through the airport, so use whatever method works best.

On a final note, I want a transfer. I'm positive those Directive bastards are onto me, and I can't stay here without compromising security. I'll brief a replacement as thoroughly as possible, but I'm getting tired of digging bugs out of my OpNet terminal.

Fly

PROTEUS MEMO

Agent Lindstrom:

We've lost contact with Fly, our primary London operative. I need you to go in and find him. Don't raise a fuss or get involved in local issues. Get in, find him, and get out. We can arrange a rescue later.

If you can, get any files or notes he's worked on in the past seven days. Enclosed are dossiers on known Directive operatives in the area.

Good Luck,

Director Ozaki

DIRECTIVE COMMUNIQUE

General Collin:

We've apprehended the Proteus operative codenamed "Fly." He's in custody awaiting your decision as to disposal. I suggest full-scale debriefing and incarceration.



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N!terview

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London Gets Municipal Defender

Reuters, London (January 14, 2008) — Yesterday, a massive fire in new construction threatened to spread and cover most of downtown London when the self-named "London Fog" appeared on the scene and doused the inferno with a heavy downpour. She later told reporters, "London's my city, I'll be watching," and then flew into the evening sky.

Two hours later, her agent released a statement to the press indicating London Fog's intent to serve as London's "municipal defender." She's currently in negotiations with the city government to define her duties and responsibilities to the city, as well as her salary and benefits. Reportedly, several toy manufacturers have already made offers to carry a line of action figures based around London Fog, and she's entertaining offers from two different comic-book publishers.

Coat manufacturer London Fog released a press statement concurrent with the heroine's, indicating that she's already in negotiations to endorse their line of rainwear.



June 7, 2009, BBCNews



London Fog: ...And I simply overloaded the plane's electronics and forced it to land before it got out of Heathrow.



Reporter: Quite resourceful. Tell me, what do you have to say about the front-page story in today's *Sun*? Were you born a man?



London Fog: What?! No comment!

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N!sight

N!tre nous

N!ternet

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fun N! games

search

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From *The Sun*

London Fog W as a Man!

by Edward Whitfield

London, 7 June, 2009 — Everyone in London knows London Fog. She was the talk of the town last year when she flew in and stopped a fire with her weather powers. What hardly anyone knows is her history. Just who is London Fog and what is she trying to hide? This reporter found out, and the truth will astonish you.

My search began with public records — records, I might add, that were amazingly sparse when it came to information about London Fog and her past. Certainly, we know that her civilian name is “Elizabeth Deborah Barton,” but that name leads to a dead end. No records exist for her birth or education, yet she claims to be a London native.

Of course, as we all know, novas can change drastically in appearance upon eruption, warped and twisted by the flow of quantum energies through the Mazarin-Rashoud node. I sincerely doubt that Antaeus of Project Utopia fame was born with leaves sprouting from his head, after all.

My investigations took me to Islington, where I met someone who claimed to be a friend of London Fog’s from state school. As it turns out, “Elizabeth Deborah Barton” was born “Benjamin Jeffrey Emory” in 1974 in Islington.

According to what I’ve learned, Benjamin sought medical intervention and sex-reassignment surgery in the early ‘90s, but couldn’t save the money for the surgery. He shifted from low-paying job to low-paying job, never quite able to make ends meet and still afford the hormone treatments and counseling necessary as a prelude to the surgery.

Benjamin’s eruption must have been quite the lucky break for him, but why has he gone to all this effort to conceal the truth from the public? Is Benjamin ashamed of his condition? Does he have anything else to hide? Who is this person who claims to be London’s defender?

The Sun Apologizes to London Fog

10 July, 2009 — Edward Whitfield retracts the article published on 7 July, 2007 claiming that London Fog was born a male named Benjamin Jeffrey Emory. No member of *The Sun* staff will answer any further questions on the topic nor are Mr. Whitfield’s research references available upon any request.

Melissa Weatherby MP

Minister Without Portfolio

Melissa Weatherby was the Conservative Party Election Manager from 2004-2010.

As Minister Without Portfolio, Ms. Weatherby will be responsible for assisting the Prime Minister and other ministerial colleagues in presenting, coordinating and implementing government policy.

Ms. Weatherby is a Minister of State in the Cabinet Office. Her responsibilities there are cross-departmental, assisting in the strategic implementation of the government's policies to ensure the new administration succeeds in fulfilling its programme, including the key manifesto pledges on education, jobs, health and crime.

Ms. Weatherby's responsibility for the presentation of government policy is to ensure consistent and clear projection of the government's activities and messages to the public. Ms. Weatherby will work closely with the Prime Minister and other colleagues across Whitehall on these issues. She is also a member of a number of cabinet committees.

Ms. Weatherby, 38, was elected as Member of Parliament for Westminster in 2000. She was appointed an Opposition whip in October 2002 and then made Shadow Civil Service Spokesman in October 2003. She stood down from her post in July 2004 to focus full-time on the Conservative Party's election campaign, while remaining on the Opposition front bench.

Ms. Weatherby studied PPE at St. Catherine's College, Oxford. She was a television producer for *England Today* from 1992 to 1995 and then appointed Conservative Party Director for Campaigns and Communications. She remained in this post until she was selected as the Conservative Candidate for Westminster in 2000.

Ms. Weatherby's hobbies include cycling, photography and historical novelizations. She is unmarried.

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N! the news

N!sight

N!tre nous

N!ternet

N!tv

fun N! games

N

the news

Andrew Pennyworth, January 15, 2007

In recent years, England has fallen behind other nations in a few key areas, but our primary concern is power. Oil is no longer the valuable commodity it once was. Nuclear power is being phased out in favor of cleaner energy sources. In general, we have to change the way we think about energy.

To that end, we at British Power are devoting ourselves to seeking out more efficient and more plentiful sources of power. Solar, geothermal, hydroelectric — these are just the beginning.

We intend to develop a workable fusion reactor within the next decade. This may seem unrealistic to many — consider that despite having the best nova minds at their disposal, even Project Utopia has not yet successfully harnessed the true power of the sun. This does not indicate an insurmountable problem to us. Instead, it just means we have to work that little bit harder.

It is unfortunate that we must raise our rates to accommodate the increased research, but consider the long-term benefits: A few pennies a month now versus unlimited cheap energy for your children.

Andrew Pennyworth,

British Power

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Jacob Ashton

July 16, 2009

I've tried everything I can imagine, and nothing works. It sits just beyond my reach, taunting me. I *know* it's achievable, but I haven't yet found what will do it. I fear that I may kill myself before I stumble upon the right alchemy that will trigger my node.

Transcendental meditation, skydiving — nothing works. I've even resorted to murder with my bare hands. How is it that I can have so much and yet be relegated to the hordes of common men — only to look in awe and envy upon the quantum gods who walk among us? Surely , it's my birthright to *join* their number .



Industrialist Nearly Killed in Tragic Airline Crash

British Airways Flight 317 plunged into the icy waters of the Atlantic yesterday . thirty-nine people died in what is currently a mystery to investigators. Fortunately for the surviving passengers and crew , one Jacob Ashton among them, the *HMS Inevitable* was nearby and could mount a rescue effort.

Investigators are now going over the submerged wreckage to determine the cause of the mysterious crash. The black box recording, retrieved late last night, indicates that the pilots lost all control as the plane simply dived into the ocean.

British Airways is keeping the names of the deceased confidential until their families can be contacted. If anyone reading this fears that a relative or friend may have been on board, send a query to BA317@british-airways.co.uk .

Doctor Loretta Morgan

Dr. Burghalter:

Enclosed are the observations from the Bahrain facility, as requested.

I've catalogued every manifestation of taint syndrome we've observed since 1998, and I have to say that I'm at something of a loss. In some cases, novas manifest mutations in a seemingly random fashion, and in others, they seem to relate directly to their powers. It has become clear that high-intensity power use accelerates the process in some way, but this is by no means a hard and fast rule.

My primary concern does not lie in the physical mutations. Rather, it's those who have become mentally unstable. I'm not certain whether there's a direct link, but I have no other conclusion. Some novas retain relatively normal features yet develop increasingly irrational and antisocial behavior patterns. Patients 27, 45 and 63 all developed the classic signs of various mental dysfunctions as outlined in the DSM-VI manual, yet none of them have a history that would in normal circumstances lead to such dysfunctions. Patient 45 is the most telling example — at age 36, she developed dissociative identity disorder. As is known, DID is reliably observed to develop as a result of *childhood* trauma. Patient 45 showed no signs of such trauma before her eruption and the unfortunate events that followed. In fact, she spontaneously developed the symptoms only a month ago.

I have already recommended to Director Ozaki that these operatives be pulled from duty. They lack the stability necessary to perform the work Proteus requires of them. Unfortunately, my words have, as yet, had no effect. Do you think you could get Justin to apply some pressure? After some of the recent issues, Utopia can't afford the potential for trouble these psychos (yes, I use that term advisedly) represent.

Brigadier General Matthew Collin

Interrogation Transcript

General Collin: Are you comfortable? Would you care for something to drink? A cigarette?

• **Fly:** [through gritted teeth] No. I'm fine.

• **GC:** Then shall we attend to business? Good. I hope you can satisfy my curiosity. Specifically, why you've spent so much time observing our governmental buildings. Surely they can't be *that* interesting, even to a tourist.

• **F:** I'm an amateur photographer. I was just taking pictures.

• **GC:** Really? Is that so? Why then were no photographs amidst your belongings when we picked you up? And why did you try to run? Certainly, a simple photographer has nothing to fear from two men in business suits.

• **F:** [pause] With suspicious bulges under their jackets? What would you think if two armed men approached you like that?

• **GC:** [laughter] Come now, you must realize that we're more civilized than to simply shoot an American for taking pictures. Still, you have a good eye, if you noticed that. Now, we know you sat outside an M15 office for six consecutive hours, I presume photographing all who entered or departed. What we don't know is why. I could make an educated guess, but I'd like to hear your explanation first.

• **F:** Before I say another word, I want to call the US Embassy.

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Lord Alexander Frasier III

New Owners Reopen Millennium Dome

01/01/2002

Lord Alexander Frasier III officiated at the reopening of the Millennium Dome. After its sale two years ago, various parties pooled resources to convert it into a "living museum of England's present." Lord Frasier stated, "Today, we create our own future. Let those who come after us admire our works."

The Millennium Dome, now the London Museum of Living History, has exhibits displaying the *Galatea* station, extensive documentation of the "Nova Age," as it's termed, as well as several exhibits donated by British corporations to showcase their present-day accomplishments and future goals.

Lauren Meyer, the museum's director, hopes to keep the exhibits up-to-date to match the quickly changing world situation. Lauren addressed the attendees, saying, "We are privileged to live in these wondrous times, when miracles are a daily occurrence and hope reigns over the world. I want this [museum] to embody the spirit of the current historic age."

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Violet Mayhew

N!Sight with Parker Stevenson, N! Network, August 17, 2009

Shaped From the Dust — A New Musical Sensation

• **Voice-Over:** Live from London, England, N! is proud to present the world's most popular interview program, N!Sight, with your host Parker Stevenson!

[applause]

• **Stevenson:** Thank you! Thank you, everyone, and welcome to today's show. This week, we're coming to you straight from London. Today's weather is nice and sunny — maybe London Fog decided to help out.

[laughter]

I'm here today to interview our special guest, the lovely and talented Novox sensation, the Silvery Voice of Albion herself, Violet Mayhew. We'll discuss her musical influences, how she got to where she is so fast and how she became the spokeswoman for an entire nation!

[mixture of applause and cheers]

• **Mayhew:** Good evening, Parker, and thank you for that introduction. It's nice to be on the other side of the interview process for once. I find it very relaxing.

• **S:** You've made quite a splash in England since your appearance two years ago. It's clear that you enjoy your celebrity status — who wouldn't? — but why have you just now decided to branch into music?

• **M:** Well, Parker, *Shaped From the Dust* is something of an autobio-

graphical work. Each song resonates symbolically with a distinct part of my life. You'll notice the change in tone from the first song, *Spare Change* — a very depressing note to start on, but you can only go up from here, right? The real transformation starts with *The Soul's Alchemy*, a song that's really about my eruption, but it's much more profound than that.

• **S:** Could you be more specific? I mean, the tone becomes very optimistic and uplifting. Critics have described it as inspirational, even. I notice that your musical style changes drastically at this point, transforming from the harsh, rage-filled lyrics in the first half to a more modern, electronic style. Why that choice?

• **M:** I wanted a sound evocative of the present, with no limits. Electronic, techno-style music was the obvious choice, since you have the most freedom with instrumental accompaniment. I wanted to center the sound on a soaring, powerful theme but range far and wide in the process. I think this succeeds, and my fans love it.

• **S:** What about other endeavors? Any plans to appear in a movie or model?

• **M:** Oh, no! Next to Lydia Divine, I'm afraid my flaws would stand out terribly. No, I'm happy here in England, with my own program and my music. Maybe in a few years I'll look for something else. Until then, I'll stay right where I am.

The Temple of the King

From BBC2 News Magazine, dated 24/06/12



• **VIOLET MAYHEW:** TONIGHT, WE STAND OUTSIDE THE HEADQUARTERS OF A YOUNG BUT FAST-GROWING SOCIAL CLUB, THE TEMPLE OF THE KING, AN ORGANIZATION MODELED ON THE GENTLEMEN'S CLUBS OF THE PREVIOUS CENTURY BUT WITHOUT SOME OF THE REGRESSIVE RESTRICTIONS. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT, MR. ASHTON?



• **JACOB ASHTON:** WELL, VIOLET, WE HOLD NOTHING AGAINST THE FREEMASONS OR OTHER SOCIETIES, BUT IT'S TIME THAT WOMEN WERE GIVEN UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO THE SAME KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES MEN HAVE TAKEN FOR GRANTED FOR THE PAST SEVERAL CENTURIES. THESE CLUBS TRADITIONALLY PROVIDE A RELAXED, SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE OUTSIDE THE BUSINESS ARENA WHERE YOU CAN MINGLE WITH PEOPLE YOU MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE HAVE A CHANCE TO MEET.



• **ASHTON:** ONE BENEFIT, OF COURSE, IS THAT ATTENDEES CAN MAKE CONTACTS IN THE CORPORATE AND POLITICAL SECTORS, AND THAT SHOULD HELP US REVIVE ENGLAND'S ECONOMY.



• **MAYHEW:** ARE THERE ANY PLANS FOR EXPANSION IN THE FUTURE? BRANCHES IN OTHER CITIES? OTHER COUNTRIES?



• **ASHTON:** YES, WE DO HOPE TO EXPAND. RIGHT NOW, OUR MEMBERSHIP IS GROWING AT A PHENOMENAL RATE, AND I EXPECT WE'LL FIND A GOOD RECEPTION IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES. FROM THERE, WHO KNOWS?



• **MAYHEW:** THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME, MR. ASHTON. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING WHERE THE TEMPLE GOES FROM HERE. GOOD LUCK, AND GOOD NIGHT.

Private Interview Transcript

- **Luiz Francisco:** Are you both comfortable? Care for a drink?
- **Finn:** I'll have tea — whatever you've got. He'll have gin. Straight. What's the nature of your problem, Señor Francisco?
- **Francisco:** My company produces the processor nodes used for Europe's OpNet. We've recently developed a — well, we'll just call it a prototype. It's very valuable to us and would cost us greatly if we lost it to a competitor.
- **Finn:** Was it stolen?
- **Francisco:** No, but I believe one of our employees, Pablo Hernandez, took schematics for the new chipset and intends to auction it off to our... competitors.
- **Finn:** This is his portfolio? Interesting. Didn't you run a full check on him when you hired him? Just one glance tells me this guy's shiftier than quicksand.
- **Francisco:** Look, not everything's immediately obvious. Pablo came with impeccable references, and he's one of the best in his field—
- **Dog:** Cut the crap, Francisco. One look at his performance reviews shows he couldn't design a potato chip, let alone a computer chip. You can suck my cock and call it strawberry ice cream, but it's still going to taste like cock. Now, why'd you keep this loser in your employ *knowing* he's an incompetent security risk?
- **Finn:** Dog has a point. What aren't you telling us?
- **Francisco:** Look, I'm giving you everything I have. This is all on the level.
- **Finn:** That's interesting. As it turns out, we know Señor Hernandez isn't your employee. He's also not stealing anything from you. We do have evidence that your corporate spies tried to steal this very design from IntelEurope and that this man was hired to recover the stolen prototypes. Lies give me gas, idiots give me a headache. Now I have both, and all I did was sit in the same room with you for two minutes. Not very impressive. Have a good day, Señor Francisco. We won't be in touch, and I suggest that you never contact us again.
- **Dog:** [snarls]

Reuters

Reuters, Acapulco Mexico — Gunfire broke out on the *Island Princess* cruise ship while still in port yesterday afternoon. 26 casualties, including the Novox performing sensations, Brother Rap and Sister Soul, have been found so far. Investigators believe that no others were harmed.

The assailants are unknown at this time, although investigators harbor strong suspicions that they were elites. The massacre was over too quickly for baseline reflexes.

Investigators found evidence in the Novox duo's cabin linking them to several terrorist actions conducted under the banner of an extremist Nation of Islam group. If the evidence is accurate, Interpol will discover the cause of at least a dozen bombings in the past two years. Nation of Islam representatives deny any link to Brother Rap or Sister Soul's activities.

The Apostasy Protocols, 2012

TOP SECRET EYES ONLY, Page 26

Theoconception

Given the great power *Homo sapiens novus* can demonstrate, it's not a matter of if but when some will decide to set themselves up as living gods. In most cases, — on the scale we're concerned with — this is harmless, and the novas in question will grow out of it. It's the novas who revel in it, who use their powers to maintain it, strengthen it and create a legion of followers who will obey their every command who are a danger.

Theoconception is an ugly thing. Humans with powers they can't properly control taking on airs of godhood and use entirely too gullible baseline humans to support their delusions. Cases that reach a critical meme vector of .69 gamma will spread into the general population and have the potential to create social upset, either through zealous followers or the nova's personal schemes. At .75 gamma, it's a guarantee that toppling local or national governments is a viable course of action. Thankfully, it's possible to identify such cults before they reach .60 gamma and encourage them to dissolve before it's too late to reverse the trend. Methods of encouragement vary from cult to cult. Use whatever measures are deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

The earlier a nova cult is defused, the better the likely resolution. It's better to recruit a theoconceptor who has not yet firmly decided he wants to follow through than one who's prepared to execute a violent and bloody revolution in a major nation (but the situation would have to get very out of control before this is even a consideration).

Assign highest priority to theoconceptors who demonstrate superhuman charm and powers of persuasion — their subtle danger should not be ignored. They can exert a kind of control over their followers that's not easily breakable, possibly because it's authentic, despite the source.

Assign next highest priority to the insane. Nova insanity feeds upon itself — it somehow interacts with the M-R node and causes further mutation and insanity. A nova who begins as merely deluded finds that his own M-R node reinforces those delusions over time. This process has been observed at the Bahrain facility in six separate case histories (refer to Bahrain case file BR-445) as of the last update (January, 2012) of this file.



Introduction

Not all novas are content to work in the open. Some would rather work behind the scenes and try to manipulate events through proxies. Shadowy figures within Proteus, the Directive and the Teragen all work toward their own ends. Some novas have chosen to work independently, rather than link fortunes with any specific group.

Arthur Francis Anningsley is quite probably one of the five most intelligent novas on Earth, and he's devoted that intelligence to claiming as much influence over global events as he can manage. Raised in an impoverished English family of noble blood, he feels that the influence and wealth rightfully his has been denied him. His eruption only made it possible for him to take that — and much, much more.

Anningsley's eruption granted him immense mental capacity and the power to control multiple minds simultaneously. He's used this power and intelligence to create an organization centered upon him as a messianic figure. Very few members of his secret cult are even aware he exists, yet he's interacted with every one of them.

The main reason for Anningsley's success on the personal level is his lover, Violet Mayhew, a popular English media commentator and singer (sometimes referred to as "The Silver Voice of Albion"). When Anningsley needs to bring a truly influential recruit into the cult, Mayhew usually makes contact and brings the poor soul into the conspiracy. She's very effective at this, and Anningsley occasionally rides inside her mind and offers "cues" when necessary. Usually, he just lets her go, as she's much more capable of such seductions and subversions.

This chapter presents the growth and development of Anningsley's cult and the ways in which the characters may interact with (and probably destroy) it. Anningsley's subtle execution means that he can grow his cult to a reasonable size before it's noticed, but he can't keep it hidden forever. His ambition will probably be his downfall.

The Man Who Would Be King

Not more than two centuries past, the sun never set on the British Empire. The British seemingly had holdings and colonies everywhere — they were present in Africa, Asia and North America. Their aggressive colonial policies took them to many places and led to much trade. Unfortunately, their good fortune was not to last.

In time, the subject nations overthrew their British rulers or negotiated freedom. In 1997, the last of Britain's extra-territorial holdings — Hong Kong — was returned to the People's Republic of China. All that remained was England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. England's prosperity faded as well, with economic depression and worse. In recent years, England's decline (socially, economically and politically) has continued as the United Kingdom refuses to join the European Community, foster a relationship with Project Utopia or respect the Euro. Racially motivated violence is on the rise, and crime skyrockets.

Arthur Francis Anningsley grew up in this environment: His life spanned eight decades before his eruption, and he lived through the global depression of the '30s, the Second World War (where he saw London bombed into rubble) and the slow decline of England's social fabric over the following decades. His own family was impoverished in the 19th century, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Hanging on purely through social connections, they maintained an appearance of affluence — but even that eventually ended.

In 2005, Arthur Francis Anningsley, Duke of Southminster, lived in a London townhouse he could barely afford. His holdings had been made into a tourist attraction years before, and he preferred to avoid such chaos. At 80 years of age, he found himself disappointed in his life and his country. He'd accomplished little in his long life and regretted many of his decisions. He entered a deep depression that would have killed him, had it not triggered his eruption.

Anningsley didn't dwell on past failures. Instead, he examined them, analyzed them, disassembled them and *understood* them. He took his own mind apart, dispassionately examined the pieces and reassembled them, occasionally taking pieces from nearby minds and incorporating them into the final result. He remade his consciousness into something ruthless, amoral and inhumanly predatory. He established his goal — nothing less than the United Kingdom's political and economic revival. Under his guidance, England would join the superpowers of the 21st century.

To succeed, Anningsley needed support — not only in England, but globally, and to that end, he devised a cult, with himself as the central figure. Anningsley reasoned that religious devotion was among the strongest a human could hold and crossed national lines; his goal was not to attract mindless followers but to attract influential businessmen and national leaders (or people close to them). He needed a means to bring them under his banner and convince them to follow him.

Anningsley converted Violet Mayhew first. He chose her for her talents and what he perceived to be a certain ethical flexibility. Until Anningsley met Mayhew, she used her persuasive powers mainly to further her own career (and get the occasional valuable gift from hopeful suitors). She had great ambition but no real direction. Anningsley gave her that direction. He laid out his plans for Mayhew, culminating with the two of them ruling a new British Empire. Mayhew, fully convinced of the rightness of Anningsley's goals, used her own connections to lure influential men into Anningsley's new cult.

Camelot

When Anningsley constructed his "religion," he took several cues from Christianity, Freemasons and his own national legacy. The Temple of the King, as he calls it, operates as something of a small elite society.

Most of the members view the Temple of the King as a glorified social club. They use it to make contacts in

the business and political arenas and cut deals behind closed doors.

Anningsley's intent is to create a sense of fellowship, so members will preferentially deal with each other over outsiders. With this in mind, he's careful to admit a mixture of members that will lead to an overall gain for England. He doesn't want to be too obvious in this regard, but the island's increased fortunes will become apparent over time.

Anningsley and Mayhew have devised a series of rituals designed to encourage increased camaraderie among the membership. The most basic of these is the initiation ritual. Every potential member must have a sponsor to join the Temple, and the new recruit must meet the approval of at least two other members. This is rarely an obstacle (unless the new member is someone Anningsley or Mayhew sees as a potential danger to the Temple), and new recruits join fairly regularly.

Initiation is drawn directly from Masonic rites and the mystery cults of the past. The new member is brought into a temple blindfolded. When the blindfold is removed, he finds himself in a gloomy chamber, with only a few candles to provide light. Surrounding him are several hooded figures (two are always women). They each give a ritual recitation and ask questions of him. His sponsor coaches him in the ap-



propriate responses, so he will be able to answer properly.

Once the session is over, the lights are turned on, the hoods are discarded, and he's welcomed. The experience is staged to be very intense for the inductee, and it generally succeeds spectacularly.

The primary benefit of membership is an active social schedule. The Temple has regular social events — balls, outings, meetings, etc. — intended primarily to provide a venue in which the elite can cut deals with the elite. A member can find her prospects for promotion improved, make that critical deal or get enough support to guarantee a political office and advance her career. The Temple is not only intended to give Anningsley access to the elite but also to influence who joins the ranks of the social elite.

Beyond the normal run of members are the truly influential — the Inner Temple. Potential members require two sponsors and unanimous agreement from the remaining membership. Initiation is similar to initiation in the Outer Temple (never referred to as such in front

Temple Rituals

Anningsley studied various past groups — Freemasons and the Knights Templar for example. With his superhuman intellect and knowledge of human psychology, he creates rites that establish a strong resonance in his recruits' psyches.

An example is included above, so use that as a starting point. Keep in mind that, to a participant, the rituals should seem majestic and carry great import.

- **Outer Temple Initiation** — This ritual typically has few participants. Three members enact the ritual, while the candidate responds to their questions and his sponsor stands nearby. The sense is that the sponsor gives support but also stands to lose if the candidate proves to be unworthy. The three questioners are masked, concealing their true identities (ideally, two men and one woman). Once the questions are over, the masks are removed and the candidate is welcomed as a comrade. Ideally, the questioners should be people the candidate already knows (and is on good terms with), thus strengthening the camaraderie following the initiation.

- **Meetings** — Every Outer Temple meeting starts with a ritual. Each member is greeted at the door with a question about his intentions for the evening. The member answers with a rote affirmation. This question-and-response style is repeated when the meeting officially begins and again when it's over. This isn't a laborious or long process — rather, it's quite short and to the point, akin to a formal toast.

- **Inner Temple Initiations** — The basic format is similar to the above, except that Anningsley echoes each question in the candidate's mind as the questioners speak. The questions are not the same but instead relate to the return of the king and the restoration of a golden age. The two men vary among the other Inner Temple members, but the woman is always Mayhew. Once the questions are over, Mayhew personally welcomes the new recruit, using her incredible charm to further strengthen the feeling of welcome and unity within the cabal. The three questioners represent Lancelot, Galahad and Guinevere — explicitly, in this case.

of Outer Temple members), with the exception that some of the Temple's goals are revealed — England's political and economic rejuvenation being the most noteworthy. The King is revealed to be Arthur of Camelot, as a sign of hope for England. Inner Temple members are encouraged to use their contacts to increase the wealth and influence of their native land.

Mayhew is the Inner Temple's heart and soul. She keeps everyone in line, massages bruised egos and convinces reluctant participants to shed their misgivings. She presides over all initiations — giving a sense of majesty to the proceedings not possible any other way. Unlike the Outer Temple, Inner Temple security is strictly enforced — and the few who have tried to violate this dictum have come to bad ends. Business for the Inner Temple is deadly serious, as nothing less than England's manifest destiny is at stake. Mayhew uses all the persuasive power at her disposal to hammer this home to new members (who have already been indoctrinated before they were approached).

Why Get Involved?

So Anningsley wants to economically revitalize England. So what? He has a goal that anyone can sympathize with, after all. Who wouldn't want to bring his country to dominance in the global community?

In Anningsley's case, however, he wants to do it at the expense of other nations' welfare. He doesn't want to share the pie with anyone. His ideal world is a world in which Britannia dominates all facets of life, globally — but that's just the beginning. For his plans to work, he must nullify or distract all possible opposition.

Note that Anningsley isn't stupid — quite the opposite. He knows where he is, where he wants to go and has already determined how to get there. His plans are flexible enough to adapt to contact with the enemy, and all he needs is patience, support and resources.

Anningsley's first steps have been to get a foothold in both the political and economic arenas and use that to improve England's standing — so far, he's been moderately successful. Not so that anyone outside his conspiracy would notice. England still suffers through economic recession and is unwilling to cooperate with Project Utopia for the "common good."

Anningsley's plans call for multiple assassinations, first within the English government and later in other nations (many of them Directive members). His plan to upset the global political and economic landscape and to raise England (under his rulership) to dominance is not a plan the rest of the world wants to see come to pass — or would if they knew about it.

He's identified nova threats and allies and is prepared to move appropriately in each case. He doesn't want an obvious round of deaths among novas, but he will do what he must to eliminate the threats he can't convert to his cause.

The novas he's marked as potential allies don't know it yet. In each case, he needs an appropriate approach (usually intended to feed their egos and desires). Novas

are a more difficult case, since he can't simply expect to exert his mental powers and use them as he does baselines. Instead, he accepts that they are unknown quantities and will move a nova from potential ally to threat without a second thought if events warrant it.

Factions

The following information deals with how the factions would react to knowledge of Anningsley's activities, should it come to their attention. Also included are hooks to get the characters involved, regardless of their allegiance (or lack thereof).

Project Utopia

Utopia has no interest in allowing any one nation — especially one so opposed to their activities — economic dominance — even less so does anyone in the upper echelons want a nova "despot" leading that nation. It's one thing to have a third-world country with a nova ruler suffering from limited ambition. Even The Fireman isn't a problem, since Portman has a strong sense of ethics and works within his nation's laws. An unprincipled, megalomaniacal supergenius is another issue entirely.

This is not to say that Utopia is against nova leaders (they supported the candidacy of President Portman in 2008, after all). Rather, Utopia is against nova leaders who don't support Utopia's goals.

Utopia's other problem with Anningsley's schemes relates to the fact that he's already subverted several ranking European members. He's gained some influence over Utopia affairs and has no compunctions about using that influence to inflict a great deal of harm and interference upon Utopia operations.

Fortunately, he has not yet managed to infiltrate Team Tomorrow. The fact that it's primarily a nova-operated branch (along with his very real fear of Caestus Pax) has kept him away from any employees of T2M-Eu.

The big scare for Utopia, especially Utopia-employed novas, would be the literal PR disaster Anningsley could become if or when his actions become public knowledge. No one wants baseline conspiracy theorists to start wondering just *how many* Mega-Intelligent novas might be secretly running things in any given government and just what that might mean for society (especially given the implications of taint).

Proteus Division

Director Thetis absolutely does not want Anningsley's schemes to come about (once she hears of them). The very possibility shakes her to the core of her being. Once aware, her goal would be to remove Anningsley and Mayhew as quickly and quietly as possible, replace them with Proteus agents who can stand in for them and use the opportunity to disassemble the Temple, preferably in a clash of egos or petty infighting.

Upon Proteus' founding, the Aeon Society provided a document called *The Apostasy Protocols*. This document includes an exhaustive list of scenarios focused around novas attempting to conquer nations, infiltrate and/or undermine national or international agencies or impact national

or global economies. It contains signs and patterns to watch for and recommended strategies for responding to subtle nova threats of an international nature.

The Apostasy Protocols made it possible to spot a few potentially threatening nova-driven conspiracies and stop them before they spread too far. Anningsley's Temple is simply the latest in a trend. Proteus is ready to send agents in and put a stop to Anningsley's activities. Unlike the Directive (see below), its agents haven't identified the center yet. They do know of Mayhew's involvement and consider her the primary starting point for any investigation.

Aberrants

The Aberrants are already quite sensitive about conspiracies against novas. Another cabal that removes "problematic elements" would certainly get their attention. For the moment, Anningsley considers the Aberrants potential allies (given their opposition to Utopia or what he perceives as such). Unfortunately, he uses many of the same tactics that turned the Aberrants against Utopia in the first place. Not all Aberrants are openly a part of the faction, and all associate with other novas. If a character's friend vanishes (see Missing Persons, below), Aberrants are primed to investigate the matter.

Teragen

Generally speaking, individual Terats might not find Anningsley's goals objectionable — except for the part where he would try to eliminate the Teragen and other novas seen as threats. Nova Vigilance would find this policy quite offensive. Some Terats might be interested in recruiting Anningsley, but to do so, it would be necessary to rid him of his ideas about dominance in the baseline world. Certainly, such ends have their uses, but for the One Race, it's a rather petty goal.

The Directive

Anningsley's activities are a direct (if silent) attack upon the countries making up the Directive. Few of the factions in the Directive are interested in allowing a nova to gain the kind of temporal and political power Anningsley stands to gain if his goals are even partially met. Like Proteus, elements within the Directive would be more interested in containing the damage and eliminating the cause.

The Directive is aware of Anningsley's conspiracy, the Brigadier General's participation and enough about Anningsley's plans and goals that immediate action is absolutely necessary. Characters would be assigned to investigate and contain the situation quickly, quietly and efficiently.

The Directive has its own documentation and protocols for dealing with situations like this. They're very similar to *The Apostasy Protocols*, but go by other names.

Elites

Part of Anningsley's plans involve the direct elimination of potential problems — most of whom are other novas. Specifically, Anningsley has targeted several elites for termination. Anningsley realizes that once the wrong people know his schemes, the elites will be the first on the scene to remove him from circulation. He'd rather re-

move them first. While this is not as easy as it sounds, the mechanism for such an action is already in place.

Elites are mercenaries who take highly visible and dangerous jobs for a lot of money. Anningsley simply tries to set them up — get them hired for a high-risk job, and make sure they die. He expects this process to take several years but has already started it. The elites (in general) won't take this sitting down. Any given elite might get involved after a friend died in what was (to him) an obvious set-up. Investigation would lead him to the Temple.

Another possibility might be to actually set one of the characters up for a fall — Anningsley's decided the character is a potential threat to his position and needs to be brought down. Any elite, after surviving the ambush, would be very curious about who set him up and why. If the elite in question was working for DeVries, the agency itself will investigate. Legwork will lead back to the Temple.

Organized Crime

The Camparelli-Zhukov Megasyndicate has limited operations within the United Kingdom, which they guard jealously. The simple fact that Utopia (or Team Tomorrow) isn't welcome to operate within England sets the stage for some useful rendezvous points and safe houses (as long as they can pay off or avoid law enforcement).

Unfortunately, Anningsley's managed to bring a few Camparelli-Zhukov operators under his umbrella. This doesn't directly impact their operations (at first), but it does give some lieutenants a second set of loyalties they can't afford to have. A sufficiently influential lieutenant might get invited into the Inner Temple, at which point he either disappears (because Anningsley knows that he's not going to be loyal) or he turns against the Megasyndicate.

Anningsley has also picked up some of the Camparelli-Zhukov people in Europe (although they'll never get into the Inner Temple). Once he knows enough about Megasyndicate operations, he'll try to arrange operations against it within England (except for those factions he already has in his pocket), eliminating it from his consideration.

Independents

Any nova (of any faction, or none at all) can easily get involved for any number of reasons. Anningsley's moving quickly to get his fingers into many pies and using those pies to consolidate his influence. He's spreading the Temple to the United States and Canada as soon as possible, and he needs hearts and minds to meet his goals.

A Friend in Need

Novas know people — a lot of people. It's not uncommon for novas to have influential friends — agents, politicians, CEOs, ambassadors and so on. These are often the sort of people whom Anningsley wants either to recruit or eliminate. Look over the characters' contacts, allies and followers, and decide who would be good candidates for Anningsley's Temple. Candidates suitable for the Inner Temple work even better — what may start out as a "social club" slowly turns out to be something far more sinister. And what happens when the

characters' friend turns against them? Or frantically tries to call for help — only to be cut off?

Missing Persons

Even more sinister, Anningsley has marked many novas as potential threats and has already begun working his way down that list. He hasn't picked off more than two or three novas so far, but what if one of those novas is a friend of the characters? Anningsley won't necessarily kill every nova on his list. If he sees it as safe to do so, he won't hesitate to use his mental powers to work over a nova's brain to transform her from a potential enemy to a valuable servant. Such a drastic change in her personality, especially after an extended absence, should alert the characters that something is up.

If Anningsley decides death is the only option, he will be more careful about moving. Of course, given his facility with mind control, it might not be too difficult for him to frame another simply by acting through proxy. Enough groups certainly exist to take the blame — the Aberrants, the Teragen, the Church of Michael Archangel and others. Of course, such a murder must be eventually traceable to Anningsley and his Temple or you will have frustrated characters (and players).

The Course of Events

Anningsley's plots span years, but by the time the characters get involved, they've accelerated. It's a very short period of time before he acts on the final stages of his overall plan. It's assumed that the Storyteller will bring characters into this a matter of weeks before Anningsley intends to assassinate the Prime Minister, but if he introduces the Temple to the characters months or years before the critical point, it's possible for them to get involved much earlier.

With the resources at Anningsley's disposal, he won't be able to succeed fully. Even so, after eliminating several dozen critical people in important positions worldwide and deliberately shaking up the economy, he can seriously disrupt the global status quo. It's best to stop him before he sets the final phase in motion (if at all possible).

The Beginning

Anningsley moves very quietly at first, bringing in the Inner Temple's core membership and Mayhew. He starts his moves in 2009 and completes them within two years. By the fall of 2011, he has a small but very dedicated core around which he can build the Temple of the King. He refines his observation of public novas, noting those whom he cannot abide and those who would make potential allies or pawns.

Andrew Pennyworth

Andrew Pennyworth is the chairman for the British Power board of directors. He only recently came into that position (with assistance from others in the Temple and direct intercession on Mayhew's part), and now he's only a figurehead for Anningsley's needs. He can't address British



Power's needs directly if Anningsley comes to him every other week and demands that they pull out of some obscure third-world country or attempt to buy out extranational companies' holdings in England. At least some of the other board members are starting to suspect that someone else pulls Pennyworth's strings. Pennyworth is loyal to Anningsley's cause, but if he's pushed much farther (and feels that much more powerless), he may turn against his hidden benefactor. Of all the Inner Temple, Pennyworth only respects General Collin. The others he sees more as hangers-on and opportunists, looking for easy power.

Lord Alexander Frasier III

Alexander Frasier III enthusiastically accepts the Arthurian symbolism in the Inner Temple and supports a New Britain where the monarchy truly are rulers and are not merely figureheads living on state subsidies. Frasier re-



sents the way the rest of the world treats the English nobility — more like fascinating animals on exhibit than as real people. He would rather have true power than superficial fame. He views Ashton with disgust — the man clearly has no care for what he's inherited and squanders his life in pointless distractions. Pennyworth, on the other hand, he views with envy. He's begun to court Dr. Morgan, as he's very attracted to her sharp and insightful mind.

Jacob Ashton

Jacob Ashton's family was among the forefront of industrialization in the 19th century. They made a fortune building an industrial empire and maintained it through the following decades. Ashton is wealthy enough to have nearly any-



thing he could possibly want, except for an active M-R node. Mayhew lured Ashton into the temple with stories that Anningsley might know how to trigger eruptions. Even without that temptation, Ashton faces the challenge of raising England above all other nations with anticipation. It's a difficult road, but one he's ambitious enough to navigate. Ashton could care less about the rest of the Inner Temple. The only exception is Dr. Morgan, whom he believes holds Utopia's "secret" for inducing eruption. He's not yet certain how to broach the subject. Should anyone convince him that Utopia has no such secret, he will react as if betrayed.

Dr. Loretta Morgan

Dr. Loretta Morgan is one of the top 10 global specialists on the M-R node and nova physiology. She's also the only Project Utopia employee in the Inner Temple. She is an Oxford-educated English national, but her duties often require her to travel. She does have clearance for the Bahrain facility (where she studies taint closely). Her high level clearance in Utopia gives her a great deal of access to information about Utopia's operations, which she puts at Anningsley's disposal. Anningsley has provided her with extensive funding and free reign to work inside England on the projects she can't get support for within Utopia. Proteus agents noticed Dr. Morgan's



association with the Temple of the King early on but have not yet investigated deeply enough to uncover anything suspicious (though it's only a matter of time). Anningsley values Dr. Morgan's input to the cabal but fears that Utopia will discover her duplicity. Unknown to Dr. Morgan, he's implanted a suicide impulse in her mind. If she's discovered (and knows it), she will try to kill herself before consciously betraying the Temple. Frasier's advances charm her, but she isn't prepared to accept them. His old-fashioned ideals don't easily lend themselves to a full-time relationship with a woman who works a full-time career.

Brigadier General Matthew Collin

Matthew Collin has been in the SAS for nearly 25 years and is among the best that England has to offer. He's fought in Iraq and Central Europe during the '90s and now finds



himself with much less work (given Elite presence). He has a great deal of national pride but directs it carefully. For him, Anningsley's plan is a godsend. Collin doesn't care about the Arthurian legendry, but he does care about making England the primary world power. He believes that a new British Empire would have to be economic in nature and not political. His contacts are primarily in the corporate arena — many friends from the service have moved on to manage corporations, and he rigorously maintains contact with all of his influential friends. As a high-ranking member of the Directive, he does bring valuable information and influence to Anningsley's cabal. General Collin views the members of the Inner Temple as national resources to be drawn upon at need. He doesn't intend to form any close attachments with any of them. In some cases, their naked lust for power repels him.

Minister Without Portfolio Melissa Weatherby

Melissa Weatherby has served as Minister Without Portfolio since 2009. Her duties — she assists the Prime Minister and other ministerial colleagues in presenting and implementing governmental policy — give her direct access to



the upper echelons of English government. Weatherby's not so concerned about the trappings of Anningsley's cabal so much as maintaining her privileged position in the new regime. Her primary motivation is mundane greed. Weatherby is willing to cooperate with any of the other Inner Temple members, unless they deliberately antagonize her. She wants their full support should anything happen and will not jeopardize her standing. Even so, she doesn't trust Jacob Ashton — he's been near too many accidents.

Building the Temple

Once Anningsley's solidified his core, he'll begin to work outward and recruit others into the Outer Temple. The Temple of the King will be presented as a modern incarnation of the "gentlemen's clubs" of the past. Of

Gentlemen's Clubs?

These clubs of the 19th and 20th centuries served as private places for businessmen to gather, socialize, exchange favors and have a quiet space away from the rest of the world. In the late 20th century, it was clear that these clubs (closed to women) made it possible for men to advance further and faster than women and attempts were made to open them to women, with mixed results.

course, Anningsley is more concerned with competence and influence than with issues such as gender or race, so membership is not heavily restricted.

Between 2011 and 2013, he carefully and quickly promotes the Temple and aggressively recruits anyone who fits the criteria he's laid down — the new member must have something to offer and something to gain from membership. He also has the Inner Temple scrutinize members to see who might be amenable to joining the cabal.

Anningsley takes the Temple international, opening chapters in New York, Washington, DC, Paris, Munich, Rome and Moscow. Mayhew handles the recruitment efforts, with direction from the Inner Temple. He exploits the Inner Temple's contacts to bring in important (but not too high-ranking) Utopia employees, governmental aids and representatives of other countries (especially European nations and the United States).

Novas

Starting in 2014, Anningsley makes his first moves toward other novas. He sets up an elite to see how well it works (with oversight from him, of course). Anningsley has watched novas ever since his eruption in 2006 and uses the information he's gained to his best advantage. He also has a Rashoud facility director in the New York Temple, whose mind he regularly sifts for information on known novas.

At this stage, Anningsley's not yet ready to move full-bore into his projected plans. He's still moving carefully and hasn't consolidated nearly enough power to completely protect himself and the Inner Temple. His most potent weapon is secrecy, and exposure is his greatest threat. Should revelation of the cabal's existence become a possibility, Anningsley will panic. He will try his utmost to remove the threat to his power base and plans. While his actions will be as subtle as he can manage, they greatly increase the risk of exposure, and the characters (who probably triggered the reaction) would do well to capitalize on this vulnerability.

England in 2014

As noted in *Aberrant*, p. 72, the English have resisted both Project Utopia's assistance and the adoption of the Euro. Economically, England's slowly sliding into a nasty depression, dragging Scotland and Ireland along with it. This has caused some discord on the UN Security Council, as the English representative refuses to discuss the matter with Utopia's representative.

Accordingly, England has no Rashoud facilities anywhere (a condition that sometimes leads newly erupted novas to head straight to Paris for help with their new condition). As a stopgap, the English have set up their own approximation of Rashoud facilities to assist English novas. Unfortunately, they lack the expertise and equipment available to the more advanced Utopia clinics.

Perversely (at least to other nations), the English take pride in their independence from the EC and Utopia. Many in the government seek to establish England's destiny without interference from outside. How this will work, only time will tell. To those on the outside, it looks as if England will crash and burn.

On the other hand, some patriotic novas do their part to improve England. At least one self-appointed nova patrols London as a "municipal defender." Appearances of altruism aside, she receives a healthy paycheck from the government to support her busy schedule.

In the past five years, several English corporations have begun to establish profitable relations with businesses outside the islands. This is slow going, but some economists predict that the slackening isolationism will rejuvenate England's economy.

The UK is one of the founding nations of the Directive, and it enthusiastically supports the international agency and its primary purpose — to monitor and gather information about Project Utopia. This enthusiasm leads the nation to further forbid Utopia more than minor representation within London — at best, a small office and few representatives. The Utopia employees present in London were subjected to intense scrutiny and constant surveillance. So much so that most voluntarily left. At this time, no full-time Utopia employees or operatives work openly within England's borders. It should be noted that English agencies do cooperate with Utopia in international counter-terrorist and other operations.

Traveling to England

It's not difficult to get to London. It's a simple process to get a passport and arrange for travel. Citizens of Commonwealth nations (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, etc.) still require passports, but they tend to move through customs more quickly.

Customs in England is strict — they check incoming luggage for bombs, firearms, hard drugs (anything from cocaine to soma) and anything else that may corrode England's moral fiber (or whatever). Customs agents may seize anything that would be illegal to carry in England and assess fines. In extreme cases (bringing in weapons or drugs), imprisonment is a distinct possibility.

Work visas are denied to anyone who isn't a Commonwealth citizen. This is part of the effort to stop the black market, but it hasn't cut down the activity by much. The problem is that English citizens run the black market, not outsiders as some stubbornly insist.

Immigration to England is possible — and encouraged if the immigrant brings needed expertise or resources to England. Novas who apply are always investigated thoroughly, and the

least amount of suspicion can lead to denial. Novas who get past the screening are welcomed enthusiastically (and novas who have needed skills, powers or connections will get much more leeway than novas who simply have flashy powers).

London

Alone among first-world nations, England has grudgingly accepted Utopia's assistance in matters of health care and advanced technology. The advances are present in England but not as common as in other nations. This reluctance contributes to London's currently low standard of living.

Disease is no more prevalent than it has ever been, but compared to cities like Venice, New York and Paris, that's considerably more than the standards in the rest of the world. Pollution also tends to exceed that of other nations. Since Utopia released the Zushima macrobe into the atmosphere, this minimizes the environmental damage London puts into the environment but does not help London itself much. This does not mean that London or England itself is heavily polluted — England has adopted the hypercombustion engine and industry hasn't been heavily polluting for several decades. It's just that, in comparison to other nations, England is in worse condition.

The Thames has been the subject of some cleanup effort. At this point, it no longer stinks, but London authorities still caution against swimming in it. This caution is with good reason. Government workers are still in the process of dredging the river, and they often dig up some very peculiar (and often not very wholesome) things.

London also supports a healthy "medical black market" where modern cures are available (but for an exorbitant price). This still leaves most of the population unable to afford black-market services, and the wealthy simply go to other countries to receive treatment. The beneficiaries tend to be underworld figures or members of the dwindling middle class who can scrape together just enough to get the modern anti-cancer treatments. The government claims that English novas are working on their own cures and promotes a sense of nationalism about England finding its own way in the 21st century. Unfortunately, the lack of medical care equal to other nations creates a great deal of resentment among those who have no alternative avenues.

Violence and crime are on the upswing in London, as the lower classes turn to the only options available to them — criminal activity. Gangs tend to form along ethnic lines, with a degree of fanaticism driving the "cause." The government spends a great deal of money equipping the police to deal with the surge of violent actions taken against the city.

London's police force routinely carries firearms and tasers for increased protection. The black market brings in guns despite the tight control over gun ownership on the island — in truth, most acts of violence are committed with homemade or impromptu weapons, and the laws only serve to keep weapons out of the hands of potential victims.

The upper classes surround themselves with bodyguards and security forces, preferring to avoid the evidence of social disintegration around them, and look forward to

“better days,” when they know that England’s isolationism will pay off. Many are simply unaware of how bad things are getting on the street level, and those who are blame it on outside forces. Only a few readily admit the true cause of London’s problems and try to find ways to improve matters before the city becomes too much of a hell to live in.

Despite the grim image painted above, London still has a regular tourist trade. Historical monuments such as the Tower of London and Buckingham Palace continue to draw foreigners to look at the ancient structures. London police and security agencies maintain greater patrols around tourist attractions and popular hotels to keep one of the city’s major sources of income from dwindling. This is largely successful, but every so often, a family or group will decide to try London’s seedier side. These occasions often end in tragedy.

Getting Around London

Traffic in London — especially toward the city’s center — is terminally unmanageable. Traffic jams are the norm, and driving to work is generally not a very good idea. Fortunately, London hosts an extensive underground tube system, with armed guards on every car and cameras and other security measures minimizing risk from criminals. Characters would do best to get around under their own power or by taking the tube. Anything else is ill advised.

Running the Story

This story is self-contained but can impact any number of other factors in the greater world. If Anningsley’s conspiracy is exposed, this could lead to public backlash as people in other nations start to wonder just how many novas are doing the same thing in their countries.

When running “A Green and Pleasant Land,” put pressure on the players to react. Don’t railroad them into a specific response (or type of response), but give them reason to keep digging and pushing against Anningsley’s group. If the characters are part of an organization like the Directive or Project Proteus, it’s a simple matter to assign them to the case. If not, the answer is to make it personal. Some ideas follow for dragging characters into the middle of Anningsley’s plots.

Cult or Conspiracy?

The Temple of the King is a bit of both. Anningsley has established a two-tiered system within the Temple. The first is the Outer Temple, for general membership and networking. It’s predominantly a social club, but it serves nicely for Anningsley’s information gathering needs, as well as concentrating enough people to make direct influence over business and politics a reality.

The second tier is the Inner Temple, composed of six people either Anningsley or Mayhew specifically selected. Despite their own goals, each will do nearly anything Mayhew asks (and she takes the time to cultivate this devotion in each and every one of them). Whether or not they believe in or care about “Arthur Pendragon’s return” is unimportant, their primary loyalties lie with Mayhew. Anningsley understands this and needs Mayhew

for this very reason. He’s currently convinced she has the same interests as he does.

Violet’s Agenda

Violet Mayhew’s taken the religious angle a step further than Anningsley wanted — she’s conceived and built a cult around herself, exalting her as some combination of Guinevere and the Lady of the Lake, preparing to return Arthur to Britain and lead the nation to glory. Most of this cult is lower class, and many are unemployed. She draws people in who need — and don’t have — something to believe in, to hope for. Her own limited shapeshifting abilities enable her to conceal her true identity from her followers.

Mayhew also picks out promising candidates from among the Outer Temple membership to form her own cabal, separate from Anningsley’s. She hasn’t begun the process as of 2014, but she has several members under observation for possible inclusion in her clique. It’s a guarantee that anyone affiliated with the characters will be on her list of approachable candidates.

Mayhew intends to use her cult for her own defense if things come down to the wire — whether it’s an internal split between her and Anningsley or attacks from outside. Note that due to the way Anningsley set up the Temple, only the Inner Temple would consider standing with him against Mayhew (and then only if Mayhew’s not nearby at the time). Anningsley hasn’t quite realized Mayhew’s full potential and power when it comes to winning hearts and minds.

Character Involvement

None of this information does any good without hooks to drag the characters into the middle of things. With that in mind, here are several ways to introduce your characters to the plot.

The Human Element

Most **Aberrant** characters have friends — the Allies and Followers Backgrounds directly tie into this. These Storyteller characters, generally support systems for novas, are ready-made plot hooks. The question simply becomes, “how to use them to involve the players’ characters.”

Many allies, contacts or followers may have important, influential positions somewhere — in a corporation, government, Project Utopia or the Directive, among others. Holding these positions automatically makes one a candidate for the Temple of the King. If any are English, then they become possible candidates for the Inner Temple cabal.

It’s best to choose one Storyteller character for membership in the Temple — too many supporting cast members flocking to Anningsley’s banner will look a bit contrived when the players figure out what’s going on.

It’s also important to give players a clue that one of their associates has picked up a new interest. It doesn’t have to be obvious, but it’s something that should be apparent to any player who’s paying attention. A supporting cast member in the Temple should go through the following stages of involvement (with the accompanying signs to his nova friend):

- **Membership** — The friend joins the Temple — a branch just opened near where he lives, and he was on the

initial invite list. He might mention the additional social obligations/interactions to his friend/patron somewhere along the line, but the Temple should seem mainly like a social club.

• **Favors** — At some point, the new member is asked to give favorable consideration to another member (possibly one of the Inner Temple members) in business, politics or some other arena. The favor should be difficult (but not impossible) for him to accomplish. It should also require him to ask his nova friend for assistance. It shouldn't necessarily be *suspicious*, at least not at first — it's a warning sign, not a declaration of war. Repeat a few times, with each favor more difficult than the last. The last favor in the sequence (that could cover weeks or months) should border on the illegal, and the new Temple member should grow more nervous with each new consideration.

Note that he does get favors in return. The reason he's asked for so many is simple: He knows at least one nova. His own position and his association with novas are the primary reasons the Temple approached him for membership (at Anningsley's direction).

• **Conspiracy** — Shortly after the final favor mentioned above, either Mayhew or Anningsley decides to bring him further in. If he's English, Anningsley and Mayhew will invite him to join the Inner Temple. If he's not, Mayhew will bring him into her own cabal, in preparation for getting Anningsley out of the way. He'll leave a message for his friend, noting that he has a great opportunity (literally an offer he can't refuse). After that, he simply drops out of contact for seven days (while he's prepared for initiation).

Anningsley uses Telepathy and Domination to rework the new member's loyalties toward himself, with a compulsion to reveal all he knows about the novas he associates with — their powers, habits, personalities, etc. Be fair about this. Anningsley learns much about one or more characters, but he doesn't learn *everything*. He's already nervous about suborning someone so closely associated with novas, so he wants to keep as many aces up his sleeve as possible.

Mayhew, on the other hand, uses her considerable force of personality to redirect her new ally's loyalties to her. She has no brute force means of guaranteeing this, but her Mega-Social Attributes go a long way in this regard. She doesn't want to use her recruit against his friends — she wants to use his friends against Anningsley (when she deems it necessary).

• **"Help Me!"** — Shortly after the initiation happens (no more than a day later, and close to 3 AM, Greenwich Mean Time), the recruit calls his friend and frantically ask for help. Play it up, and make it at least a bit melodramatic. You want to communicate a sense of panic and desperation. When the character checks out his friend and finds he took a week's leave from work (or whatever), he should be at least a little more curious. The call is untraceable by normal means. A Computer (Hacking or OpNet) roll against +3 difficulty will trace it to a London flat (where he's been staying during the preparations). Novas with Cyberkinesis have an easier time, but refer to the table in **Aberrant**, p. 187.

It's not inconceivable that one or more characters track him down and get him out of the flat (but when they arrive, he doesn't behave as expected, see below). Teleport or Warp from **Aberrant** or Transmit from **Project Utopia** makes it possible to span the distance. If the characters are in London at the time, it's even easier.

• **"No, everything's fine"** — The next day, the new inductee returns from London and catches up on what's happened while he was gone. When asked what he was doing, he makes vague comments about "vacation time" or a "business trip." When asked about the early morning phone call, he denies it. In truth, he doesn't recall the conversation. It was a somnambulistic episode, his subconscious rebelling against the conditioning forced upon him.

If Anningsley worked on him, he's "programmed" against disclosure. He simply can't talk about what happened (and doesn't want to). He steers the conversation to other topics if pressed (even with Mega-Charisma or Mega-Manipulation backing it up). The block can be overcome with either the Domination or Hypnosis powers or the enhancement Hypnotic Gaze. If the characters try this, three successes are necessary to overcome Anningsley's conditioning (five with Hypnotic Gaze). If the characters break Anningsley's conditioning, he appears quite relieved and tells them everything about his stay in London. Once away from the characters, however, he tries to commit suicide (see Dr. Loretta Morgan for details). This compulsion must also be overcome.

If Mayhew recruits him, he's much less reticent about the time he spent in London. He mentions the Grand Temple of the King and some of the sights he saw (the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, the Millennium Dome, etc). He doesn't reveal what happened with Mayhew (or that she was involved). She controls him in a way that Anningsley could never manage, because of the subtler nature of her powers and her superior ability to manipulate others' emotions. This does mean that it's easier to get him to talk about his experiences, but it will take time. Domination (again, three successes) makes him spill his guts immediately (but he'll try to confess to Mayhew as soon as possible) and Empathy Control to transform his devotion toward her into hatred (or even dislike) makes him reveal everything.

• **"I'll be watching you."** — If Anningsley recruited one of the characters' allies, he uses Telepathy to eavesdrop on the characters' meeting with the new pawn. Anningsley is paranoid, but he doesn't expect the characters to break his conditioning so quickly (if they do). When they do, he retreats to avoid detection and plans to eliminate them. Otherwise, he takes the opportunity to observe the characters' behavior and reactions. He was unaware of the call in the night but finds it troubling. If the characters decide to go to London to investigate the matter (they probably do so whether or not they crack the conditioning), he works to protect himself, hiring an elite or two, and waits in his townhouse.

• **The Other Side** — In Mayhew's case, she finds out if the characters know about her when the new

recruit calls to confess to breaking down and telling all. If the characters used Domination, Empathy Control or Mega-Social Attributes to compel a confession, he does this as soon as he's out of their presence. It is possible for the characters to keep him from doing this, but it requires as much work to undo Mayhew's efforts as it took her to establish them — that is to say, a week of intense deprogramming (longer if Mega-Social Attributes or mental powers aren't available).

Whatever happens, the characters have a big clue aiming directly at London and the Temple of the King. How they deal with it from there is up to them.

Nova Problems

As mentioned previously, the Storyteller can draw players in by playing up Anningsley's paranoia about novas and his actions against those whom he sees as potential threats. Any characters who regularly operate inside England (but who are not English) are on his list, as are any who demonstrate an incredible intellect or personality and are directly involved in politics, business, Project Utopia or the Directive. Finally, he considers the Aberrants and Teragen *in toto* threats to his plans, simply because of their subversive nature and lack of apparent allegiances to any but themselves.

Elites are Anningsley's special worry, because at any moment one of the more intelligent nova agencies (Novelty Consulting or Argus more than DeVries) might suspect something's up and send an operative over to unravel the structure he's so carefully built. Even worse, a random elite hired for standard corporate espionage (or counter-espionage) might get caught up in the Temple's machinations and learn too much before she can be identified or stopped. Yes, his fears are irrational — he's not yet clinically paranoid, but that'll probably be one of his first aberrations when he gains more taint.

This plot thread can go two ways (and need not be exclusive of the arc discussed previously). Anningsley targets one of the characters for elimination. In this case, consider the character's faction and goals. An elite is easy enough to set up — just have one of the members of the Outer Temple hire him to do a job — something routine, if somewhat challenging. It needs to be appropriate for the character's demonstrated abilities and power level, of course. Utopian or Team Tomorrow novas can be hired through Nova Services International, of course.

The other option (and this one can be run before the option above) is to set up a nova friend or acquaintance of the characters. Think carefully before you decide to kill one of your regular Storyteller characters, and

make it properly dramatic and shocking when it happens (sure, elites die more often than other novas, but this should be someone the characters feel sympathy for). At the very least, the nova's death should leave some question as to how and why it happened. Novas are rare and important; no nova death goes by without investigation from some quarter, whether it's Utopia, the Teragen, N! or some other organization. Investigation will lead the characters to the contractor. Investigating the contractor will lead the characters to the Temple.

The second option works nicely for novas who are part of informal and secretive groups. After all, most of them aren't for hire through DeVries or part of Project Utopia (some are, so don't rule the first option out). Also note that novas who snoop around the Temple's headquarters in London will *certainly* be noticed. Anningsley's preference would be to eliminate them, but if he can distract them in other ways and eliminate them later, he will do so.

• **Set Up** — The set up works well on its own or in conjunction with the suborned friend under *The Human Element*, above. If the characters find out about Anningsley and the Inner Temple and Anningsley is aware this has happened (or believes it likely), he certainly sets the characters up.

Anningsley arranges to hire the characters and send them into a fatal situation. In this case, one of his pawns hires the characters (through whatever intermediary is necessary, if any) for a legitimate task. Through another proxy, he hires Finn and Dog to "stop this corporate espionage" or some such thing or to leak information to Utopia or the Directive that links the characters to something illegal or worse — something that mandates a rapid and violent response. Finn and Dog check out the job and come up clean — at least until the time for confrontation. Play up the dramatic tension here, since both are professionals. Give the characters a chance to tell the elites the truth and turn them to their side.

Once the characters talk or fight their way out of the setup, it's clear to Finn and Dog that the characters *aren't* up to the reported shenanigans. Finn and Dog are consummate professionals and hate setups like this. The elites offer to compare notes with the characters. If invited, Finn and Dog join the characters in untangling the mess they're in.

The above can happen to a friend or acquaintance, in which case he either dies ("What do you mean Luther was



killed while guarding a train car filled with high-tech gear?") or survives as described above and mentions it to the characters later. Alternatively, the novas hired to attack the characters' friend comment on the mission's weird circumstances. In either case, the friend mentions who hired her and that the terms of her contract were misleading.

- **Investigation** — Once the characters have a lead (the name of a member of the Outer Temple), it's time to find out what's going on and why this guy just tried to get one or more novas killed. This person, Anningsley's "patsy," as it were, doesn't know that he tried to get anyone killed. He remembers arranging the contract and getting the necessary approvals from his superiors to hire a nova to deal with a problem, but he believes the problem was genuine and that he'd gathered information indicating this to be the case over the period of a few weeks.

No evidence of his investigation exists outside his own mind. If the characters investigate him, it doesn't take long to turn up his association with the Temple of the King or to discover that he spent several hours at the Temple chapterhouse the evening before he hired the nova.

If the characters decide to track down whomever hired Finn and Dog to attack them (or hired them to attack Finn and Dog), they find the same evidence as in the first case. At this point, the characters should have a distinct suspicion as to who is behind their situation. If not, throw more hints their way until they make the connection.

- **The Temple** — All this activity is geared to aim the characters directly at the Temple, whether it's a nearby chapterhouse or the Grand Temple in London. Investigation eventually leads the characters to London.

The above elements can be woven through several stories, building a body of evidence pointing at a conspiracy operating within the Temple. Mayhew's actions may also become apparent to outside observers, hinting at an internal power struggle (once the characters assemble and examine the evidence). At some point, the characters directly investigate the Temple of the King and determine just what's going on. It's not necessary to force characters to act or hold off at any given point. Once they plunge into the Temple, the story's next stage begins.

London Fog

London's municipal defender is a bit of a wild card. How and when she appears is entirely up to Storyteller preference and character action. She can be an ally or an antagonist, depending on how she's brought into the story. Since she's London's preeminent nova, she *will* get involved.

My Enemy

The characters come in, investigate the Temple and alert the conspiracy, triggering a response that brings all of London down on their heads. This includes London Fog (and may include other novas who happen to be in town — maybe even Finn and Dog), who's never happy with anyone who threatens London, people in London, places in London, etc. It's her town, and she's going to put a stop to "all this nonsense." When she catches up to the characters,

they'd better talk fast (or otherwise deal with her). She'll have as much backup as she needs.

My Ally

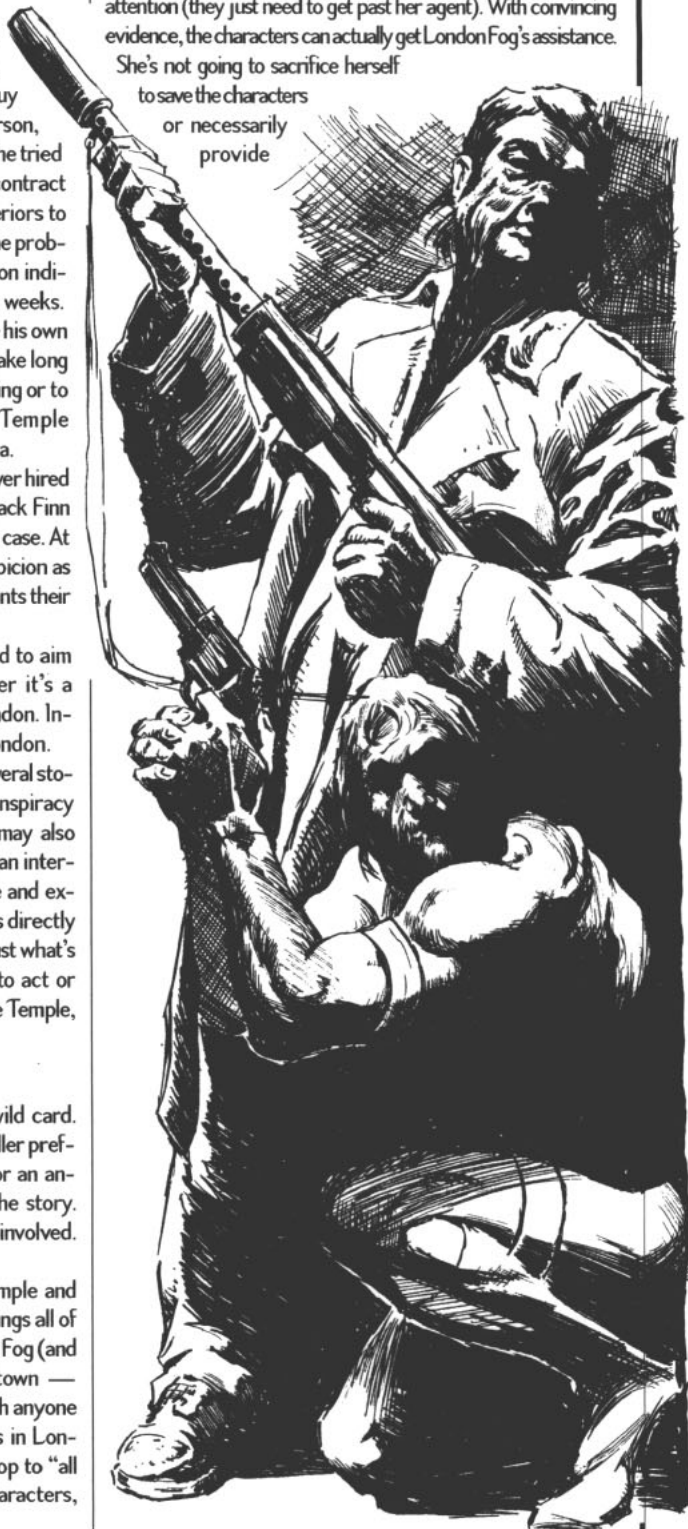
Characters who approach London Fog first, especially if they have any evidence of Anningsley's conspiracy, can easily get her attention (they just need to get past her agent). With convincing evidence, the characters can actually get London Fog's assistance.

She's not going to sacrifice herself

to save the characters

or necessarily

provide



a last minute rescue, but she can make that bit of difference (and intercede with the authorities when the Inner Temple maneuvers forces into place).

Finn and Dog

As mentioned previously, Finn and Dog are a pair of elites who prefer not to make a big splash wherever they go. The pair can be contracted through the DeVries Agency and list their specialty as "Troubleshooting and Investigations." They're very careful about the paper trails they leave behind and the witnesses who see them at work. They've turned down all offers for licensing deals (although rumors circulate that at least one major book publisher is making headway in serializing and publishing their exploits as a series of adventure novels).

Using them in the story is a simple matter. The best use for them is as potential opponents. When the characters get the Inner Temple's attention and trigger a reaction, that reaction may very well be Finn and Dog. As noted elsewhere, they like to do their homework and *hate* to be lied to or fooled. When Anningsley's people hire Finn and Dog, their research will check out (even if it requires a little subtle nudging from Anningsley). Novas on a beeline for Anningsley and his Inner Temple will be sufficient cause for Anningsley to break his normal rules regarding nova manipulations.

Finn and Dog aren't incidental players — they won't pop in to be convenient punching bags for the characters and then pop right back out. Give them a reason to suspect things just aren't as they seem, and they will correct their mistake (and take a pound of flesh from the guy who set them up). When you bring Finn and Dog in, the characters might hear rumors about them. The elites are fairly well known among nova circles (by reputation, if not by face), so bring the characters up to date on who they are and what's likely to happen if Finn and Dog catch them.

Turnabout

So Finn and Dog catch up with the characters, who promptly convince them about the real story. Finn's immediate reaction is to try to figure out just what exactly is going on. He barrages the characters with questions and demands evidence that they back up their claims. Dog's the quiet (but violent) one. He doesn't participate in the exchange beyond the occasional acerbic comment. If the two can figure out how to turn the tables on their deceivers and still get paid, they're all for it.

Unfair Play

The characters don't convince the elites (or they don't try). Finn and Dog continue to track and harry them for the duration of their contract. They have every reason to believe that the characters are engaged in illegal or terrorist activities until convinced otherwise. Characters who fight and run won't be very convincing when they protest their innocence.

Use Finn and Dog carefully. They won't charge into a fight with guns blazing in a frontal assault. They'll sneak around, set up an ambush and attack from surprise. If they

start to lose, they retreat rather than fight to the death. It's better to run away and live to fight another day, after all.

The Inner Temple

Investigation and events lead characters to discover the Inner Temple. They learn about the cabal if Anningsley brought one of their friends into the Inner Temple or if Mayhew recruited one for her own ends — she cautions her new co-conspirator against direct interaction with Anningsley's chosen.

• **Finding the Cabal** — Once the members of the Inner Temple have names or faces (some characters might already know a few of the Inner Temple members), it's time to investigate them. Just doing a search on the OpNet or at a library will turn up basic information about each of the six — what they do for a living, any news stories about them (see the in-character section). None are known to be novas, but all are formidable in their own right.

If the characters' friend was initiated into the Inner Temple and Anningsley is aware that they got information from him, then the Inner Temple members are "on vacation" when the characters come looking for them. Yes, it looks suspicious as hell, but each and every one of them face conspiracy and treason charges if they're caught. They're busily covering themselves in preparation for what they expect to come next.

If the characters tracked the conspiracy through direct investigation of the Temple itself, the Inner Temple conspirators are unaware of the characters' actions. This means that the characters have a chance to surprise them.

• **Opposition** — Once Anningsley and the Inner Temple knows the extent of the characters' investigations, all bets are off. They do everything possible to expel the characters from England — or kill them. Among the six, they have sufficient Backing, Contacts, Influence and Resources to have free reign in London. If worked properly, all of London is after the characters. Of course, if they identify the manipulations (or manipulators) and present evidence to the proper authorities in London, they can turn the tables on their tormentors.

Unless approached for assistance earlier, this is where London Fog makes her appearance, and she shoots first. The characters need to talk fast to communicate the answers they need London Fog to hear. If they convince her, she makes a valuable ally. If not, it's rough with another nova trying to catch them while they track down the Inner Temple.

If handled well, it's possible for characters at this stage to catch the entire Inner Temple. It's also extremely *difficult*. Each of the cabal members has a great deal of temporal power that they will not hesitate to use to avoid discovery. None can afford to let any single member fall into police, government or nova custody (with evidence of their activities), since the conspiracy will quickly unravel shortly thereafter.

Anningsley honestly regrets the loss of any of his people but acts to minimize the damage. In most cases, it's a simple matter — locate his minion, determine

whether it's feasible to get him out of custody, and arrange it. If it's not feasible, he regretfully kills the poor soul in some dreadfully ironic fashion. If he wasn't trying to kill the characters before he's forced to take such measures, he immediately switches to that tactic.

Keep in mind that Anningsley attempts to rescue or kill his people but has no guarantee of success. If the characters can find a way to go along with the arrestee, they can certainly keep him alive. Alternatively, if they personally act to grab one of the Inner Temple members, they have much more freedom to deal with the situation.

- **Revelation** — This is the stage where the characters learn as much as possible about Anningsley's conspiracy. It happens through investigation (especially if one or more of the characters has Analyze Weakness or Mental Prodigy: Investigation, Strategy or Tactics — although Mega-Perception or Mega-Intelligence might be sufficient) or the capture and interrogation of one of the Inner Temple members.

Characters who dig deeply enough learn many things about Anningsley and his operations. Analysis of the Temple's activities will point at activity intended to improve England's standing in the global economic and political arenas (not a bad thing) but at the expense of other nations and the UN itself (see sidebar). The fact that one of his cabal is a highly ranked member of the Directive and another has access to sensitive Utopia data does not improve matters for novas who work with or for either organization.

Other novas might not be so concerned, at least until they learn that they — or their friends — are near the top of Anningsley's personal liability list. The point is that something Anningsley's up to should impact them fairly closely (if the mindwarped friend or attempted assassina-

tion isn't enough). Feel free to extrapolate Anningsley's activities as necessary, keeping in mind that he's a super-intelligent borderline paranoid with megalomaniacal plans for the world. It's also possible to link Anningsley's activities to prior events in the series, if they're sinister enough and haven't had an explanation yet.

One important note to keep in mind: Anningsley isn't pure evil. He's pure ambition. He's done both good and bad things in his efforts to recreate Britain. As the characters learn about his activities and plans, they should find elements to sympathize with and elements to despise. Acting against him is not a clear-cut course, morally speaking. He's not a cackling arch-villain with no redeeming qualities.

War

Once even one member of the Inner Temple is exposed and the characters discover Anningsley's plans, it's time for him to "[cry] 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war." The time for kid gloves and subtle tactics is over. Now it's war. By the same token, the characters may decide it's time to move against Anningsley and take him into custody/kill him/otherwise deal with him. How the characters choose to respond is up to them. How Anningsley responds is up to you.

The following events are likely extrapolations but are not set in stone. Use them as a guideline while running the story, not as an inescapable track from which the characters cannot deviate. The idea is to give the players (and their characters) a satisfactory resolution, rather than force them into a box with only one way out. Whatever path you choose, make it intense and fast moving. Put the characters in a position to act and react *quickly*.

Just What Are Anningsley's Plans?

These are Anningsley's specific goals. He's liberally sprinkled his beneficial intentions with some rather vile acts.

- **Economic Subversion:** The first stage is to use his own genius coupled with the Inner Temple's influence to shift the global economic balance in England's favor. In truth, with the conspiratorial aspects removed, these plans would prove very beneficial to England.

- **Martial Law:** Anningsley's cultivating a terrorist group in London. It's made several punitive attacks against government buildings and businesses, but he plans to escalate its activities to the assassination of the Prime Minister. Once the PM's dead, Brigadier General Matthew Collin steps in to take control of the situation and pushes for martial law. Once the terrorists are eliminated, he turns control of England over to Melissa Weatherby, who acts according to Anningsley's instructions (and turns England over to Anningsley within a year).

- **Chaos:** It's not enough that England is economically paramount. The other influential nations must be brought to their knees. Anningsley's intent is to economically and politically sabotage the EC, the United States of America, Japan, China, the Russian Confederation and other powerful nations. Again, the tool is assassination. Anningsley's compiled a list of the heads of state and industry whose deaths will precipitate social and economic chaos. The targets aren't restricted to the upper echelons, as Anningsley's also pinpointed the most valuable people in the government, military and business hierarchies to kill before he makes his final moves.

- **Expansion:** This directly ties into the Temple's goals. Anningsley's Temple cultivates ambitious young men and women determined to make a difference in the world, and this is where he puts them to work. Anningsley's Temple puts the membership in position to replace those killed in the previous step. Anningsley wants governments and businesses to have an England-friendly outlook.

The detailed plans (complete with extensive personal information on the targets) to murder several hundred influential people in several nations is certainly sufficient to label Anningsley for the threat he is. He is intelligent, and he does have a reasonable goal. His methods, however, are nothing short of monstrous.

What are Violet's Plans?

At first, Mayhew went along with Anningsley's plot, because it intrigued her. It was something far more interesting than being a pretty face for teenaged boys to lust after. As Anningsley's plans expanded in breadth, depth and detail, Mayhew's ambition grew along with them. Mayhew decided that she didn't want to rule *beside* Anningsley.

Mayhew knew that her plans were dangerous. Anningsley is extremely intelligent and very perceptive: He can see a threat coming before the source realizes that it is a threat. Mayhew took this as a challenge and set to work. Her first goal was to convince Anningsley to step up his time scale — spend two or three years preparing to take England's government, not the decade he initially planned. This was surprisingly easy. Anningsley's intellect proved little match for Mayhew's persuasive ways. She literally talked him into sabotaging his own goals.

Mayhew had little trouble convincing Anningsley to brainstorm with her on every plan and contingency and offered deliberately and carefully flawed advice. Anningsley planned himself into a corner from which Mayhew could eject him at any time, something she intended all along. Mayhew feeds Anningsley's ego carefully, leading him to often incorrect conclusions about his own intellect and the opposition arrayed against him, so that when the time comes, she can throw him to the wolves and make herself out to be England's great patriotic heroine. It's not simply a matter of adulation, but that figures into it. Mayhew looks to her future and does not care for the world Anningsley wants to create. She hopes that the notoriety of her association with Anningsley's plots will catapult her to international fame. She needs something to compete with the more famous novas.

• **First Strike** — Who blinks first? Anningsley's tactics are simple — if he knows who the characters are, he leaks information to their enemies (this works best if they're known). If the characters are Teragen, he calls T2M-Eu, if the characters are T2M or Utopia, he leaks it to the Aberrants, Teragen or anyone whose egos (or bodies) they've bruised in the past. Use the series' history to give Anningsley's choice greater context.

If the players move first, they find Anningsley prepared to defend himself. The first attempt to locate him is met with violence (from heavily armed, Domination-controlled mitoid thugs). He's trying to prepare the above surprise while holding them off, but if the characters move quickly enough, they bypass such troubles (only to encounter them later). Anningsley leaves London and sets up shop elsewhere, so his reactions are delayed as he gets situated in new quarters.

• **Violet's Move** — It's time for Violet Mayhew to play Mordred, if you want to include this twist. It's best to wait for Anningsley to be completely occupied with the characters (like when he's directing his thugs against them). She doesn't act directly against him (at first). Instead, she offers to assist the characters against Anningsley, mobilizing her own cabal within the Temple to pick up the pieces after Anningsley falls. If pressed, she may send elites directly after Anningsley (and make it seem that they came from someone else — using Anningsley's own tricks). She sends her own "worshippers" out to riot in the streets (all in the name of the Temple, of course) and (if the characters already found it) breaks the complete story about Anningsley's activities to N! She's ambitious, intelligent and will not take self-destructive actions. She ensures her own safety, whatever form her betrayal takes.

Keep the nature of Mayhew's powers in mind — she has Mega-Social Attributes at fairly high levels. If she's caught, her story is simple. Anningsley used his incredible mind-control powers to force her to commit acts she never wanted to

be a part of. She'll make a big show as both the victim *and* the hero (but she will not begrudge the characters a place in the spotlight. After all, it pays to be gracious). Public approval will back her up. Play this out any way that makes sense.

Last Trump

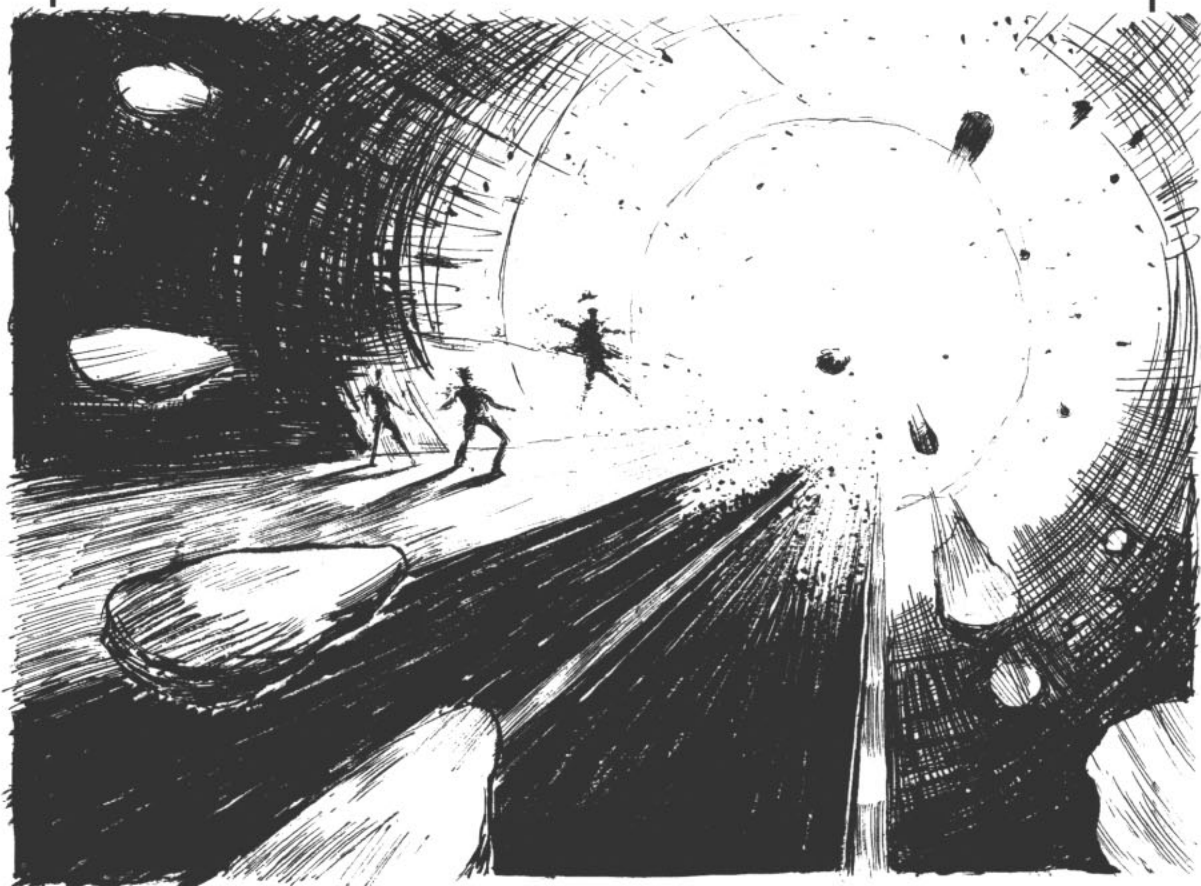
The characters have chased Anningsley out of his lair, Mayhew's betrayed him, and Anningsley has no expectation that he will get the grail he's so fervently planned for and sought after. Of course, this means no one else should, either. Anningsley sets a contingency in motion.

In preparation for his final moves, Anningsley used General Collin's contacts and influence to obtain high explosives that he later had placed at critical junctures in the London tube system (the underground train). The Inner Temple's resources made it a simple task to mine the tube system (even if it did take a few years to completely set up). With the approach of imminent defeat, Anningsley sets the timers to trigger the explosives. After all, he can stop the countdown later if events turn out as planned.

Odds are good that things won't go well for Anningsley, and the tube explosives will count down to zero, barring outside interference. The bombs should be set to go off between 30 and 60 minutes after the characters capture Anningsley (or fail to). How do the characters find out? The simplest way is to tell them, but Anningsley's unlikely to gloat that his actions will shortly lead to thousands of London commuters' violent deaths.

• **Premonition:** Characters with Intuition, Premonition or Pretercognition can have visions about the disaster (or a sense of it in the case of Intuition). It's up to the players to decipher just what the visions mean.

• **Investigation:** Anningsley's files hold a lot of damning evidence. A character with high Computer (Hacking) skill or the Cyberkinesis power could retrieve the data. It's possible to intimidate or interrogate the answer out of Anningsley (if he's available) or simply snatch it from his mind.



• **999 Emergency!:** A workman in the tube finds one of the bombs and contacts the authorities. If the characters are working with the police or London Fog, they'll be asked to help. The characters could also find out from a news bulletin.

The list is by no means exhaustive — use whatever's dramatic and appropriate based on the characters' choices during the story, their capabilities and their situation at this point.

If the bombs go off, as mentioned above, thousands of people will die, many thousands more will be trapped in the now-demolished tube system, and the characters have their work cut out for them with rescue and disaster relief efforts.

It's possible to stop the timers on all the bombs simultaneously. All that's required is the transmitter (a cell phone among Anningsley's belongings in his quarters at the London Temple). All that's needed is the code to safely disarm the bombs. This is possible with a Computer test (at +4 difficulty). Anningsley knows the disarm code, but getting it out of him should not be easy (+3 Interrogation difficulty or an appropriate power or Mega-Attribute).

Finding and defusing the bombs is more difficult. Anningsley's placed 12 bombs throughout the system, and all need to be defused. An Engineer test (at +2 difficulty) or appropriate powers (Cyberkinesis, Electrical Anima or Mastery or whatever else would reasonably work) are necessary and take up to several minutes.

Whatever happens, tailor how it happens to the characters, and let the players use creative plans to save the

tube system, but make it difficult and entertaining. Die rolls in this part of the story should heighten the drama and tension, not defuse it.

If The Characters Fail

London's tube system will be out of commission for several months to accommodate repairs, the disaster is referred to as one of the worst in history. If characters act immediately to mitigate the damage, they can still save many lives. Whatever happens, the outcome is grim for London. Traffic and buses will be overtaxed as people who formerly road the tube are forced to seek alternatives and many of the explosions will damage aboveground structures as well.

If the Characters Succeed

If the characters are public about it, interviews and licensing deals might be in the works, and their fame might be on the rise. It couldn't hurt to use the opportunity to buy some Influence if they don't have any. The increased "recognition factor" works to add plot hooks, especially if members of the London government decide they want to draw on the characters' resources later.

Conclusion

What's the aftermath? The events in "A Green and Pleasant Land" can and will have an effect on the world. What kind of effect? Consider the possibilities.

The Temple of the King

Anningsley and Mayhew created an international-scale conspiracy in a matter of years and had a real chance to accomplish their goals — only the characters' involvement put a stop to it. If Mayhew or the characters took Anningsley's actions into the public eye, consider the fallout. World governments were already paranoid about nova activity (and its effect on them), but given actual evidence of a nova-driven conspiracy to wrest control of an entire nation for his own purposes, they will redouble efforts to dig up such conspiracies within (and without) their own borders. Even worse, novas with superhuman intelligence and personal magnetism will be under near-constant suspicion.

Corporations may have a similar reaction — they'll want more guarantees before giving capable novas access to their upper echelons or industrial secrets. Those novas who are already there will be watched carefully and constantly (and given incentives not to betray the company). New nova employees will be investigated thoroughly before being hired. Novas with marginal backgrounds (hired mainly for abilities and not heavily scrutinized, as was common in many cases in the past) will be scrutinized carefully — many may find their very lucrative contracts severed because the board of directors doesn't see them as trustworthy.

International Politics

Between national distrust for novas within their native countries and the worry about other nations employing novas as *agents provocateurs*, tensions rise. The fallout includes tightened tourism regulations and increased restrictions on imports, exports and work visas. The outcome won't destroy the developing global community established in **Aberrant**, but it does inflict lasting harm. Individual nations rely less upon one another and more on their own resources — the sense is encroaching (but not complete) isolationism.

Project Utopia

Anningsley is precisely the type of nightmare that plagues Utopia directors far too frequently. Analysts in Utopia determine that he could have easily succeeded had he not been exposed. Utopian (and by extension, Team Tomorrow) efforts will be focused toward clearing up nova-caused tensions. Characters in either group will be hard-pressed to act against the Temple's fallout.

Utopia, having already lost some credibility with novas in **Aberrant: Worldwide** — Phase 1, sits on the brink here. It needs to keep photogenic novas out in the public eye, doing good deeds, saving people from famine, war and disease — the usual. Unfortunately, guilt by association applies. If novas can and will mastermind this kind of thing, who's to say Utopia doesn't have such masterminds in its employ? Worse, who's to say they didn't *always* have such masterminds?

Questions that in the past were glossed over in favor of Utopia's accomplishments will come up more often. Just how did Utopia get set up so quickly? Why did the United Nations accept Utopia so swiftly? Looking back on events, it almost seems as if Utopia (as an organization) anticipated events rather than reacted to them. Uto-

pia could easily lose approval ratings across the board, just from suspicion alone.

Proteus Division

Parallel to Utopia's concerns, Proteus redoubles efforts to find any cults or conspiracies with goals or scope on a scale similar to Anningsley's (or greater). While Utopia's trying to look good (despite the rumors and PR problems), Proteus has to make certain that this does not happen again.

The intent is to investigate and locate any similar operations and *quietly* eliminate the ringleaders (and anyone who can spill the news to the press). Anningsley's conspiracy is enough to give anyone cold sweats. Another public revelation could mean a terrible backlash against novas.

Even more disturbing is the possibility of copycat cases — novas who decide to follow in Anningsley's footsteps, only this time they intend to "get it right!" Director Ozaki considers it an absolute priority to profile as many novas as possible to locate those likely to do something so foolish and stop them before they gain momentum.

If Anningsley survived the story, Proteus' number one priority is to track him down and eliminate him — quietly or messily, it doesn't matter. He needs to go. Proteus characters may be assigned this (admittedly difficult) task. Once he's eliminated, Proteus agents will leak the news of his death (probably shifting the blame to someone else — elites, the Teragen, the Directive — whoever's appropriate).

The Directive

The Directive's concerns parallel Proteus Division's very closely but will be accompanied with an internal purge, as former members of Anningsley's Temple are identified and removed. Not all of those purged are part of Anningsley's Temple, of course. The potential for an internal power struggle as various factions jockey for dominance in the aftermath is great, and several ranking members will certainly try to pick up the pieces. Brigadier General Collin (if he survived the story) will find himself out of the Directive and facing a court-martial for treason.

Directive characters may find themselves in a shifting landscape as power blocs within the Directive restructure in the wake of Collin's expulsion. If played well, they can advance within the Directive. If played poorly, they can be implicated (and if they're novas, this is a distinct possibility).

Aberrants

Aberrants may be more interested in minimizing the damage to the general nova image, however they may choose to go about it. The downhill slide is not yet at a frantic pace, which gives Aberrants (and other novas) room to keep too much tarnish from accumulating on their collective image.

Teragen

With public perception shifting to suspicion toward novas, those who isolate themselves the most from humanity will come under the greatest scrutiny and be subjected to the wildest speculation. Given that Divis Mal has already set himself up as a cult leader-like figure with near-religious significance, it won't take much for the world to look at the already

alien and suspicious Terats and wonder if they aren't planning the same thing as Anningsley and his Temple.

The Casablancas and Pandaimonion will have their hands full dealing with the backlash. After all, what Anningsley was doing secretly, Narcosis and Count Orzaiz do in the public eye (or that's how many will reason — and they won't be far from the truth). How Teragen members react to this is purely individual.

Reactions among the Pantheon are varied — Geryon finds the situation ironically amusing, Narcosis is on the thin edge (her lawyers and press agents are working overtime), the Apostle gets ideas (why *not* have baseline worshippers?), the Mathematician delivers grim prognostications and others likewise follow their urges, beliefs and personalities.

Arthur

The conclusion of "A Green and Pleasant Land" does not require that Anningsley end up dead or imprisoned. In fact, it's very possible for him to escape justice. With his plots exposed and his Temple scattered, he needs time to retreat and reconsider his options. He'll use his powers and intelligence to establish himself elsewhere. Some agencies may even find it desirable to court him for their own use. Elements within Proteus or the Teragen might actively seek out his allegiance — after all, he's much more valuable as an ally than as an enemy.

Anningsley seriously considers such options (if he's still free). As a Portent among the Teragen, he'd be able to hone his power to greater levels and possibly bring it under his sway. Proteus is intriguing and provides an opportunity for him to work behind the scenes again, this time with sanction. The best choice for his future loyalties is whichever faction the characters directly and regularly oppose.

The characters may certainly want to track him down for what he may have done to them — and this is perfectly viable (and a major reason he'd consider the above offers). He enthusiastically defends himself but will not move until he's convinced he has a solid base to work from (and that may take years). This time, he knows to avoid the pitfalls that caught him the first time around. Most especially, he swears revenge upon Mayhew.

It is not necessary that Anningsley survives the story or avoids imprisonment. If the characters catch him, he is theirs to do with as they see fit. If he *does* escape, they're unlikely to let him go that easily. He makes a useful recurring adversary, but don't feel obligated to keep him around if the characters defeat him.

Violet

Violet Mayhew's got a guilty conscience. She helped build what might have been something grand and then acted to destroy it so she could save herself — she doesn't regret it, but she still suffers twinges at having sold Anningsley out. Her other immediate worry is that Anningsley will come around looking for revenge (if he's still alive).

Mayhew parlays the fact that she turned over evidence into greater fame. If the characters presented evidence to the authorities before she acted, she shares the spotlight with

them (as noted previously) and tries to forge contacts with them if Anningsley survived — both for protection and to preemptively deal with Anningsley before he gets around to dealing with her. In this case, she acts on the "enemy of my enemy is my friend" principle. Whether the characters accept her assistance or protect her is, obviously, up to them.

Mayhew remains in the public eye as much as possible to make it difficult for any possible assassins to get to her unnoticed. Those who know her notice more desperation in her manner. She's not quite as "in control" as she was before everything fell apart.

On the other hand, England still loves her dearly.

Other Cults

Despite Anningsley's public downfall, he's an inspiration for any number of ambitious novas — whether or not they decide they want to rule the world or a single nation is not the point. They want people to serve them and bring them power. Some use the Temple of the King as a model, while others scorn Anningsley's structure as inherently flawed (he failed, did he not?).

Aberrant cults were already a problem *before* the Temple indicated their potential scope. Now, they're watched more carefully, and many go underground to avoid the increased scrutiny. Over the following years, more and more cults spring up as more novas not satisfied with action figures, N!terviews and T2M membership realize how easy it is to use their powers for personal gain and aggrandizement. The reasons for forming such cults are as varied as the novas who create them. Nova cults range from the seemingly beneficent to the downright disturbing, as many adopt symbolism from human religions and legends or invent their own to feed their titanic egos.

The Characters

On the other hand, many feel that trustworthy novas are the best to find and expose conspiracies on this scale — the characters find themselves with more employment offers than they can handle for just this reason. Keep in mind that with the Temple broken, the characters *succeeded*. They've eliminated a threat to English national security and will be rewarded for it.

Not everyone views the characters' success with equanimity and goodwill. Some honestly believe that the characters destroyed England's chance to pull itself out of the pit it's dug itself into. This is, in fact, true. However, it ignores the fact that the recovery would have come at the price of global prosperity. Anningsley's vision was to rob the world to pay the crown.

The Final Outcome

The previous discussions note the negative fallout that may come from the events in "A Green and Pleasant Land." It's important to note that none of the above are absolute statements of a downhill slide. Everything's given in general terms to suggest a way for the series to turn, not give an ironclad set of directions. Even with the backlash from this event, many people will still idolize novas. They'll continue to

be media icons, ideological leaders and more. The actions of one or two novas can shed suspicion in general, but currently, the balance doesn't need to be negative.

The consequences discussed above contribute to the ongoing **Aberrant** timeline, in that they add to the pressures that will lead to the Aberrant War in 2049. Whether or not you want to focus on these pressures is up to you. If they don't add to your series, don't feel obligated to make the world any darker than you feel necessary.

Dramatis Personae

Arthur Francis Anningsley

Background: Arthur Anningsley spent much of his life as a disenfranchised noble, increasingly powerless to influence



England's downward spiral. After his eruption (at age 80!), he turned his attention to correcting all those things he could not touch before, with vastly increased mental capacities and his regained youthful vigor. He conceals his true past from all he meets (and few would guess that he is one the most influential men in Europe). Anningsley poses as a normal member of the Temple, careful to meet as many members as possible and frequently traveling to attend to his interests.

Image: Arthur Anningsley is a healthy young man, moderately handsome and in vigorously good health. He stands just over six feet in height and sports a splendid physique. His hair and eyes are brown, and he maintains a perfect tan. He wears expensive, tailored suits (preferably from Hong Kong).

Roleplaying Hints: You are supremely self-confident. Always act as if you are in control. Under normal circumstances, you will present a friendly, casual front to anyone you meet. You're grateful for your rejuvenation and try to enjoy its fruits whenever possible. You're sexually adventurous and will flirt with any attractive woman, provided she seems a challenge. You are charming, gracious and oozing with savoir-faire. When dealing with others, you try to speak in their native tongue (if possible).

You rarely carry weapons, instead relying upon bodyguards (whom you'll telepathically control, thus allowing you to apply your Tactical Prodigy and other mental abilities to coordinate defense while you makes your escape).

Gear: Cell phone, finely tailored suit.

Nature: Architect

Allegiance: Himself

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 4

Abilities: Academics (Culture, Economics, Politics) 5, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Biz 4, Brawl 2, Command 4, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Etiquette 5, Firearms 3, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 5, Linguistics 4 (Native: English; French, Gaelic, German, Hindi), Martial Arts 2, Melee (Fencing) 5, Might 1, Rapport 3, Resistance 3, Science (Psychology) 5, Style 4, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Attunement 1, Backing 5 (Temple), Cipher 5, Contacts 5, Followers 5, Node 4, Resources 4

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 7, Taint 3

Powers: Mega-Perception •• (Quantum Attunement, Ultraperipheral Perception), Mega-Intelligence ••• (Analyze Weakness, Mental Prodigy: Financial and Tactical) Mega-Wits •• (Group Awareness, Synergy), Domination ••• (Telepathic), Mental Blast ••, Psychic Shield ••, Telepathy ••• (Telepathic Channeling)

Notes: Unless Anningsley is absolutely certain a nova target has no way to trace or repel an attempt to telepathically spy or control, he will preferentially use baselines. Without opportunity for long-term direct observation, he's never fully sure what any nova is likely to pull out of her sleeve and prefers to avoid the opportunity for unpleasant surprises or exposure.

Violet Mayhew

Background: Violet Mayhew is one of England's media darlings. She regularly appears on OpNet broadcasts,



regaling the nation with global entertainment and fashion news and making public appearances. Mayhew was born in 1986 (as Lucy Prescott) in Liverpool and grew up among the lower class. All her life, she tried to get away from her squalid beginnings. The best she ever managed was work as a nude dancer in a dingy nightclub — and even that wasn't very successful, as she was rather plain.

In 2007, several drunken patrons pulled her off the stage and assaulted her. The trauma catalyzed her M-R node, and she erupted. Everyone around her simply stopped and stared. She told them all to sit down and behave — and they did. She finished her shift and made more tips that night than in any previous month. That night was her last working at the club. She took her new looks and talent and almost immediately got work with the BBC (and a recording contract). She now has a weekly show and has released two recordings — *Shaped From the Dust* and *Fever Dreams*. Her personal musical style ranges through post-techno and punk genres, fusing somewhere in the stratosphere, and her recordings regularly top the English charts.

Mayhew had grown bored with her life until Anningsley took her into his confidence and explained his plans for England. She greatly anticipates the challenge before her but doesn't truly believe that she and Anningsley can possibly fail.

Mayhew does believe that Anningsley is only a stepping stone to greater things. At some point, she'll decide that it's time to eliminate him and take control of the Temple. She's already working on winning the loyalties of enough members that when the power struggle comes, she hopes to be able to overwhelm Anningsley's people (if she can't turn them to her side instead). So far, Anningsley's convinced of her commitment to his cause and hasn't bothered to check. For Mayhew's part, she's very good at hiding her true feelings. When around Mayhew, Anningsley finds it very difficult to distrust her.

Image: Violet Mayhew is drop-dead gorgeous. She has slanted, brilliantly green eyes, straight black, knee-length hair (which she usually braids, shortening the length to her waist, or otherwise styles). Her features are very fine — almost fragile. She paints her nails with bright colors and wears complementary shades. Her clothing is always the newest and best from the designer runways but not baroque or *outré*. Outside social functions or work, she dresses down quite a bit (slacks, casual dress), but she never wears anything so *mundane* as jeans, sweatshirts or other “blue-collar” clothing.

Using her Appearance Alteration, Mayhew often appears somewhat shorter, with dark brown hair and eyes. She wears her hair braided into a “crown” of sorts, and her clothing is very fine silk in fashions evocative of the medieval era.

Roleplaying Hints: You've achieved all your dreams — now what? Power. You want lots of power. More than anything else, it attracts you. You like having power over the men and women who would look down upon your baseline identity (if they acknowledged her at all) and revel in the control you have over those around you. Only Anningsley is exempt from such perceptions, as he is your only true equal. Anyone who can re-

sist your charms intimidates you, and you'd rather avoid such people (making excuses for whatever reason).

Don't play to stereotype — you're an intelligent, powerful woman, and you have no qualms about letting people know it.

Gear: Cell phone, compact, chip player.

Nature: Hedonist

Allegiance: The Temple of the King

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 5, Manipulation 4, Charisma 5

Abilities: Academics 2, Arts (Lyrics) 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Biz 3, Brawl 3, Command 4, Computer 1, Drive (Fast Cars) 3, Endurance 3, Etiquette 3, Linguistics 1 (Native: English; French), Martial Arts 3, Perform (Sing) 5, Rapport 3, Resistance 3, Streetwise 3, Style 5, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Backing 5 (Temple), Contacts 2, Eufiber 3, Followers 3, Influence 4, Resources 4

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 7, Taint 0

Powers: Mega-Dexterity • (Physical Prodigy), Mega-Stamina • (Resiliency), Mega-Wits • (Artistic Genius), Mega-Appearance ••• (Appearance Alteration, Awe-Inspiring, First Impression), Mega-Manipulation ••• (Persuader, The Voice), Mega-Charisma ••• (Commanding Presence, Dreadful Mien, Natural Agitator, Soothe), Psychic Shield (see below) •••, Quantum Bolt (Sonic Scream — Bashing) ••, Strobe (Hearing) 2, Stun Attack (Sonic) 2 (Area)

Notes: Mayhew's Psychic Shield actually represents her profound Manipulation and Subterfuge. She's literally able to throw up a “layer” of thought that conceals her true intentions. Any telepath who fails to overcome her Psychic Shield will pick up relatively superficial (but pertinent) thoughts but will not sense her true motives.

London Fog

Background: London Fog was born in 1974 in Islington. Her birth name was Benjamin Jeffrey Emory. Nature played



a cruel trick on the child. She was born with the unshakable conviction that she was female, but she had a male body. She spent most of her early years hovering between confusion and self-loathing, only to have shifted firmly into self-loathing upon reaching puberty.

Benjamin ran away from home at 15 and tried to start the process of sex reassignment. Unfortunately, Emory lacked the funds for the expensive procedure. The police caught Emory and returned "him" to his parents.

At 18, Emory chose to forego higher education, choosing instead to try to find work to get the cash for reassignment. This began a long chain of low-paying jobs throughout London, none ever paying quite enough for Emory. At 20, Benjamin Emory legally changed her name to Deborah Emory and lived as a woman. Her life continued in much the same vein over the following 11 years. Expenses (especially England's rising cost of living) made pursuing surgery impossible, since England's socialized medicine system would not cover it.

In late 2005, Emory abandoned hope. Estranged from her family (who refused to accept the change), neglected by English law (that made it illegal for her to legally alter her birth documents) and unable to save the money for surgery, she decided to finish it. She walked to the middle of Hungerford Bridge, spent a few minutes working up the nerve to jump, and when she saw a police officer approaching, she steered herself and leaped, only to regret the decision to the core of her being a brief fraction of a second later.

A strong wind preempted Emory's suicide attempt. Inside, she exploded. The world around her flared into brilliant, flowing light, as she suddenly perceived weather around her as energy patterns that she could control. Even more significantly (to Emory), she discovered that she'd somehow transformed completely into a woman. The newly-manifested M-R node also gave her headaches the likes of which she'd never before experienced, the intense pain triggering random electrical discharges into anything nearby.

Emory directly checked herself into a Rashoud facility, where the resident experts tended to her headaches and taught her how to control her powers, and she was released after a month of care and training. With Utopia assistance, Deborah Emory legally changed her name again, this time to Elizabeth Deborah Barton, to more clearly divide her old life from the new. Again with Utopia assistance, she located an agent who specialized in municipal defenders and started negotiations to fill that role for London.

On January 14, 2006, Barton had her first opportunity to present herself to London. She stopped what threatened to become a rampaging fire in downtown London with an incredible downpour. Her appearance also accelerated the negotiations her agent was in with the London city government.

In 2007, a tabloid reporter outed her. She responded poorly to questions on the topic, and her agent threatened well-funded legal action if a retraction wasn't printed. One was (albeit buried on page four). London Fog doesn't discuss the matter in public, but it's common knowledge (if not universally believed).

Image: Elizabeth Barton is a tall, unorthodox woman. She looks mostly normal, except that in place of hair, she has a streaming, nearly tangible, fog crowning her head. Her eyes reflect the weather (bright blue on a sunny day, dark gray on stormy days), and her body throws off harmless flickers of electricity. She likes to dress in a casual mode and rarely dresses for the weather. Since she's as comfortable in Antarctic winds as she is in a tropical jungle, she dresses primarily out of personal preference and avoids ostentatious or over-done fashions.

Roleplaying Hints: You've got it made, you're a popular nova in one of the most famous (and oldest) cities in the world, you have everything you could ever want, and your name is a household word. All that's left to do is to enjoy yourself and indulge your sense of duty. You won't hesitate to use your position to try to change things for the better (and have in many cases). You don't like to openly acknowledge your past, but you've done your best to improve rights and opportunities for English transgendered people and will continue to do so.

Gear: London Fog trenchcoat, cell phone.

Nature: Paragon

Allegiance: London

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 5, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Biz 2, Command 3, Computer 1, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Etiquette 4, Investigation 3, Martial Arts 4, Endurance 3, Intimidation 3, Rapport 3, Resistance 3, Science (Meteorology) 4, Style 3, Survival 5

Backgrounds: Allies 3, Attunement 2, Backing 4 (London Government), Eufiber 3, Followers 3, Influence 4, Node 3, Resources 4

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 8, Taint 5 (see Image)

Powers: Mega-Dexterity • (Accuracy), Mega-Stamina ••• (Adaptability, Resiliency), Mega-Perception • (Electromagnetic Vision, High-End Electromagnetic Scan), Mega-Charisma • (Commanding Presence), Bodymorph (Fog — Density Control [Decrease] ••) ••, Flight •, Immolate (Lightning — Lethal) ••, Quantum Bolt (Lightning — Lethal) •••, Weather Manipulation (Alter Temperature, Fog, Weather Alteration) •••

Finn and Dog

Finn and Dog are a well-known pair of elites — at least in the right circles. Most people never hear about them, and they prefer it that way. Among some nova circles, they're fairly well-known — elites, most especially. They don't seem to be in the business primarily for the money. Their services do fetch handsome prices, but they prefer to accept jobs that they find interesting or challenging — truly intriguing jobs may even get a discount. Finn and Dog don't work solo — the client hires both, or he doesn't hire them at all.

Finn and Dog refuse to work for clients who will not reveal their identities and have been known to ques-

tion their clients' motives. They pull out of jobs if they find that the client has deceived them about the nature of their assignment. On at least on two occasions, the duo has caused considerable damage to parties who had done just that.

The two elites steer away from jobs that concentrate on straightforward, large-scale combat (such as war zones) — they claim that they're boring and pointless. They're better known for operations that involve stealth and cunning. They prefer constructive assignments — such as locating missing persons or tracking down international criminals and terrorists. On the other hand, on Christmas Eve, 2007, they left 26 dead aboard a Caribbean cruise ship, including Brother Rap and Sister Soul, a pair of novas who were later found to be supplying the Nation of Islam with weapons and money. In the end, Finn and Dog are extremely effective and deadly when necessary.

In elite circles, Finn and Dog are considered to be the odd men out, but both are professional enough to avoid problems with others in their profession of choice. They have solid reputations as dependable (if somewhat weird) troubleshooters. A persistent rumor circulates that Finn and Dog are lovers, though no one has any actual evidence to support this. Both refuse to comment if asked — of course, they refuse to comment or respond to most personal questions, so this indicates nothing.

Finn and Dog are always well-equipped — they have the contacts and the money to get anything they need, be it a bigger gun, personal armor or more exotic equipment.

Finn, Nova Elite

Background: Finn originally appeared on the elite scene alongside Dog in '05. Whereas Dog soon became known as the surly one, Finn quickly gained a reputation as a nice guy — someone you could hang out with. Unlike most elites, Finn is not image-conscious, nor does he engage in idle posturing. This, coupled with his amazingly

effective persuasive powers, enabled him to work the duo deep into the elite society and establish them as serious players. While they aren't particularly well-known in many circles, that's the way they prefer it, and Finn constantly works to ensure that those with the cash and the really good jobs do know about them.

In most negotiations, Finn does the talking, and he's very good at it. He's charming, fun to be around and doesn't mind taking advantage of that if it suits his purposes. He's not in the habit of using his powers to cheat clients — that could put a stop to their business when word gets around.

Image: Finn is a healthy, fit man in his 30s. Silver strands run through his red beard and shoulder-length hair. He nearly always shows an eager smile to the world, and appears to be friendly and easy-going. He dresses comfortably and casually, even for special occasions. In action, he wears a black bodysuit designed for convenience and protection over style. It's not uncommon for him to wear a leather jacket or trenchcoat over the body suit.

Roleplaying Hints: When dealing with someone you like, you're a hell of a nice guy. Generally speaking, you're calm, cooperative, willing to negotiate and good company. You crack jokes and make folks feel right at home. Business negotiations close without a hitch — you know that you're selling the good stuff and can make things happen with a minimum of fuss. You never argue about money — you set a price. If the client is willing to meet it, fine. If not, that's also fine — it's not like you're starving. If the gig is good enough, the money ceases to matter. If it's some bloated multinational corporation, you milk it for all it's worth and then some. If they want the elite, they hire Finn and Dog. If they want some lame-ass losers, they'll hire someone else. What's to argue?

At the same time, you tend to assume that everyone's an asshole unless proven otherwise. You're a severe misanthrope and this attitude is not limited to the baseline population. Most novas, especially the likes of Caestus Pax or Divis Mal, are just as bad. You'll give people the chance to prove they're not idiots. Should they fail to do so, you write them off as worthless fools. This isn't to say you'll let that slip (unless the idiot truly deserves it — you're Mega-Social Attributes make your expressed disapproval a terrifying thing indeed).

Gear: Whipsword, brain-implant data connection (full OpNet), flechette rifle, heavy pistol, knife.

Nature: Judge

Allegiance: Finn and Dog

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 4

Abilities: Academics 5, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Biz 4, Command 2, Computer 3, Drive 3, Endurance 3, Firearms 4, Interrogation 3, Intimidation 3, Intrusion 2, Investigation 2, Legerdemain 3, Linguistics 5 (Native: English; Arabic, Basque, Bengali, Chinese, Coptic, Finnish, French, Gaelic, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Italian, Latin, Navaho, Norwegian, Spanish, Swahili,



Turkish) Martial Arts 2, Medicine 2, Melee 3, Pilot 3, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Survival 2

Backgrounds: Cipher 5, Contacts 4, Eufiber 5, Node 3, Resources 5

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 6, Taint 3

Powers: Mega-Strength • (Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity • (Fast Tasks), Mega-Stamina •• (Durability), Mega-Perception •• (Quantum Attunement), Mega-Intelligence • (Linguistic Genius, Mental Prodigy: Tactics), Mega-Wits • (Natural Empath), Mega-Manipulation •• (Persuader), Mega-Charisma •••• (Dreadful Mien, Soothe), Psychic Shield •, Stun Attack (Psychic) •••

Dog, Nova Elite

Background: Back in '05, when he and his partner first appeared on the elite scene, Dog caused quite a ruckus. He's opinionated, intelligent, educated and willing to back those qualities up with quick wit and sarcasm — or fists, if necessary. He expresses contempt for most of his fellow elites, and this never helps. He wins most of these arguments, one way or another. Fortunately, Finn's calming effect smooths over most of the bad spots, but Dog still has a reputation as a troublemaker — not that most people feel like making anything of it, since his reputation also includes a tendency to successfully resolve disputes in his favor.



In combat, Dog becomes a whirlwind of carnage. He's fast, deadly and suffers no qualms when he needs to kill. He prefers to incapacitate his opponents but will not hesitate to respond with lethal force if attacked with intent to kill. When Dog draws his guns, he becomes a blur of motion, as he shoots at everything around him with uncanny accuracy. It's clear that he enjoys combat, and it's not uncommon to see him charge into a fight with both guns blazing.

Image: Taint has twisted Dog's features — his head is a mixture of human and schnauzer — but is otherwise normal. He favors simple, stylish clothes with room for holsters, pockets, belts and other weapons or equipment he can realistically conceal on his person. Dog hates to be surprised and always carries weapons when possible.

Roleplaying Hints: You're good and you know it. You don't take shit from anyone. You know for a fact that you're *not* the toughest bastard in the valley, but you're certainly the sneakiest and meanest. You can play nice, but you mostly leave that for Finn. You don't talk to miserable idiots if you can avoid it. You're civil until provoked, and have no tolerance for fools. You're not afraid to let them know it, either. Some say a dog's bark is worse than his bite, but in your case, this is dead wrong. Still, you're fair — you doesn't pick on others unless they ask for it.

Gear: Twin small SMGs, twin light pistols, twin knives, carbon-fiber garotte, an assortment of grenades.

Nature: Bravo

Allegiance: Finn and Dog

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Appearance 1, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Biz 1, Command 1, Computer 1, Drive 3, Endurance 4, Firearms 5, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 3, Intrusion 2, Investigation 2, Legerdemain 3, Martial Arts 3, Medicine 1, Melee 3, Pilot 1, Resistance 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Cipher 5, Eufiber 5, Node 4, Resources 5, Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 6, Taint 6 (looks like a humanoid schnauzer)

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Lifter), Mega-Dexterity •••• (Accuracy), Mega-Stamina ••• (Resiliency x 2, Hardbody, Regeneration), Mega-Perception • (Analytic Taste/Touch, Bloodhound), Mega-Wits • (Enhanced Initiative, Quickness x 2, Multitasking), Intuition •••, Luck ••••, Psychic Shield ••, Sensory Shield •

Elite.

The word might as well be “regal,” “mysterious,” “dangerous” or “sexy.” All these and more capture a bit of the essence of these literal one-man armies, quantum-powered mercenaries living a life as romantic as any in the media’s eye. Safe at home, we look for the newest news about Pursuer, Sarge In-Charge or the enigmatic Totentanz. We marvel at their exploits, as these paragons of lethality shrug off bullets, bayonets and even ballistic missiles. We cheer when they clash with the only things that can put them down: their own kind.

And why not? Far better that half-a-dozen people should fight a war than half-a-million. Especially when you consider that conventional war, callous as it sounds, is boring. Who wants to see footage of precision bombing on some news channel when powers spun from the fundamental forces of the universe are being thrown around on N!? There’s a reason special effects flicks gross big at the box office. Garbed in their distinctive uniforms, trading blows that break the sound barrier, nova elites appeal to a kind of 21st century gladiatorial fetish. Time was, people in

costumes who threw lightning bolts were confined to comic books, film and video games. But now, beyond the printed page and the TV screen, these larger-than-life characters are continuing to blast the shit out of each other. And it’s still as entertaining as it was when we were kids and there were no such things as novas.

Excerpt From
Novawatch, OpNet
Magazine, 01/14 Issue

Beautiful. Deadly. The elites are the heroes and villains of the great drama that is the ongoing theater of global conflict. Some would argue that it is barbaric to celebrate the ages-old dance of combat. Perhaps they’re right. And when the world’s *baseline* populace evolves beyond the need for war, maybe we’ll put that barbarism behind us and the elites will hang up the mask. But, until then, let’s make the best of what we’ve got and enjoy the show. Sure as hell, with the paychecks they’re making, the elites are enjoying putting it on for us.



Magnusson: ...So what you're saying, Ms. Santos, is that you do *not* approve of the use of nova elites as proxies in global-scale conflicts?



Santos: I am as happy as the next person, Leif, when I hear that wars are going to involve perhaps a dozen lost lives, as compared to scores of thousands, don't get me wrong—



Renault: But you would rather we get back to *conventional* war, Ms. Santos!? Isn't *that* what you're saying?



Magnusson: Please, Mr. Renault, you'll have your chance to speak in just a moment.



Santos: Thank you, Leif. What I was saying a moment ago was that I have to wonder what kinds of negative impact the elite phenomenon is having and will have. I mean, the "Stone Badass" is *not* a good role model for children and young adults, no matter how you slice it. It's sad when you can point to certain members of the Teragen as better examples of how a person should behave.



Also, it is a long-standing truism that war changes a person, usually not for the better. All you have to do is take a good hard look at a sadistic murderer like Totentanz to know that all that bloodshed can even warp the psyches of novas. I shudder to think of what a war-hardened nova, with skills and powers honed by years of killing, could do if he finally went off the deep end.



Renault: Better, then, to inflict these horrors on *normal* people? Let these elites kill each other. Let the countries that hire them deal with the egos of competing nova mercenaries on their budgets instead of buying nuclear warheads from the nations that supposedly got rid of them back in 2007. Missiles take whatever orders they're given, don't question their superiors and are incapable of distinguishing civilian targets from military ones.



At least Utopia can track down and prosecute an elite who violates international law; *no one* can make a detonated nuclear bomb stand trial. The fact of the matter is that elites may not be shining beacons of virtue, but they are simply the best alternative to full-scale conventional war.



Magnusson: It seems we've gotten hold of a very hot topic here. More to come when we return....

CNN News Report, 02/27/14

Philip St. Christopher; Calcutta, India

St. Christopher: "Spurred on by an ongoing deadlock with Project Utopia on the matter of 'India Syndrome', the Indian government has finally put its foot down. No official confirmation yet, but eyewitness accounts in this area seem to indicate that two or three nova elites were spotted overhead just about an hour ago, in transit to nearby rural communities. Presumably, these elites and, if rumors are to be believed, at least a handful more, are specifically seeking out villages where novas are worshiped as divine avatars, there to guard against involvement by Project Utopia and Team Tomorrow.

"All of this, of course, comes on the coattails of the debacle that ensued a week ago when Utopia representatives arrived in an isolated farming village a far up the Ganges. The name of the village, due to conflicting reports, remains as yet unknown, but what is confirmed is that the differences between quantum science and ancient faith erupted into a physical confrontation that is believed to have left Gina Benet of Team Tomorrow Asia/Pacific in critical condition.

"Team Tomorrow and Project Utopia representatives were unavailable for comment on the matter, but representatives from the Indian government have stepped forward to say that Utopian 'Eurocentric imperialism' and 'anti-spiritual sentiments' will no longer be tolerated on Indian soil. Representatives went on to say that India has finally had enough of 'Project Utopia's attempts to disprove the realities of the Hindu faith and to create a mandatory adherence to scientific belief structures.'

"How all of this will resolve from here is anybody's guess, but it looks like India intends to fight, if need be, for the right to see these 'new humans' in the light they are most comfortable with."

A Personal Letter to General Yuri Petrov, Dated 03/01/14:

General,

I am pleased to inform you that your 01/13/14 request for assistance on retainer from the DeVries Agency has at last been processed and approved. We apologize for the seemingly undue period of time between your request and our reply; however, we are certain that you can appreciate the delicacy of *our* position in having dealings with a single member State of the Russian Confederation. As a Bosnian by birth myself, though, I sympathize with your plight and have made every effort to facilitate the approval process as best I could. Currently, the best operatives we have available for your particular contract are the elites Cavalier, Gilgamesh, Haven and Manticore. Any or all of these elites (or, by consultation with myself or another duly appointed DeVries representative, more or others) can be had on the scale of fees we had negotiated last week. Of course, additional services may also be had for an additional fee. If you would like to go ahead with the contract, or if you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to call me at any hour of the day or night (really, there is no worry; I don't sleep) — you know my number. If I am not in my office at the time, you will automatically be forwarded to my cellular.

I eagerly await word from you, general, and I hope that we can do business in the very near future.

Warmest Regards,

Radu Szlaniskovich,

DeVries Europe East Coordinator

A Missive

Received by Several DeVries Elite Operatives, Dated 03/29/14:

Unique business opportunity. Offer will not be made twice. Most profitable job ever. Interested?



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awards
legal stuff

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the news

N! the News , Live
From Outside the
Amp Room, 03/17/14

Ingrid Weiss; Ibiza town, Ibiza

Weiss: "...Now that the dust has settled a bit and the interference we were experiencing has died down, we are coming to you live from just outside the doors of the Amp Room, where bouncer "Ironskin" Andy Vance and a few other novas from inside have just broken up what could have erupted into a *very* ugly confrontation between Ryu "Asahi" Okano of the Nippontai and Wei Xixiang of the Exploding Heavenly Mandate. This, of course, in the wake of allegations of 'problems' stemming from possible involvement in Chinese affairs on the part of the Directive, specifically that of the Japanese arm of the Directive. Though nothing has been confirmed, it didn't

keep words, and, eventually, fists from flying here tonight.

"Aggressions between China and Japan are absolutely nothing new. There have been no military actions in decades, but old enmities die hard. In truth, suspicions of Directive 'monitoring' of the Chinese populace, founded or no, have proven sufficient to foster an atmosphere of resentment and distrust between these two ancient cultures. Details of the matter are, naturally, uncertain, as Utopia involvement in both China and Japan is limited and the Directive is, as always, tight-lipped about the potential situation and show no signs of a willingness to come forward and either confirm or deny. Still, one has to wonder how long it will be until someone talks or something gives."



The Overview

Pound for pound, elites are probably the deadliest novas on Earth. They develop their quantum-powered gifts specifically to the end of becoming ever better soldiers, more cunning assassins and unstoppable killers. Even Utopia refuses to take them on one-on-one. They are consummate mercenaries, selling fantastic powers to the highest bidder for nothing more than cash, and lots of it. These are, by no stretch of the imagination, morally upright people. Neglecting the responsibilities of power, they instead attend to their own bank accounts and indulge in the thrill of the most dangerous kind of warfare humanity has ever known.

Most people are too excited by the prospect of watching the Highwayman do his work on *N!* to think about the implications of what 13 years (since elites first appeared in the Equatorial Wars in sub-Saharan Africa in 2001) of continual conflict does to the mind of a nova. Sure, there are the nights of whirlwind romance in Hong Kong and dinners with kings and princes to break up the monotony of slaughter, but these are not things that help one to remain firmly grounded in the real world. An elite's life exists in finer, sharper colors than most of us are accustomed to. Pushing themselves to greater heights and depths of experience than any baseline can hope to attain, the elite's senses are honed by the surreal moments when death seems inevitable, by the unrepentant decadence of the times between missions and even by the smell of napalm in the morning. Our lives, by comparison, seem to them dull, gray, uninspired. This lunatic affair with Death slowly desensitizes these novas (not the most caring or compassionate of people to begin with) to the consequences of their actions. Once you've reaped billions of dollars from participating in various international conflicts, why keep doing it? Unless, of course, you *love* it.

Indeed, with the media inundating the public with the "glamorous" lives of these super-powered hired killers, there comes a point where the glamour becomes real. The adoration of the masses elevates what is essentially a bipedal piece of artillery to the status of a cultural icon. Ask any 12-year-old boy in 2014 who he'd rather be: Pursuer or the President? The answer will probably be unsurprising. Sooner or later, the elite will come to believe in his own PR. At this point, what is to stop one from wondering what it would be like to rule rather than be ruled, to command rather than to take orders?

A nova named Radu Szlaniskovich began wondering precisely that. Szlaniskovich, however, had a unique perspective on that topic. As the Eastern European Coordinator for DeVries National Tactical Solutions, he was able to see trends that remained invisible to others: Humanity's ability to deal with novas through technological means was increasing at an almost geometrical rate; at the same time, groups like the Directive and Project Utopia were snatching up novas before they had a chance to think about their whole range of options. The window of opportunity for establishing a nova homeland was shrinking. Szlaniskovich began playing scenarios over in his head, looking for a chink

in the armor of the global body politic. He knew that, sooner or later, an opportunity to paralyze international government and seize every mercenary's "promised land" would present itself, and novas would overthrow their baseline masters and take control. Szlaniskovich envisioned a surgical strike, a black-op against the nations of the Earth.

In short, it was a covert mission like any other, simply far grander in scope.

In early 2012, Szlaniskovich started browsing through the DeVries database of elites, searching for those who best embodied that special blend of heartlessness, discretion, team spirit, ambition and obedience. One seasoned mercenary, no matter how powerful, was no match for the world's peacekeeping organizations. However, six to ten could constitute a veritable army of novas, and a very formidable one at that. Such an army, working in small teams, each unaware of the movements of the others, yet all directed by a single tactical nexus, would be like a tsunami; crushing all that stood in its path, flowing around what it could not destroy and slipping through the fingers of any who attempted to catch it. In short, the plan was perfect.

Now, all that remained was to implement it.

Theme and Mood

The theme of "Dominion" is power and its price. "Dominion" brings characters face-to-face with all that is darkest within the hearts of novas and shows them what they themselves have the potential to become as their quantum gifts grow and the call to divinity begins to outstrip the simpler needs of humanity. It serves as a macrocosm for the inner conflicts within each nova, as the baseline world becomes more distant, more worshipful, more needy — and more suspicious. As novas become more powerful and the inevitable confrontation of 2049 looms ever closer, the characters are given the opportunity to peer into the rising darkness and see that, when its time comes, the apocalypse may be wearing their faces.

Also, this scenario is about doing what is right, regardless of the cost, regardless of the likelihood of success. Sometimes, all an individual can do is stand up for whatever she believes in. The important thing is to try. No one wants to feel that their struggles are in vain, but all of us know that sometimes the good guy *does* finish last and the villains (at least, from one's own perspective) walk away with the prize. However, defying the inevitable can be glorious and dramatic in and of itself (read Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" or Frank Miller's *300* if you need inspiration in that vein). It is the romance of standing before the storm and refusing to kneel. It is acknowledging that "a coward dies a thousand deaths, a brave man dies but once."

The primary mood of "Dominion," on the other hand, is grim and unrelenting. The characters are fighting an uphill battle that they may or may not be able to win. At no point should the characters feel that they can take victory for granted nor even necessarily feel confident that their abilities are sufficient to stem this tide. The clock is

ticking. The enemy is stronger, faster, smarter and more adaptable. The characters should feel like Cub Scouts about to go head-to-head with Navy S.E.A.L.s. Whenever the characters embark on a new leg of the scenario, they should be seriously wondering if all of them (or, indeed, any of them) will return. Only principle, conviction and perhaps more than a little heroism should be able to overcome the sense of hopelessness and futility that will stand in their way.

Directly in opposition to this, however, is set the underlying mood of “Dominion”; epic conflict on a global scale, a veritable clash of titans. The characters will be able to sense that they are playing out a drama with the world as their stage. Though only a very few eyes are upon them, they are the eyes of the most secretive and powerful people on Earth. No matter what happens, the characters are heroes, perhaps more so than at any other point in their lives, as, for once, their nova powers don’t give them the advantage over their enemies. This isn’t the heroism of the caped strongman who rescues a damsel from a villain’s clutches, but that of the soldier who charges headlong into gunfire to save a buddy. It is the heroism that stands up to the fear of death and conquers it (think of *Braveheart* or *Glory*, rather than the guy with heat vision). In short, the characters are being *real* heroes by doing this, rather than four-color characters fighting for “Mom and apple pie.”

What Has Come Before

Before you can throw the characters into all of this, of course, you’ll need to know exactly how these events came to pass. As previously stated, Szlaniskovich started seriously thinking about this idea a couple of years back, but he didn’t actually *do* anything about it for quite a while. Instead, he observed, using DeVries’ inside information about the theaters of international conflict to keep an eye out for the perfect moment to strike. By late 2012, he had finally narrowed the bank of potential “applicants” down to 14. During this time, he earmarked potential points of global-level conflict (the escalating tensions in India and the growing aggression between China and Japan were simply two among scores of weaknesses to exploit), mentally filing them away for use as diversions when the time to strike was at hand.

While Szlaniskovich maneuvered his pieces on the board, a few complications entered into the mix. Two of his “picks” were killed in action, and one was arrested for violations of international law. Also, Szlaniskovich’s choice of “promised land” had to be continually readjusted to account for the delicate balances of power that were eternally being redefined by Utopia, the Directive and others. Yesterday’s banana republic gave way to today’s “recently established democratic nation, currently assisted by UN peacekeeping forces.”

However, with characteristic determination, the former elite set his sights, knowing that nothing would cheat him of his destiny. He called on contacts forged years be-

fore in various criminal cartels and called in favors owed to him by those at the highest levels of various governments. In some instances, all he asked for was silence. Thus was funding generated, hardware stockpiled, intelligence gathered and secrecy assured. And, though it all, Szlaniskovich watched his chosen ones, selecting a mission here or there to test their personalities, morals, values and methods. Assassinations, kidnappings, interrogations, sweep-and-clear operations and so on and so forth. During this period, two more elites proved themselves to be unsuitably humane for Szlaniskovich’s purposes.

As early 2014 rolled around, Szlaniskovich finalized his plans. The mercenary set his sights on the Ukraine as the rock from which he would hew his throne. The breadbasket of the Russian Confederation, it was populated enough to make a nation, fertile enough to make that nation grow with careful cultivation and important enough to Russia to give Szlaniskovich the satisfaction of taking it away from those who had robbed his people of their independence and identity. And so, with a few last bits of political and military nudging here and there, he summoned those he would make the champions of his bold new world.

The meeting was held in DeVries’ Eastern European headquarters in the Russian Confederation state of Croatia in mid-April. Each participant was brought in separately and placed in isolation from all of the others. It was held by teleconference on a secured line, and all of the elites were given codenames to address one another so that no one’s identity was compromised. Szlaniskovich coaxed, cajoled, persuaded and manipulated. His words were gospel truth, his plans flawless, and his intentions exactly what each individual nova present wanted to hear. He played egos like fiddles and played into everyone’s personal motivations. In the end, only one, El Toro, dissented. Later, when Szlaniskovich gave each elite the names of three of the others (excepting himself in all cases), that they might start to work together as teams without the potential for easily compromising the whole conspiracy, he used El Toro as an object lesson. Each of the conspirators received one of the elite’s severed fingers hanging from a golden chain along with an admonishment that infidelity to the cause would be punished by the most gruesome torments imaginable and that anyone who became a liability should expect no mercy.

It Begins

The characters, regardless of affiliation, should be drawn slowly into the conspiracy’s web. As the plan goes into effect in late April, 2014 (unless, of course, there is another time, more appropriate to your series, that you would prefer to set it in), little events, none in any way suspicious, begin to set the stage. Big Time and Diecast perform some small operation in Tanzania. Cinder assassinates a very minor political figure in Thailand. Nothing big, nothing questionable. At this point, it’s doubtful that any of the characters would know any of the conspirators from Adam.

Still, the characters will slowly begin to become involved with the events as they transpire. If Tomorrowites, they might be sent to deal with a brushfire conflict in Africa or rumors of elites moving Red 7 for the Medellín cartel. Fairly run-of-the-mill stuff for the world's most powerful gathering of novas. If the characters are operatives for the Directive, they could be sent in on any of the same kinds of jobs or, perhaps, even shadier ones. After all, *someone* is going to wonder about at least one or two of the files that Szlaniskovich has "appropriated" or arranged to have lost. Some were just for the sake of liberally peppering his tracks with red herrings, and the characters might "inherit" a bit of that runaround. Even the Teragen, Aberrants and others will find reasons to interact with these first faint glimmerings of the plan in its infancy (or, alternately, the plan might find ways, accidentally or otherwise, to interact with *them*.) Perhaps a few young Terats will go to break up (or just protest) Utopia's "peacekeeping efforts", or Aberrants will stumble upon some small facet of Utopia's overarching agenda that turns out not to be Utopian in origin at all. Corporates may be sent to protect their company's interests someplace that factors, however peripherally, into Szlaniskovich's battle plan. The idea is to leave the characters wondering later how they missed it (even though they had no real

reason to be looking for it yet.) The important part is to keep it plausible (these people are extremely good at covering their tracks), yet drop enough clues that they will later be able to assemble a few of the pieces.

Opening Shot

As the conspiracy's plan just begins to get off the ground, the eight elites involved are dispatched to various "points of interest" that factor into the grand design. As previously stated, all of these operations are, as yet, nothing overtly ambitious or even terribly noticeable. This period of time is much more about weakening structures that the conspirators will later have to destroy and generating capital and favors to be repaid at later dates. Without Szlaniskovich's tactical genius, overarching perspective on the matter and access to DeVries' most sensitive files and projections on current and future developments in global conflict, it would be nigh-on unthinkable for anyone else to garner even an inkling of what's going on here.

The characters will probably feel that they're getting into some "business as usual" during these months. Under no circumstances should they be suddenly stumbling upon evidence of a planetwide conspiracy to conquer the Ukraine. For Utopians, minor diplomatic missions in South America and Africa could instead suffice, so long as you slowly play

As with any other "big secret to be revealed later" plot in an **Aberrant** game, there is a glaring potential problem that some of you (especially those of you who are accustomed to dealing with it on a regular basis) are likely noticing. Namely, that proposed by characters with things like the Mega-Intellect enhancement of Mental Prodigy: Tactical or (especially) quantum powers like Pretercognition. How can you ensure that the player gets her points' worth out of the powers, yet manages not to blow the lid off the conspiracy until you're good and ready?

This is a delicate line to walk and one that doesn't readily offer any easy solution. Naturally, such a character will probably be instrumental in the investigation, something you should be sure to play up so that the player knows that her character and the ways in which she has chosen to develop that character are proving important toward achieving the group's goals. Also, you may choose to require, say, resisted Tactical Prodigy rolls (probably at higher difficulties for the character, who is largely searching for the "needle in a haystack"), so as to facilitate fairness and yet maintain the conspiracy's structural integrity.

Of course, all of these are just suggestions. Depending on your players, you may find that someone is not averse to simply hearing, "it would be better for the story if you just didn't know that yet," so long as it isn't a every-game occurrence. Also, given the thousand nuances of your series that we're not privy to, there are probably several other ways you can, convincingly and without making anyone feel that they wasted those precious nova points and experience, keep up the suspense. In essence: Remember the basics, and be fair, but don't let the rules bulldoze their merry way over the story.

Why the Ukraine?

A lot of you are probably wondering why Szlaniskovich would choose, of all things, a member state of the Russian Confederation as his target. There are some good reasons. First, the Ukraine, due to a long period of negative population growth (which began well before the turning of the millennium), is still hovering at around its pre-2000 population of 50 million. Fifty million people scattered across the second-largest nation in Europe. Comparatively, this is like six modern-day New York City's worth of people spread over a landmass almost the size of Texas. Divided as they are, it is not too large a number of people to conquer and subjugate. Also, the Ukraine is an overworked, underpaid land, with the vast majority, almost all in fact, of its people employed in industrial, agricultural or service professions. Even with Vladimir Sierka's financial wizardry, the "breadbasket of the Confederation" finds about 35 percent of its people living below the poverty line and most of the rest managing little better. Poor people, put simply, are easier to crush than wealthy, or even comfortable, ones.

To Szlaniskovich's thinking, all he really needs to do is cripple the military base in Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, and weather the storm for a couple of days, just long enough to blackmail as many United Nations member states (including a few in the Confederation itself) into not getting involved. When you've arranged or carried out violations of international law for those member states (including murder, assassination, trafficking in contraband, kidnapping, espionage and more), that kind of blackmail isn't too hard to come by. All he really needs are those two or three days to cement his rule. And that, of course, is where the characters come in.

up a subtle sense of the gradual buildup of tensions in the region. Directive agents might be sent in to investigate the murder of a seemingly insignificant bureaucrat in a first-world government (in this case, the Directive's monolithic paranoia actually works in their favor.) The conspirators anticipated that their enemies (everybody) would, probably sooner than later, discover evidence of their activities. The idea, then, was to make sure that nothing looked out of the ordinary in the earliest stages and to lay down a few false leads that would keep the attack dogs at bay until the plan kicked into high-gear. Keep it low-key, and keep it going long enough that the characters start to feel a bit bored with it all and let down their guard. Then and only then do things start to get interesting.

Strike the Match

A person who is essentially in charge of a significant number of mercenaries could theoretically manage, by dint of his influence (the ability to manipulate contract prices, close working relationships with military and political leaders, etc.), to engineer a conflict of his own. Throughout human history, special interest groups that stood to profit by war have done that very thing. All it would take is a certain insight into how the

dynamics of societies, human aggression and the clashing egos of persons of power work. Radu Szlaniskovich has all of those bases covered.

It begins innocently enough; on June 3rd, 2014, two nova elites (neither of whom is involved in the conspiracy) attack a small motorcade of Macedonian dignitaries en route to a state dinner with visiting diplomats from Russian Confederation member states. As per their orders, the two simply cause some havoc and promptly leave, before any kind of resistance or pursuit can be organized. Later in the day, the OpNet is hit with a post from self-proclaimed "supporters of President Radocani's policies, demanding his release from Utopia's torture camp in Bahrain." Further, they threaten "continued" and "more drastic" actions (naturally, all of this is just a ruse, and a crude one at that; it is intended to divert later suspicions away from the area of the Confederation.) This, one way or another, is where the characters come in.

If the characters work for a more hierarchical or bureaucratic organization, one with a defined chain of command, they will simply be ordered to go to Skopje, Macedonia to investigate the nature of this assault. If they are affiliated with a less hierarchical organization, it is probably best to have an experienced and trusted mem-

Why Get Involved?

In reading over "Dominion," you may discover that, even if you like it and want to run it for your players, you are having a bit of trouble trying to come up with a reason why novas from Faction X should give a damn. Some are obviously easier to rope in than others, but don't despair if your characters aren't squeaky-clean T2Mers. Everyone, even that hyper-political pack of Terat revolutionaries, potentially has a reason to try to interfere with this conquest. Naturally, some of these reasons are stronger and more compelling than others, but all justifications are not created equal. Of course, the following points are just generalizations, anyway. In the end, you need to tailor the reasons to fit the characters; these are just suggestions for you to use, alter, be inspired by or ignore, at your discretion.

Utopia (including Team Tomorrow and Project Proteus): This is probably the easiest organization to get involved. Anyone who claims membership in Project Utopia and who can't figure this one out had best refer back to the employee handbook. The only thing you'll need to seriously stress in running "Dominion" for Utopians is that the usual expectations of prodigious backup will not hold true in this instance. Like it or not, the characters are going to have to break Utopia's "two-on-one" rule regarding elites.

Aberrants: Members of the Aberrant movement are likely to get involved simply because no one wants to see people like Szlaniskovich and his elites in charge of a nation. Even Utopia's agenda (should the Aberrants' suspicions prove true) isn't *this* sinister. However, as added incentive (while we're on the topic...) Utopia, whether they prevent the takeover or not, could also use something like this to legitimize a near-stranglehold on UN policy. And who knows what they could do with more authority than they already have.

The Teragen: Teragen have as compelling a reason to interfere with Szlaniskovich's plans as any other nova. After all, a nation of baselines ruled by nova tyrants is as much counter to Teragen philosophy as novas being forced to submit to baseline authority. The door swings both ways, and separate does not mean "to lord over." When one takes the Terats to task on their philosophical beliefs (no matter how much any of them might relish the thought of inert playthings and servants to attend to them), it cannot be denied that this action is one of the grossest possible violations of everything *The Null Manifesto* stands for, and Divis Mal himself will happily clarify this point if need be.

The Directive: Characters in the employ of the Directive will, without a doubt, be sent to deal with this crisis. Threats to world security and the possibility of a nation ruled by novas is what the Directive was in great part founded to guard against. Once again, however, just as with Utopia, it is important to withhold the advantage of numbers that the characters should rightly have access to under such circumstances.

Independents: Independents might be brought in the defend their employer's interests in the region or to establish a humanitarian reputation for a corporation whose human rights policies are currently looked on unfavorably. If the characters are DeVries Elites, they certainly have a compelling reason to get involved. Truly independent novas looking to make a name for themselves could certainly do so here. Ultimately, there are as many reasons for independent novas to get involved as there are independent novas, and each will need to be brought in according to who she is, who she works for (if anyone) and why she would oppose this.

ber of the that faction (perhaps a mentor, ally, or contact) tip them off, ask them to look into it or otherwise get them to think that it would be a good idea to go poking around before someone else figures it out. It is *highly* implausible that truly independent novas will simply decide to vacation in Macedonia and accidentally blunder upon this situation, so you'll need to do a bit more legwork in the case of such characters to keep the scenario believable for them. The characters should arrive in Skopje anywhere from the 3rd to the 6th of June (news just doesn't travel as quickly or as urgently in some circles as it does in others). If the characters arrive on the 3rd, the investigation commences quickly and with few obstacles, if they arrive on the 6th, then paperwork has to be filed, permits secured, officials bribed, etc.)

Day One (Arrival)

Upon arriving in Skopje, the characters are probably going to need to orient themselves to the new city (check in to wherever they're staying, get a huge meal, etc.) Give them time to assess the situation before deluging them in conflict. This will probably be their last opportunity for quiet introspection for a while. Currently, the heavy traffic of military, UN, Utopia and Directive agents moving about in the city evokes imagery straight out of the days of the Cold War. Police checkpoints abound, and the characters will likely have their identification examined any number of times over the course of the day. They should probably quickly get used to this kind of treatment (being a nova, ironically, doesn't help in this instance.) If the characters are operatives in the employ of any of the organizations mentioned above who are currently scouring the streets, they will be subjected to a few less impromptu interrogations, but only a few.

The characters will figure out shortly that the various national and international law-enforcement agencies present have reason to believe that at least one of the assailants has not had an opportunity to flee the country as of yet. They intend to keep him boxed in until his location can be pinpointed, but every hour that passes makes the security forces worry more and more that he's already given them the slip. Nothing could be further from the truth. Currently skulking about in Skopje's septic system (Adaptability is good for more than just the vacuum of space, after all), Robert "Manticore" duChamp is looking for his golden opportunity to get the hell out of Dodge. Before too long, he'll either make his presence known to the characters or be located by them, so don't be in a hurry to get them in touch with him just yet.

All told, when bedtime (where applicable) rolls around, the characters should have some kind of game plan for the next day. Obviously, the frantic searches being conduct by the various authorities already present aren't likely to yield much (as it stands, those groups have that base covered far better than the characters could hope to.) Thus, the characters will likely have to open themselves to other, less obvious possibilities. Manticore

has only barely managed to avoid the scrutiny of his many pursuers and every close call makes him slip up just a little bit more. Likewise, a slightly less orthodox search party might be able to unearth its quarry.

While the characters run around in Skopje, they will occasionally be harassed by various people, both baseline and nova, who wield enough legitimate authority to freely do so. For the record, these operatives are searching for a dangerous felon tied to what could be a faction of potentially very dangerous Radocani loyalists. They are not taking any chances. By the same token, though, Skopje is not *crawling* with novas, but then again, neither can Addis Ababa be said to be "crawling with novas," even during major Team Tomorrow functions. Still, there *is* an unusual concentration of them, and the characters are likely to be accosted by at least a couple over the course of any given day in the city. Beyond this, of course, they will pass literally dozens of police checkpoints and small bands of roving baseline peacekeepers of various affiliations.

For the average Macedonian police officer, Russian military policeman or United Nations, Utopia or Directive baseline operative, use the following template:

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Appearance 2, Manipulation 2, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Bureaucracy 1, Command 1, Drive 1, Endurance 1, Firearms 2, Interrogation 1, Intimidation 1, Investigation 2, Linguistics 1, Martial Arts 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1

Willpower 4

And for the nova personnel present (most of whom are affiliated with Utopia, the Directive, the Russian government and/or DeVries) this should suffice:

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl or Martial Arts 3, Bureaucracy 1, Command 2, Drive 1, Endurance 3, Firearms 2, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 1, Investigation 3, Linguistics 2, Melee 1, Might 1, Resistance 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Powers: Mega-Strength • (Crush), Mega-Stamina • (Durability), four more dots of Mega-Attributes; one Level Two power at one or three dots of Level One powers

Quantum 2, Quantum Pool 24, Willpower 6, Taint 0-2

Storyteller characters of either template will likely be armed (probably with rifle and/or pistol and, for genuine police, a nightstick) and uniformed. Any of these characters will definitely have ready means on hand of contacting backup, should it prove necessary, and pretty much everyone but UN and Utopia affiliates have been authorized to use deadly force if necessary. Consider this fair warning for characters who wish to stupidly bulldoze their way through Storyteller characters with legitimate authority in this matter.

Day Two

Depending on how the characters go about it, their search could bear fruit even this early into the investigation. Manticore has already committed to the notion that he's not just going to stroll out of Macedonia without someone's help. A few near-encounters during the night have forced him to take more audacious measures, and he is, by the second day the characters are in Skopje, coming close enough to the surface to occasionally get a glimpse of the proceedings above-ground. Even with his low Node rating, Manticore has enough to sense other quantum signatures in his immediate vicinity and thus quickly take a rough head count of the novas in any given neighborhood. Tempting fate, Manticore will attempt to tail any novas he does locate — even if only briefly — in a desperate attempt to find potential nova allies.

If the characters seem to him (from the methods they use as they move around the city, whatever conversations of theirs he can listen in on and any clue he can get as to their overall attitude) to be perhaps a bit more reasonable (however the Storyteller chooses to define that) than the various other parties hunting for him, he may be inclined to approach them and ask for their help. Note, however, that the characters' actions would have to be exceptional for Manticore to put his life in their hands this early into the game. Still, he knows that it's only a matter of time before the bigwigs bring in some kind of investigative specialist who can blow through his abilities of misdirection and camouflage. The only case in which he absolutely will not do so is if the characters are members of the Directive, which scares the shit out of him.

If the characters do manage to make a favorable impression on Manticore, skip directly to "Talking to Manticore" (but keep in mind that, depending how long they hang around Skopje, the characters may still run into some of the other problems looming on the horizon).

Day Three

By the third day, police activity is frantic. Russian Confederation dignitaries, Macedonian and otherwise, are calling for the head of this terrorist. The Directive is eager to plumb his mind for evidence suggesting a possible uprising on the part of an as-yet-unknown faction of guerrillas loyal to Yaroslav Radocani. Patrols are stepped up, and the investigators get even pushier in their dealings with both the citizenry and the tourists. The authorities advocate shutting down all points of egress from Skopje until the culprit is located. The world is watching what's going on here, both in the news and on the personal OpSites of those currently residing in the area, and the pressure to perform at peak efficiency is intense. The various higher-ups in charge of the operation feel (not incorrectly) that a single nova elite — and not even a particularly famous one — is making fools of them all and that the world is snickering at their ineptitude. It does not sit well.

The characters get the definite sense that they are being eyed warily by the various "official" operatives in the

city. Even if they are here in some official capacity, agents of other affiliations will scrutinize them, escalating tensions inflame the mutual distrust that exists between many of these groups, aggravating the situation further. In fact, as this distrust begins to build, the characters should begin to suspect that the investigation is suffering for it. Everyone feels the pressure to outperform the other factions and be the first to bring Manticore to justice, distinguishing themselves before the eyes of the watching world.

Manticore could make contact with the characters at this point — though keep in mind that he's not stupid and he'll err, if at all, on the side of caution. If he chooses not to show himself, the day passes with a quiet, but by no means subtle, sense of building menace. Sooner or later something *will* happen. If, by some chance, the characters do get in touch with duChamp this day, skip ahead as above.

Day Four

If Manticore hasn't been located by this point (i.e., if the characters haven't found him and turned him over to whomever they perceive to be the proper authorities), things get ugly. The authorities seal off Skopje and all points of access, in and out, are closed until the fugitive is brought to justice. Most importantly, the ominous glances the characters got on day three turn into something more today. So long as the characters leave wherever they're staying and venture out into the streets, they will receive this rude surprise.

The characters are approached on the street by three persons in the distinctive blue-and-white Directive uniform (if the characters are with the Directive, they will be Utopians whom the characters recognize as having a good deal of on-scene authority) and asked to come to a local "facility" to answer "a few questions." Naturally, the characters may resist if they so choose, but they will be failing to comply with a legitimate agent of an organization that has every right to question them.

If the characters are brought in by the Directive, the interrogation is just that. The Directive doesn't really have a sterling reputation to maintain, and so, it can afford to take the kid gloves off. The characters will be isolated from one another and subjected to a battery of questions, some of which may seem to have little or nothing to do with the matter at hand (e.g., "Ms. Delgado, how many times have you used the substance known as soma?"). The idea is to make the ordeal trying and confusing and to give the characters the sense that their rights have just somehow been legally violated. The characters will each be subjected to surreptitious Telepathy (as per the Telepathy Extra) during the session, to verify their answers. A telepath *might* be able to sense this procedure in use, as might someone with exceptional psychic barriers (or Psychic Shield), at the Storyteller's discretion, but most will have no idea that someone is rifling through their heads. Lies will be pointed out, along with threats that a failure to comply truthfully and honestly with Directive operatives will result in *serious* consequences. In all likelihood, i.e., unless the characters behave completely in-

appropriately, no consequences, serious or otherwise, will befall them (too much press coverage), and any flippant or deceitful characters will instead simply be marked down by the Directive as "troublemakers" for future reference.

If the characters are Directive operatives brought in by Utopians, the process will run much more smoothly, and it truly will consist of only a few questions. The characters, however, as agents of the Directive, are really under no obligation to reply (or reply honestly), and Utopia ultimately can't do much more than plead with them for any help they could offer.

When the interrogation is over the characters are free to return to the streets of Skopje, where the next element of the mystery reveals itself.

Talking to Manticore

The characters have gotten here one of two ways. Either they have won enough of duChamp's trust through their actions that he is willing to speak with them, or they have not found him by Day Four. If it is the latter, then Manticore is about to be (conditionally) delivered to them. If it is the former, then the "delivery man" will instead make his presence known in the opening moments of the meeting.

If the characters are approached by duChamp, they will immediately know who he is (as his face has been plastered up on TV, OpNet sites and flyers everywhere). While he draws near, he keeps his hands in plain view and makes

no threatening gestures. If instead the characters have to wait it out until Day Four, then Manticore will be brought to them by a plain-looking young man of Indian descent calling himself "John Smith."

In the event that the characters make contact with Manticore at any point before Day Four, he will appear very haggard, sound nervous and smell like a septic tank. Just as the characters begin to speak with him (wherever in town they are; obviously someplace out of plain sight), they will be interrupted by the aforementioned "John Smith," who offers to bring them somewhere safe in the immediate vicinity. You may need to stress to them just how vulnerable they are out on the streets and how little choice they probably have in the matter. If need be, a near-encounter with some peacekeeping forces should be arranged. If the characters have to wait until Day Four, the scenario is pretty much the same, except that Smith finds them and offers to bring them to duChamp and that the elite has had an opportunity to bathe first. However it happens, the safe house is actually a run-down tenement building owned by an elderly widow who is using most of the apartments as boarding rooms for folks traveling on the cheap.

Manticore will, at this point, gladly inform the characters of his mission while Smith looks on impassively. DuChamp doesn't really have all that much to confide. He was paid a reasonable sum to cause a little trouble in the procession without actually hurting anybody (which,



if anyone has bothered to find out, he did not) and get out of the area. The only reason he's still here was a few too many red lights that kept him from getting out of town to hook up with his flight before security cracked down at the edges of the city. If it looks as though the conversation with Manticore is drawing to a close or promising to go on for a long time, Smith will excuse himself briefly. While gone, he will closely study a photo and reactivate the Copycat enhancement so as not to blow cover. Naturally, characters with exceptional powers of perception may be able to discover that Smith is not who he claims to be (not that he's really made a big secret out of that), but he will quickly dismiss any such conversation, claiming that it "isn't relevant."

After the characters are done talking to Manticore, Smith will ask duChamp to "wait with the car." He will then withdraw a hefty Manila envelope from a briefcase and hand it to one of the characters (if they haven't noticed it by this point, at least one of the characters will see that his hands are gloved). Inside, Smith claims, is evidence of a vast and powerful conspiracy within the DeVries Agency itself. Smith doesn't know who is responsible, as they are obviously extremely adept at covering their tracks. If pressed for information as to how he can be so certain of the existence of this conspiracy, Smith will let out the fact that he is an internal affairs operative with DeVries, and it's his job to remain unknown by the rank-and-file, reporting only to Anna DeVries herself, about potential problems just such as this.

If the characters wish to continue speaking with Smith for a little while, he'll hang around just long enough to address any major points they might turn up while thumbing through the documents. However, he does intend to get out of Skopje as soon as possible. The one thing he will stress to the characters is that they must not, under any circumstances, share the information they've got with anyone, including their superiors. If they do, it will likely mean that the conspiracy, already so well entrenched and hidden within DeVries will simply change its tactics (Smith is certain that whoever is behind all of this has at least a few contacts within *all* of the major nova affiliations), only to resurface later in a new incarnation. No, this must be dealt with on the sly by a small group of novas who will have the discretion to see to the matter personally. If the characters persist in trying to figure out why they should keep this to themselves, Smith will inform them that, should all else fail, the company will likely throw in with the conspirators. With the number of elites effectively controlled by DeVries, Smith asserts, even the combined efforts of the world's peacekeeping authorities and other mercenary agencies would be hard-pressed to stop them. Effectively, DeVries needs someone to do its dirty work in silence (Smith will not put it in such terms) and is threatening to play the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" card if the characters don't agree to play by its rules.

Of course, DeVries is willing to sweeten the pot. Just as they expect the characters to play ball, they too understand the rules of the game. Lucrative contracts, PR spin doctors, sizable checks and the like can all be arranged at

Breaking the Silence

Despite the warnings Smith has levied against seeking outside assistance on this matter, there is really very little keeping the characters from deciding to go blabbing to their superiors, if any, or to the public in general. Smith was aware of this and was playing a hand borne of desperation. He didn't want to do it, but he simply didn't perceive any alternative.

Sensible characters should realize the myriad problems that will ensue if they go to the authorities with this knowledge. Utopia or the Directive, for instance, would probably launch a witch-hunt against the DeVries Agency, one for which DeVries would retaliate in kind. And while it is true that both of those organizations are well-equipped to deal with most aggressors, taking on a company specializing in contracting services for nova mercenaries is, at best, stupid and, at worst, suicidal. Aberrants and Terats might be inclined to speak to others they trust, but how far can that ultimately get them in either organization. The Aberrant movement has enough wars to fight right now, and the characters are probably the only ones they can spare for such an undertaking. Terats, on the other hand, may certainly sympathize, but few would be willing to run off on the word of a "mysterious benefactor" who has painted this picture of a conspiracy in such broad and inconclusive strokes. Further, Terats, if they put any stock in their own philosophy, will not go to baseline authorities or to nova authority figures who answer to baseline "masters."

If the characters insist on talking, then certain consequences will result. First, Smith will be dead within two weeks, depriving them of any help "he" might grant later in the scenario. The only evidence will be the mysterious murder of a heretofore-unknown Taiwanese nova, Veronica Hwang, with a message scrawled, in Spanish, in the woman's blood, "First Smith, Then You." Needless to say, this will be a heavily publicized affair. Also, one or more of the characters' superiors (or others they might have confided in) will end up dead. A character or two might also lose a close friend or a family member to boot. After that, you can choose to go one of two routes.

First, if you wish to continue on with "Dominion" as is, you can simply rule that the conspiracy goes underground for anywhere from several weeks to a couple of years. A thorough investigation of the DeVries Agency on the part of several ranking members of various UN-appointed committees turns up nothing, leaving Szlaniskovich free to recalibrate his scheme and take another crack at it later. In this case, you will probably want to have had the original objective, as a possible point for future reference, have been somewhere other than the Ukraine.

Second, if you want a more aggressive take on the subject, you can have a global peacekeeping agency of your choice crack down on DeVries, even as the conspirators step up the pace of their plans. In this case, it will probably become a race between the characters and the conspirators, with the characters working to erode the conspirators' cover and thwart their plans, even as Szlaniskovich and his elites continue with ever bigger and bolder endeavors. This option, naturally, will pretty much toss the cloak-and-dagger intrigue aspects of "Dominion" out the window, but it is there if you want to go with it.

And as with everything else, if you can think of a better way to handle it in your series, more power to you.

the drop of a hat. Be willing to tailor the rewards to the characters. While a member of the Directive could conceivably be persuaded to embark on this covert crusade with a promise of detailed tactical information on second- and third-world nations, a staunch Utopian is not likely to find it adequate recompense.

If the characters want to know why Smith has chosen them, he will confide that, all variables accounted for and all odds being just about even, given the way he saw them handle themselves throughout the "Manticore situation," they strike him as the best possible candidates for this operation. (Naturally, this takes into account the fact that the characters, hopefully, comported themselves with more intelligence and class than the Big Brother-like activity currently going on in the streets.) In reality, it's a bit more complicated than that, but characters who can sense deception will know that Smith is speaking enough truth that he himself believes what he's saying.

When Smith leaves, he tells the characters that he doesn't anticipate ever seeing them again and wishes them the best of luck in their new endeavor. Within the envelope, the characters will find various esoteric notes referring to codenamed places and people, odd connections drawn, in very wordy detail, between long-completed DeVries operations and strings of weird fund allocations, phone bills, OpNet logins and more. To a character without the Mega-Intelligence enhancements of either Mental Prodigy: Investigative or Tactical, deciphering the notes is going to require an extended Intelligence roll (25 successes required, one roll per day, with a botch negating all previously accrued successes). Characters with one enhancement only need 15 successes, and ones with both only need 10. The Speed Reading Mega-Intelligence enhancement allows one roll to be made every six hours. The long and the short of it is that the character who successfully wades through the ponderous notes will discern that Smith has proof of a conspiracy but cannot point out its membership or pinpoint its projected goal as yet. However, he can be reasonably certain that the conspiracy intends to engage in a global-scale incident of aggression. Further, he goes on to draw up in great detail just how disastrous all of this could end up being if it either went public or somehow got back to the conspirators.

After Smith and duChamp depart, the characters are free to do as they wish. The manhunt for "Manticore" will continue on, fruitlessly, for some time. Several months down the line, Robert duChamp will return to the elite circuit with a new identity and an expertly redesigned gimmick. So it is, with more than a few questions and no real sense of where to go from here, the characters move into the next phase.

"John Smith"

Background: "John Smith" doesn't exist, and that's just the way "he" likes it. "He" is anyone "he" needs to be for as long as it takes to do "his" job and vanish. That's why the DeVries Agency keeps "him" on retainer as a human tactical supercomputer, monitoring possible abuses

of power within the company itself. "He" is a failsafe maintained (and known about) by Anna DeVries and a handful of others who lurk at DeVries' highest levels of power.

Image: "Smith," in her natural state, is an unassuming-looking Taiwanese woman — pretty, certainly, but no one who would stand out too much. With her powers, however, she looks like whomever she pleases.

Roleplaying Hints: Maintain your secrecy, and break this conspiracy. This is the sort of thing the company keeps you around for. Keep conversation brief, professional and impersonal. Give anyone you talk to the impression that you will not tolerate anyone trying to get close to you, figure you out or otherwise compromise your mission. Ideally, you will simply fade away after this is all done, and no one will really be any the wiser.

Gear: Nanotech mosquitoes (see **Aberrant: Elites**, p. 74) loaded with mox, eufiber fatigues, flak jacket

Nature: Analyst

Allegiance: DeVries

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Appearance 3, Manipulation 5, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics 5, Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Biz 3, Bureaucracy 5, Command 1, Computer 5, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Engineering 2, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Interrogation 4, Intrusion 5, Intimidation 3, Investigation 5, Legerdemain 3, Linguistics 4 (Native: Mandarin; Cambodian, English, Spanish, Swahili), Martial Arts (Tai Chi) 4, Melee 2, Pilot 3, Rapport 4, Resistance 5, Science 2, Stealth 5, Style 2, Subterfuge 5

Backgrounds: Backing 5 (DeVries), Cipher 5, Contacts 5, Dormancy 3, Eufiber 3, Node 3, Resources 5, Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 9, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Dexterity • (Catfooted), Mega-Perception • (Quantum Attunement), Mega-Intelligence ••••• (Analyze Weakness, Eidetic Memory, Enhanced Memory, Mathematical Savant, Mental Prodigy: Investigative and Tactical, Speed Reading), Mega-Wits ••• (Lie Detector), Mega-Appearance • (Copycat, Mr. Nobody), Luck •••

Robert

"Manticore" duChamp

Background: Robert duChamp is really just doing his job. Unfortunately, he, unlike his associate for the mission, has also had the misfortune of missing his flight out of Macedonia due to a tightening of security at the airport. He would have tried the border by now, but he's too smart to think that he can just waltz out without someone picking him off. At least if he stays in an inhabited place (like Skopje), he knows that he's much less likely to be spirited off to some gulag to be tortured, killed and buried in a ditch in Siberia. If approached by reasonable people (hopefully the characters), Manticore will be happy to explain the nature of his contract; scare the Macedonians without hurting anybody, collect paycheck, go home. He can't go into any more detail



than that. Mercenaries, he will point out, aren't paid to wonder about their orders.

Gear: Ditched it while attempting to flee.

Nature: Survivor

Allegiance: DeVries

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Appearance 3, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Command 1, Computer 2, Drive 2, Endurance 4, Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 2, Linguistics 2 (Native: English; French, Russian), Martial Arts 1, Melee 2, Might 3, Pilot 2, Resistance 4, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 2, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (other elites), Attunement 2, Cipher 2, Contacts 1, Eufiber 2, Node 1, Resources 4

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 6, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity • (Flexibility), Mega-Stamina •• (Adaptability, Durability), Mega-Wits • (Quickness), Armor •••, Body Modification (Stinger; sprouted at will, inflicts Str+2 lethal damage, can inject his Poison), Poison •••, Shroud •

Fire It Up

While the characters take a little bit of time for themselves after the oppressive atmosphere of Skopje (depending on what's going on in your series, you might even want to run a few episodes that have little or nothing to do with "Dominion"), the conspirators are preparing to make their push. Provided nobody talked about Smith or his revelations, the conspirators still have no idea that they are up against someone who is waiting for them to make a move. (Even Szlaniskovich is not highly placed enough within the DeVries Agency to know about Smith or his functions.)

Any inquiries the characters have made into the matter are, if they're lucky, stonewalled and taken no fur-

ther. DeVries takes the attitude that "there is no conspiracy within our company, and even if there were, we wouldn't tell you." Likewise, other searches will be in vain. There's just too much ground to cover for the characters to get a handle on what's going on quite yet. Though this will probably leave them feeling frustrated, Szlaniskovich isn't about to go slipping up just to oblige any potential threats to his dream.

However, in mid-July, 2014, Szlaniskovich, with the crushing weight of his charm and social graces, manages to convince certain among his peers within DeVries' regional management to step up the number of elite contracts being approved. With tensions as they are in India, Africa and South America, DeVries stands to turn a massive profit. In fact, he even offers to put his fellow regional managers in touch with important military and political figures of his acquaintance (many of whom he has "encouraged" to think about martial solutions to their problems with that selfsame charm and grace) who would be amenable to such an arrangement. Szlaniskovich is friendly with an extensive list of luminaries, a by-product of his years spent in the circles of the beautiful and powerful, and he is in a position to spark full-scale wars, as opposed to the typical ongoing skirmishes DeVries generally deals with.

The idea goes like this: Turn up the heat between India and Utopia to spark a confrontation. Next, play into Utopia's commitment to the issue to start conflicts in South America and Africa. Of course, Utopia has strongholds in or near both areas, but they will obviously be understaffed while dealing with things in India. The Directive, which has little practical power in either South America or Africa, will probably opt to keep out of the mix as much as possible and instead watch for potential fallout in the First World. If it *does* step up to bat, then Szlaniskovich will up the ante with a rebellion among member states of the Russian Confederation, but that's a card he'd prefer not to play unless he has to. All the pieces are in place, and the former elite literally has the power, with a few well-placed phone calls and (especially) some conversations in person, to set some real wars in motion.

On August 9th, 2014, India formally declares its dispute with the United Nations and with Project Utopia over the matter of "crimes against religious freedom." Fortunately for the characters, Utopia's problems with "India Syndrome" factor prominently into the notes Smith gave them. He foresaw this as a potential weakness that the conspirators could exploit and strongly believed that the conspirators might try to use the growing rift between India and the UN to take over. Despite India's huge nova population, Smith believed it to be an ideal target. Many of its novas are highly disorganized and lack a perspective on events going on even four villages away. Some of the rural novas might even *welcome* a new government, provided it was willing to preserve their way of life and defend it from outside interference. Utopia, given its recent problems with India, could be reluctant to assist the nation (nor would

India be overly enthusiastic about accepting any assistance proffered by Utopia).

Now, bear in mind that this is not a declaration of war, simply of a nation's disapproval. However, this does mean that the United Nations in general, and Project Utopia in particular, are now obligated to send representatives to India to attempt to defuse the situation. If the characters are with Utopia, they will not have too much trouble getting themselves assigned to the diplomatic corps (as not too many people are clamoring for the job). Otherwise, the most they'll probably need to do, depending on their affiliation, is a bit of minor string pulling to secure a position "monitoring" affairs in India.

So, whether with considerable fanfare or utmost secrecy, the characters arrive at the airport in Calcutta.

Day One (Arrival)

The first thing that will strike the characters about India (provided none of them are from there) is the sheer concentration of people everywhere. Calcutta is home to literally millions. India has the largest population of any nation on Earth in 2014, and nowhere in the cities can one escape from the uncomfortable realities of that fact.

The biggest problem the characters will face now is figuring out just where and how the conspirators intend to make a move in India. The possibilities are nearly limitless, and there is nothing in the notes that specifically details what the conspirators might do here, only that India would be a favorable potential location for them. Let them get settled wherever they're intending to stay. On the way to their destination, however, any of the characters who are exceptionally high-profile (with international celebrity status) will be subjected by some among the throng to literal displays of worship and adoration. To many Hindus, novae represent spirits that have achieved penultimate awareness and thus power over the material world within the course of samsara: the continual cycle of life, death and reincarnation. Some may find the notion disturbing, while others may consider it quite appealing.

Day Two (The Meeting)

The characters' second day in the city opens with oppressive heat and no more answers than the previous day. If the characters leave their hotel, one will be approached by a small boy who will tell her in Hindi that her help is needed. If she doesn't understand him, the boy will concentrate as through struggling to remember something and begin to stumble through the same message in a very rough pidgin of her primary language. Further, the boy says that she should bring the others and that he has a map to show her how to get where she is needed. All told, this will probably be weird enough for the character to feel it warrants at least an investigation.

If anyone flies or possesses quantum-enhanced spatial perceptions, the map will be easy to figure out; for a quick sketch, it is well-drawn, fairly accurate in scale, and it clearly represents prominent landmarks. In worst case scenario, at ordinary human walking speed, it is about four

days from Calcutta, in one of the surrounding farming communities. The village is small, isolated and rural enough not to be a part of Calcutta proper but close enough for the farmers to come to market with whatever meager surplus they might be able to grow. The characters, of course, will probably be able to get there quicker (at the very least, they can rent a car).

Upon their arrival, the characters will note that the entire village has been prepared as though for a celebration. The villagers have donned their best clothing (for many of them, this probably consists of nothing more than a threadbare but reasonably intact set of clean clothes), and the smell of savory, if exotic, food lingers in the air. As the characters come into the center of town, a loud cheer resounds. The villagers who emerge for their homes look genuinely overjoyed to see the characters here. The boy runs to clutch at the skirt of a middle-aged woman, who gestures for the characters to follow her to the far end of the village. If any of the characters speak Hindi or possess Telepathy, they will understand her welcoming greetings and her wishes for them to accompany her to see the patron of the village.

Just overlooking the village's meager tributary of the Ganges is a small and simple home. Flowers are hung from the outer walls and burning sticks of incense surround the dirt road leading to the front door, leaving only a narrow path. The woman knocks loudly on the door and is invited to enter by a forceful, yet friendly, voice. She opens the door to admit the characters but remains behind, shutting it behind them.

Within the house, the characters discover a four-armed man, sitting cross-legged on a large pillow. Sticks of incense burn in a circle around him, trails of smoke coiling around his seafoam-green skin, and the walls are covered in various examples of Hindu artwork, some old, some new, of varying degrees of quality. In the most extreme cases, one or two crayon drawings are to be found, as well as a small, gold-framed painting of Shiva that looks (to those with an eye for such things) to be a well-preserved 100 years old. His garb is rich, but worn, as though much of it is in need of repair or replacement.

The man offers an elaborate greeting in Hindi and waits for the characters to respond. If no one speaks Hindi, he gestures for them to simply talk, even if it's only for one of them to say, "I don't understand." If this is the case, he then indicates that the characters should continue to speak. Once about 20 or so words have been said, the man will make a Mega-Intelligence Linguistic Genius roll (if no one present speaks Hindi but one or more of the characters are linguistic geniuses as well, the whole process will, naturally, go much faster.) Provided he succeeds, he will then be able to use enough words to tell the characters to just keep talking at him, a message he will supplement with Holo images if need be (a tactic he will continue to use throughout the conversation whenever he gets to a concept too complex to express with his rudimentary understanding).



Once a functional dialogue is established, the man, whose gives his name as Krishnamurti Pradmurabpan, informs the characters that he serves this village as a bridge to the gods, a kind of demigod. He goes on to say that his visions of the future protected him from an assassin a few days ago. He foresaw a man and a woman stealing into his village to murder him in the night. By using his great power of *maya*, Pradmurabpan forged a duplicate of himself to receive the assassin's blow in his stead, but his deception was seen for what it was and a fierce battle ensued. It ended, Pradmurabpan reveals, with himself using potent powers of illusion to temporarily trap the woman, who blazed like the sun, within the prison of her own evil mind. The man, no match for the village's protector in a head-on combat, spirited the comatose woman away through a hole in the air itself (a feat, Pradmurabpan will admit, he himself is familiar with.) As he meditated on the events of the night, however, Pradmurabpan foresaw that his own part in this was not yet done and that he had to convey a message to others who could turn aside a great army of wickedness before its plans could be made complete. Thus, he sent the boy to Calcutta (his own presence would have elicited too many questions from others) and told him where in the city to find those with whom he must speak.

The characters almost assuredly have questions. Someone is probably going to ask how he could have sent a small child to a city like Calcutta by himself. With a sin-

cere smile, Pradmurabpan will simply reply that he had foreseen everything about the boy's journey, including the fact that he would return unharmed. And his "visions"? Those, the nova responds, are gifts from the gods which he himself does not fully understand. He knows that he can see into the future (though events in the remote future are often couched in riddle and symbolism) and occasionally, when the situation warrants it, into the past and that those things he sees will always come to pass, though *not* always in the fashion he imagines they will. Anything asked about the "army of wickedness" will prompt Pradmurabpan to speak about a dark force that is rising to grip the Earth in its unyielding fist. He talks of a small group of men and women, gifted by the gods, but selfish and cruel, who are slowly building a throne of misery that shall cast a shadow upon all things. Pradmurabpan also warns that these evil people have killed others like himself, that their wickedness should keep the attentions of a great giant whose duty it is to protect the world and they might freely bring evil to lands of jungles and fire.

If the characters persist in knowing more about this latter part of Pradmurabpan's revelations, he tells them that it will have to wait for after the feast. The "feast" is pretty meager vegetarian fare, but it is about all these people can spare. Even without nova-sized appetites, these people are obviously malnourished. Pradmurabpan, however, does not eat. From the way the proceedings go,

the characters would probably have to guess that he never does. When dinner is concluded, Pradmurabpan tells the characters that they must travel to a faraway jungle land, where ancient kingdoms once thrived. He says that the lands are war-torn and that selfish men feed on pain in these places. Characters with a reasonable grasp on current events will probably figure that Pradmurabpan is likely speaking of Africa, South America or Southeast Asia (though they will know that the former two, with the current geopolitical climate, are likelier than the latter), but he will not be able to clarify the issue further. Instead, he simply tells the characters to inform him of where they wish to go and that it will be the right choice.

The characters will probably need some time to discuss what they want to do and where they want to go. If need be, Pradmurabpan will offer them the hospitality of the village for as long as they need to decide, but he stresses that "what happened here, what you thought you foresaw in your heavy book, was simply one part of a greater whole that they come ever closer to realizing." Depending on the characters' affiliation, they may have a tough time justifying why they've up and vanished, but that may just need to wait for later. The lead is fresh and, thanks to Pradmurabpan, they may have an opportunity to head the enemy off at the pass. However, this window may not last long enough to make reports and file (and be approved) for personal time, especially not in light of the escalating problems in India, now that various "village novas" are turning up dead and the nation wants answers.

Regardless, though, now the characters must make a choice.

Krishnamurti Pradmurabpan

Background: Krishnamurti Pradmurabpan is venerated by the people of his tiny farming village as a conduit to the gods. He does not feel a strong identity with any particu-



lar deity, so he considers himself a vessel for them all. He uses his great powers to protect and aid the people of his village; sending fantastic creatures to help with irrigation, predicting the weather, and gently placing the terminally ill into worlds free of pain until they pass from this one. The townsfolk would die for Pradmurabpan and he for them.

Gear: Only the clothing on his back.

Nature: Visionary

Allegiance: The Cycle of Creation

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 4, Manipulation 4, Charisma 4

Abilities: Arts 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 4, Command 4, Endurance 3, Etiquette 3, Intimidation 3, Melee 1, Might 2, Perform 2, Rapport 4, Resistance 4, Style 2, Subterfuge 1, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Allies 3 (the village), Attunement 2, Cipher 4, Followers 5, Influence 1, Node 4

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 7, Taint 5 (Colored Skin [pale seafoam green])

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Lifter), Mega-Dexterity • (Flexibility), Mega-Stamina •• (Adaptability, Regeneration), Mega-Perception •• (Quantum Attunement), Mega-Intelligence • (Linguistic Genius), Mega-Appearance • (Awe-Inspiring), Mega-Charisma • (Dreadful Mien), Body Modification (2 Extra Arms), Force Field •, Holo 2, Mirage •••, Pretercognition ••, Quantum Construct •, Warp •

The Journey

Where the characters end up wanting to go, Pradmurabpan will gladly send them there, using his Warp power. Don't despair; there's something for them to do no matter where they go. As Pradmurabpan said, regardless of what they choose, it will be the right choice. They will be lauded with some small tokens of the village's appreciation for heeding the words of their semi-divine benefactor and will be sent off with genuine good cheer and wishes of good luck. With that, then, the warp is opened to the destination of the characters' choice.

Africa

For characters who decide on Africa, a strange sight greets their passage through the warp. Preternatural direction sense will inform a character that the group has arrived somewhere in the Congo, but the view on all sides is that of the inside of a low-walled military compound. The base looks old and in a terrible state of disrepair. Trees are sprouting up from within the compound itself, and the elements have taken their toll on the buildings. A family of monkeys has taken up residence in one of the taller trees. All told, the place looks like the relic of a long-forgotten conflict. A cursory inspection, however, will reveal, in one of the nearby buildings, in a slightly better state of repair, a peculiar find. Ten used military ration con-

tainers, now being expertly cleaned out by a colony of ants, are littered about. A small boulder, obviously carried in from outside, is the only seat in sight.

If the characters search the area, though, they may discover still more. An Investigation roll, at a +4 difficulty, can yield a find of great importance. (Characters with Mental Prodigy: Investigative are going to get their points' worth here.) All of this can, of course, be modified by such powers as Mega-Perception, Luck and even Animal Mastery ("Say, monkey, have you seen anything unusual going on around here lately?") If a character does manage to successfully make this roll, he will notice a single piece of paper in the far corner of the room.

On this piece of ruled notebook paper, in a nearly illegible scrawl are a few codes ("A4R13," etc.), some of which are connected to one another with lines and arrows, some of which stand alone. Also on the piece of paper are the words "Both," "Diecast," and "South." Nowhere on the paper is found any explanation or context for any of this.

If the characters don't seem to be getting the point and you're not so cruel as to want to make this a wasted trip, you may of course make the matter a little more obvious (if they're not making an effort, though, let them suffer). If one of the monkeys is playing with the paper, for example, it's likely to be a bit more noticeable. Once they do get the paper (provided they actually do), it's up to you where to go from here for the now. The characters might choose to investigate the area, but none of the conspirators are about (Megalith left that page here by mistake about two weeks ago). If you want, they could run into other elites, or perhaps even baseline soldiers, who may or may not take kindly to folks snooping about in their war zone. (Use the templates found in "Strike the Match," buffed up a bit to reflect the soldiering lifestyle.) Ultimately, however, the characters are prob-

ably going to want to get cracking on that piece of paper. (There are no guarantees that it means *anything* whatsoever, but it's just about all they've got.)

South America

If the characters choose to go instead to South America, they will be in for a rude shock. Emerging from the warp, the characters will find themselves in the midst of a gunfight between Medellín cartel soldiers (as per the soldier/police template under "Strike the Match") and one nova elite, clad in a duster and wide-brimmed hat and armed with six-shooters. One or more of the characters may recognize the nova as "The Kid," an up-and-comer on the elite circuit at the 147 spot on N!'s elite charts (once again, just use the nova peacekeeper template, adjusted as follows: Firearms 5; Mega-Dexterity ••• [Accuracy], Mega-Perception • [Ultrapерipheral Perception], Armor ••, Claws •• [Kinetic Discharge]). The characters are in no immediate danger (the fighting is just about 30 meters north of them), but they will be within a few seconds of arriving if they don't camouflage themselves, display enough power to drive off one or both sides of the combat, or use their powers to calm the situation down.

If the characters either don't interfere in any way or side with the nova, all of the Medellín thugs are driven off or killed within a few minutes. If the characters attack the elite instead, the soldiers take the opportunity to flee. Regardless of how they react, when he has a moment to speak, The Kid will try to get the characters' attention and assure them that he means them no harm. If the characters do manage to drive off The Kid, he'll soon come back around, comically waving a white flag, and asking to talk.

If the characters give The Kid a chance to communicate, he will seem grateful for the company of someone who isn't actively trying to kill him and will be eager to chat. Sooner or later, he'll inquire as to whether any of the char-

Now that the characters have the piece of paper, what the hell do they do with it? They are taking a longshot by even trusting that this note means anything and likely don't have the contacts within the DeVries Agency to even attempt to discern if any of this has any significance. Fortunately for them (if he's still alive, that is), Smith is ready and willing to help. Within a couple of days of leaving the Congo, which could end up being quite an adventure in and of itself, depending on how charitable you're feeling, one of the characters will be contacted by phone (preferably, if the characters belong to Utopia or the Directive, while she's not "at work") by a woman claiming to be "John Smith." She will ask to meet at a neutral and safe location, anywhere on Earth, of the character's choosing, in order to "help all of you with what whatever was so urgent that it made you vanish like that" (her Luck and Mental Prodigy: Investigative powers certainly came in handy for this one.)

Should the characters accept, they will be greeted, after a short wait, by an older Hispanic gentleman in a suit (who will, once again, show up as "not like he looks" to character with exceptional analytic powers). He will make a bit of small talk, being sure to allude back to the characters' first meeting with "John Smith" and ask to see what was so important. If the characters comply, he will rise and prepare to leave, telling them that more information will be forthcoming soon. If asked how soon, he will smile resignedly and shrug.

If the characters do not choose to go with Smith on this one or if, for whatever reason, he is dead, then they will have to decipher the paper on their own, if at all. Through *extremely* difficult (at least 20 successes on an extended Investigation roll, with one roll being made per week of game time), it can be done, especially by characters with the intelligence to piece together obscure logical connections and/or exceptional abilities of infiltration. Also, those with the good sense (and money and contacts) to bribe people within the company can get places. Such characters *might* be able to penetrate DeVries' layers of secrecy and figure out what the page means in the greater context of this covert mission.



acters has seen “this gorgeous redhead with a fire fetish” named Cinder. Apparently, she was working on the other side of the deal (with the Medellín, according to his tip off from some of the higher-ups in DeVries), but she never showed. That, he goes on to say, would have been weird enough in and of itself, but he also discovered, just before the firefight broke out, that the cartel was moving mite, rather than any cocaine-based product, something which is almost unheard-of for the Medellín. The Kid admits that he just wanted to talk to her beforehand and stage a good show for both employers (he’ll say that he can’t specifically tell who his bosses are for this job, but it goes something like “Confirmed Idjits Association”) and then pull a mutual retreat so no one got seriously hurt.

The Kid is very friendly and personable (even if he does come across like a handsome young gunslinger cliché), and if the characters seem interested in Cinder’s whereabouts, he will offer to look into what happened to her as soon as he gets back to civilization if they agree to help him round up the Medellín who fled the scene and destroy the small crates of mite they’re carrying. He doesn’t care if they are killed or just knocked out, so long as the product is gotten rid of. If the characters decide to help out, it will be a mere

two days later, back in Bogota, when The Kid proves himself as good as his word and discovers that she was suddenly withdrawn from the mission, with no explanation offered, to instead attend a formal dinner with some of the second-tier Medellín leadership, along with another elite named Megalith.

Provided that the characters worked with The Kid and that Smith is still alive, they will get a call and an offer similar to the one found above under Africa. Smith will be similarly dodgy and will promise to get in touch again when he’s got something more to report. If Smith is dead, The Kid will do a little bit of searching for the characters himself (though he will offer the information to the “prettiest filly” or “chummiest-seeming” among the characters.)

Southeast Asia

The most outside possibility, should the characters choose to take it, yields up what may be the best clue yet. The characters find themselves warped inexplicably into an alley in Bangkok. They will probably spend a moment wondering why they hell they ended up here. Suddenly, however, two deep male voices burst out into laughter that sounds to be just outside the alleyway, on a first-floor balcony. The mouth-watering smell



of Thai curry wafts into the alley as the two men continue to carry on a conversation in Russian.

Provided the characters take the necessary measures (getting very close to the conversation without being seen, possessing extremely refined hearing or otherwise having some means of discerning what's going on without compromising their location), they will be able to listen in as the two men (one of whom is plainly not Russian, but probably Thai) discuss "future support," "distribution of resources" and "solidifying legitimacy." All told, it sounds very much like an "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine" kind of arrangement.

If any of the characters have Intuition, Premonition or similar powers, let them know, unreservedly, that showing their faces to the men dining just outside the alley would likely be the worst thing they've ever done and would almost assuredly be the last. A near-palpable sense of life-threatening danger crouches at the end of the alley. Characters who wish to sense for quantum with Node will sense a quantum source, while those using the Quantum Attunement enhancement will feel what is probably one of the most potent quantum signatures they've ever experienced. Just outside the alley, speaking with one of his old friends from his time as an elite, is Radu Szlaniskovich, and if he senses in any way that his operation is compromised, he will fight with all of his considerable power, to

the intended end of killing anyone who might be able to derail his dream.

If the characters have the intelligence to wait and bide their time quietly, then they will find their patience rewarded. About 10 minutes after they arrive, both men will rise, embrace and bid one another farewell. The Russian will refer to the Thai as "General," and the other will

If All Else Fails...

You may notice that, while the characters have a chance to really make some headway here, they can also royally screw things up if they're not careful. How were you to know that the Terat was going to vaporize The Kid on sight? You can handle this in one of two ways. One: Find a way to get the information to the characters by an alternate means. Two: Let them miss the boat, as people do in real life when they blow their chance. The first option will probably make the story run smoother, while the second will actually force the characters to deal with the consequences of their actions (and make it *really* hard to complete this scenario as-is). It's up to you. If you don't mind the extra homework, though, we'd strongly recommend the latter. When people get the feeling that their actions do not impact on predetermined success, then they either get very cocky and difficult to manage or they get fed up with being railroaded through a world where their decisions do not influence the direction of their lives.

return his goodbyes to “Szlaniskovich.” Shortly thereafter, both will be gone and the characters will feel that mantle of danger lifted from them. Once more, Smith will arrange to make contact with the characters shortly thereafter, as above. Also as above, he will then vanish to do his research, with a promise to get back to the characters as soon as possible. And if for whatever reason the characters choose to or have to go it alone on this one, it will be at least as hard, if not harder, making any headway as it would be if the characters did likewise under Africa.

Reaping the Whirlwind

Regardless of where the characters choose to go and how things wrap up, they are probably back to wherever they want to be by around August 20th, 2014, at the latest. Now, the characters have a bit of time to regroup (unless, of course, they missed the clue and/or Smith is dead, in which case they’re probably scrambling frantically to figure out what to do next) and make plans. Clever characters, should they have somehow missed out on any of the opportunities to pick up clues, might go back to speak with Pradmurabpan (who will be able to provide some information, though not as much and as clearly as Smith can).

Assuming Smith is alive and in possession of whatever intelligence the characters have gathered, he will call back after about a week. If the characters went to either Africa or South America, they will be informed that Cinder, Diecast and Megalith (regardless of which destination they chose) are the names of three elites involved in the conspiracy and that it may go as high as one or more of the regional managers of the agency. Further, Smith goes on to urge the characters to let the higher-ups within the organization of their affiliation know what is going on. This is no longer a time for secrecy. If the characters went to Southeast Asia, Smith replies, via an encrypted OpNet e-mail, “Situation desperate. DeVries Europe East Regional Coordinator Radu Szlaniskovich, formerly Impaler, behind conspiracy. Tell your superiors. They have my location. This will be my last communication. Ultra-Violence, Cinder, BgTimeedieczx.” Astute observers (or anyone who has ever really needed to send an e-mail in haste) will undoubtedly note that “John’s” obvious final spelling error was the product of rushing to get the message sent. About two minutes later, a new message shows up in the character’s inbox; “Now you die.”

Nothing the characters may bring to DeVries (if they even choose to go to the agency at this point) will move them. The characters will be stonewalled at every turn. DeVries wants to see how this issue settles itself, and they’re inclined to bet on their own horse. In fact, the agency itself begins calling in favors owed by the most powerful member states of the United Nations to stay out of this affair. This is not because the DeVries Agency particularly cares about Szlaniskovich and the conspirators (beyond the capital they’ve generated). It has much more to do with the tantalizing prospect of putting a young nation in their debt, and the Russian Confederation hasn’t

generated much business lately. This new development, on the other hand, most definitely would. Still, this gives the Storyteller ample opportunity to throw the characters into intrigue-laden situations, as they realize the potential scope and enormity of the conspiracy. DeVries is willing to be a part of this, but who else could be involved? After the characters let on that they know this (and have known this), there may be repercussions. Will the characters’ mentor be upset that they didn’t let her in on what they knew? And of course, once this conspiracy becomes (more) common knowledge, what is to keep others from throwing their support behind it?

The characters will have a couple of weeks to work through all of this (assimilating what they now know, dealing with the fallout of revealing their hidden knowledge and/or running this campaign of counter-intrigue against the conspirators, the DeVries Agency and God knows who else.) No matter what the characters might do, however, all of the conspirators are incognito for the time being. It’s as if the Earth has swallowed them up while they prepare for whatever else they’re now planning. They know they’ve been compromised, and they’re not about to take any pointless risks or tip their hand.

A World United

The characters will come into this in one of two ways. The first (and preferable) option is that they have spilled the beans about the conspiracy. The second is that an enterprising young woman from Szlaniskovich’s secretarial pool recently figured out enough that she filed a discrete plea to the United Nations to look into the matter (as snooping in the boss’ office got her a hell of a lot more than she figured she’d find). UN contacts within DeVries then turned up things they wished they hadn’t (assisted by Smith if he survived or by one or more of the members of the Board of Directors who didn’t like this turn of events otherwise). One way or another, though, it is time to do something about this.

The time frame from here on in is left pretty loose so that you can decide when, between this point and year’s end, everything happens. It may be that the characters in your game need a bit more time for intrigue, planning or whatever, than the characters in someone else’s series. Generally, we will be assuming that this part of the scenario takes place shortly after August 20th, but that is no more set in stone than you need it to be.

The “world” that ends up united by this, however, may be nothing more than the sum total of Aberrants currently involved in that movement. Depending on how big the faction is that the characters belong to, the number of people they bring together might also number in the millions. More likely than not, though, it is probably the case that the United Nations will be involved in this affair. (Regardless of the characters’ affiliation, you may want to find a reason for this to occur, as it dramatically increases the epic score of “Dominion”; everything looks bigger when all the power players in the world are watching). Utopians and Directive

agents will almost assuredly find themselves called upon by the United Nations, but don't discount the storytelling possibilities of a pack of known Terats standing before the representatives of the member states. Expediency sometimes makes for strange bedfellows.

So, whether to Caestus Pax, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Sophia Rousseau, Divis Mal or any combination of the above and then some (taking logic into account), the characters will be asked to speak about what they know. Many others, all of whom possess scattered fragments of the puzzle, will also step up to bat, but no one has had as much and as intimate contact with the conspiracy as the characters. Now is their time to shine. The questions will keep coming, and the characters will be pressed for every detail they know. There will be criticism and many heated arguments over plans that are proposed, modified and thrown out, only to be suggested once again in an alternate form. Many cooks are hard at work spoiling the broth.

This can be a golden moment for one or more characters to step forward and demand decisive action. By now, the characters probably have a sense that all the talking in the world isn't going to stop a group of people who have proven themselves unafraid to act. Here, at the pivotal point, the characters can make legends of themselves. If none of the characters step forward to do so, though, you can have a Storyteller character (whether that be a trusted mentor or a complete stranger) pipe up and deliver the speech that everyone needs to hear. Hopefully, the characters will make a grab for their moment in the sun, but it's not absolutely necessary, and in some cases (like among certain cadres of Directive operatives), it might not even be appropriate.

Ultimately, players should realize that their characters need to intervene. Whether they're doing it for *The Zurich Accord* or *The Null Manifesto*, it's got to be done. Might does not make right, no matter how powerful one might be, and this can only end poorly for everyone, nova and baseline alike. This heretofore-unprecedented act of terrorism needs to be prevented. It may well be the first time in the history of the United Nations that the representatives of all member states agree on labeling an act of terrorism before the fact.

When decisive action is agreed upon (unless the characters propose a better suggestion and actually get everyone to listen to it, a daunting prospect if one is dealing with the UN), it will probably involve members of various peacekeeping forces scattered to "problem areas" that look ripe for conquest, places far from where Szlaniskovich actually intends to strike. Again, this may not be the case in your series if the characters are trying to pull this off with nothing more than, say, all the Aberrants they can muster.

As the characters are not going to be the ranking members of whatever faction they represent (a pecking order defines who can "ask" whom to do what within

any organization, even the Teragen), they will find themselves on guard duty in the Russian Confederation. Whether this means that T2M team leaders are pulling strings to relegate the characters to "chump detail" and thus snag all of the glory for themselves (as nobody honestly believes that anyone would be so bold as to attack the Russian Confederation itself) or the Mathematician

Two big issues have traditionally hamstrung the UN in combating international terrorism:

First, the UN has always found it difficult to actually define what "terrorism" is. People can point at it after the fact and say, "that was terrorism" (generally, there are always dissenting voices), but no one, as yet, has proposed a satisfactory means of identifying terrorism before something blows up, someone gets held hostage or someplace gets nerve gassed. Small countries are inclined to define it as whatever lets bigger countries pick on them. Large nations call terrorism anything that threatens the stability of their vast infrastructures. Religious countries include matters of faith in their definition. Nations in global "hotspots" can either be very liberal or very strict with their ideas. Many believe that it must consist of violence worked in the name of a political and/or ideological objective, but just as many are hasty to point out that this marks revolutions, national police actions and even UN peacekeeping actions as acts of terrorism to one extent or another. Often, the debate on what terrorism is simply ends up degenerating into the representatives of various countries accusing others of prior or ongoing "terrorist" activities against their own nation, which has obviously *never* stooped so low.

Second, once the representatives manage to actually look past the (unresolved) "what is terrorism?" conundrum, they need to contend with the formidable issue of what to actually *do* about it. The general consensus has almost always been that the UN should probably seriously think about considering actions to condemn terrorist activities. Maybe. Some are in favor of fines or sanctions, whereas others wish to install a system of more drastic measures. However, as most will tell you, this is all pending a mutually agreed-upon common, all-inclusive and universal definition of terrorism and a commitment by all member states to a comprehensive list of preemptive countermeasures. In short, the UN will be lucky if it works all of this out by 3014.

Thus, while the United Nations claims jurisdiction over international counter-terrorism, no one in it could tell you what they're combating — at least, not to the complete satisfaction of even a majority of the representatives present. It is, in part, this nebulous pseudo-definition of terrorism that gives the UN (and, by extension, Utopia) such broad and largely unregulated authority in these matters. The alternative, however, is to remain completely paralyzed and unable to react to *any* act of any international aggression until suitable terminology is found. If that were the case, Radocani's would still be lordling over Macedonia and the Ethiopian Highlands would probably be covered in blood rather than growing grain.

takes them aside and rattles off an incomprehensible string of equations defining why they have to go to the Ukraine, the characters should be unequivocally assigned there. Whether or not they expect it, they're going to be in for the fight of their lives.

Alternatively...

If, for whatever reason, Smith is not around or the characters feel like flying solo and you don't want to magically put everything back on track, there's another way entirely you can get the characters where they're going. As alluded-to in the introduction to "Dominion," tensions between China and Japan are growing, and while in early 2014 they're not quite at the breaking point, a lot can change by year's end, especially if you need it to. The standard *Aberrant* timeline will not be exploring this possibility, and you won't find any mention of "that war China and Japan had back in '14" in future products; it is included purely as an alternative means of getting to the final confrontation in the Ukraine.

Basically, how it goes (and you can elaborate on this in any way you require) is that, while India is hashing out diplomatic and religious issues with the United Nations and Utopia and a handful of brushfire wars are raging across Africa and South America, there is a limited engagement between the novas of the Exploding Heavenly Mandate and Nippontai. Though the event is small and easily contained, it couldn't have come at a worse time (which is precisely why Szlaniskovich worked so hard to

incite it). Still, the event does not end up being totally detrimental to the world at large.

Mayuno "Kou" Morioka, a Nippontai telepath known among certain high-ranking circles of the Japanese government for the subtlety of her mental "explorations" manages to get inside Szlaniskovich's head during some of his sessions with Japan's decision-makers and, while she lacks the power to manipulate his mind, she does get ahold of the names of a few of the conspirators (of your choice) and of the nature of their mission. While she does not know where they will strike, she is aware that they will. Further, Kou shares this information with her superiors who, in turn, decide to carry on with the skirmish with the Chinese as though nothing has happened and secretly bring what they know to the United Nations. Nippontai are ordered to engage but not to harm if at all possible (thus admirably rounding out the list of people who will owe Japan a great deal for their part in this matter when everything comes to light).

Other than that, you can make this as long or short, neat or messy, simple or complex as you want to. If your series is best served by expediency, just sum it up. If, on the other hand, you like the idea of getting the characters involved in yet more intrigue (and you feel you'd be sweeping the details under the rug if you didn't), you might want to make at least a few episodes out of it.

Judgment Day

Whatever they've done, however they've gotten here, the characters now stand at the threshold of a new age. For the first time since their ascension to the public eye about a decade-and-a-half ago, novas are about to use their powers to attempt the blatant conquest of a first-world nation. Frightening questions abound about the nature of novas and whether this will be the ink in which humanity's future is writ. Perhaps it is only as few as a handful of novas or perhaps it is as many as the representatives of all the governments of the world, searching frantically for the target even as they are already beginning to work at erasing this blemish from the annals of history (in the hopes that it will fail and never come to light in times to come), but a silent fear lingers around all who keep this vigil — what if the conspirators succeed? Crouching like a hungry spider, DeVries also watches and waits, putting just enough support into the coup to help it to succeed but not so much that their assistance can be reliably traced back to them. After all, the hallmarks of the mercenary are ambition and pragmatism. The DeVries Agency is no exception on either count.

The opening shot of the final confrontation is made in Moscow. Streaking in like a formation of demons out of Hell, every conspirator who can fly, Teleport or otherwise move very quickly (with Hypermovement or Quantum Leap) attacks the Kremlin itself. Overpowering the Directive agents and other novas on the scene within minutes, they lay to waste the cabinet of the Russian Confederation, injuring the leader of the Confederation (in fact if not on paper), the nova Vladimir Sierka, before moving

Roleplaying vs. Roll-Playing

Perhaps the thing most abhorrent to any Storyteller is that moment when the natural flow of a dramatic and epic scene is interrupted by the player who screams out "Wait!" and proceeds to rattle off an extensive list of the seemingly numberless Abilities, enhancements and quantum powers that enable him to act first and attack 50 times before any Storyteller character has even lifted a finger. Naturally, such players are also the ones who lament, loudly, that the powers they paid for are "useless" and a "waste of points" when you don't allow them to annihilate the fun for everyone else with their vast array of "instant-kill" solutions. Instead of reveling in the rich potential of a hard-fought victory, they want to blast through everything as though an encounter designed to be life-threatening is merely a cakewalk to their characters. Don't let them. Enforce your right to "go narrative" (i.e., to set a scene and perhaps even ease the characters into the situation without being assailed on all sides by declarations of intent). Don't abuse this power ("Megalith comes through the warp, puts his fist through you, and you die."), but also don't be afraid to help to sculpt the direction of the scene. ("Ultra-Violence looks at you and licks his lips as though in anticipation and, as he dives at you, you brace for the impact and then begin trading blows furiously.") As with everything else, be fair, but remember that the story comes before the rules, no matter who those rules favor at any given time.



on toward the Ukraine courtesy of Whisper's Warp ability. With a single decisive blow, the conspirators have effectively destroyed the Confederation's ability to put up an organized resistance, even as anyone who cares is patrolling the savannas and jungles looking for something they won't find there. As chaos ensues in Moscow, the conspirators close on the Ukraine, hoping to seize control quickly, overwhelming any military resistance with only a modicum of effort.

What they're not counting on is the characters being there.

Even as the slaughter in the Kremlin unfolds, military personnel are going frantic in Kiev, where the characters have been stationed (perhaps Pradmurabpan's talk of destiny is not so superstitious after all). Soldiers are racing about, trying to call to other bases for news, help or anything. Many of them are simply unbelieving of what is unfolding on their radios, televisions and computers. *Someone* needs to take control and establish some order here. Any characters with powers ranging from Mental Prodigy: Tactical to Premonition to Luck will sense that something very bad is about to happen. Here. Soon. Even if no one in the group possesses these powers, those with any kind of military or organizational training will realize that going to red alert might not be such a bad idea. Geographically speaking, Moscow is not that far from Kiev.

The conspirators have tipped their hand, and now, they must finish the game.

The characters have about seven minutes from the first indications of problems in Moscow to get things organized to provide a "welcome" for the conspirators. Unfortunately, even if they can be sure that they're coming, they don't know how or from which direction. Also, when the characters start mobilizing, especially if they claim to "know for certain" that the elites are coming here, they are going to have a panicked populace on their hands. A populace, they should know by now, that the conspirators are very much willing to inflict grievous harm on in order to weaken any resistance.

Thanks to Szlaniskovich's extensive intelligence on Russian Confederation military procedures and troop placements (the best he has on any nation), he is aware of exactly where the military base in Kiev is located and what kind of confrontation he *should* be looking at. And while he is expecting the outside possibility of one or two novas to mow down, he is certainly not anticipating the presence of an entire team of them, especially not a team of novas prepared for his arrival. This element of surprise, however brief, may be the key to the only chance the characters have.

First, Cinder and Ms. Mayhem emerge from a warp, streaking out over the base. Cinder immediately strafes the ammo dumps with her bolts of flame, rocking the ground for kilometers with the enormity of the explosion, while Ms. Mayhem liberally applies her Bioentropy Storm to as many nearby soldiers and civilians as she can. The shock and surprise last for only a few seconds, but it is all the time these two women need to begin sewing chaos among the ranks. Even as the characters begin to react to this, however, another warp opens. This time, Megalith and Big Time emerge. They drop down into the midst of a good deal of the military heavy equipment, which they begin heaving into various other structures or, as the mood takes them, into orbit. If the characters begin to move visibly at either of the two powerhouses, Big Time and Megalith will be surprised momentarily (granted, for some novas, a moment is ample time) but are sure to fling something sizable at the characters if they get the chance.

Now, the characters must divide themselves among two sets of targets if they wish to cut down on baseline casualties. (If the Teragen is involved, this is not something one can take for granted.) If the characters don't look as though they're showing any interest in the baseline body count, then the elites will concentrate on them, keenly aware that they are obviously dangerous if they possess that kind of lack of respect

for the value of life. If the characters do decide to tangle with the elites, then the conspirators will try to draw them away from the immediate area of the base and the city (something the characters are likely not averse to as it is both easier and less likely to rack up collateral damage). Regardless of how the characters approach the situation, the third wave drops in.

Running on (thankfully current) military schematics, Shinobi and Ultra-Violence end up inside the command center of the base itself. If one or more characters are not actually there, then all the command personnel will be dead within two minutes. If any of the characters are there, they will be singled out for termination the instant they display nova powers. Shinobi's first priority, leaving most of the personnel to U-V if need be, is to get Kiev's short-range missiles (all of which are, naturally, many kilometers outside the city itself) launched at every other military base in the Ukraine within 10 minutes, before any kind of counterstrike can be executed. To this end, she will be using her considerable computer skills, her Mega-Intelligence and her knowledge of similar systems she has memorized with her Enhanced Memory. In short, if no one stops her, she *will* launch the missiles.

Next, Diecast, Whisper and Szlaniskovich himself, once again relying on Szlaniskovich's intelligence on the most important structures in Kiev, end up inside Ukrainian governor Aleksei Chernenko's statehouse or in the



bunker beneath it, where the governor and many of his most important ministers of state have retreated. As the characters will not be allowed anywhere near this secret structure, unless they take truly exceptional measures, Governor Chernenko and his aides will be dead within 20 seconds. As Diecast and Whisper move out to engage the enemy outside, Szlaniskovich settles down to the business of cutting Kiev off from the rest of the world. With Shinobi doing her part at the military base and Szlaniskovich his from the statehouse, they intend to silence the city for the duration of the takeover. Also, though he has no intention of letting any of his fellow conspirators know about it, Szlaniskovich is checking to be sure that his intelligence about the escape tunnel in the bunker beneath the statehouse (which uses a small, subterranean computerized bullet train to get to a point 25 kilometers out of Kiev) is correct. Fortunately for him, should all this fail, it is.

At this point, it pretty much comes down to how the characters choose to handle the situation with the conspirators. Shinobi and Szlaniskovich will be largely occupied so, unless you really need them to make this final battle difficult as hell (which you probably won't), they will likely end up spending most, if not all, of the fight hacking Kiev's computers. However, cyberkinetics and other characters with exceptional intelligence or computer skills will probably be needed to keep the two from establishing complete control of all of the city's major civil and military systems. Remember, though, that if it begins to look as though he's in an untenable situation, Szlaniskovich will abandon his fellow conspirators at the drop of a hat and leave them to their fates.

As for other characters? Fighters will obviously have their hands full. No matter what the character's particular fighting style, there is more than likely an opponent (or *opponents*) who suits her. Characters with leadership qualities will be needed to keep the citizenry from panicking. Also, such characters might be able to rally the military (which still possesses some very potent combat technology despite the current state of chaos) and help them to organize a counterattack. In fact, there is almost no set of Abilities, Mega-Attributes and quantum powers that will not come in handy here. Granted, some must be used in a more innovative fashion than others to be helpful but, then again, not everyone is going to want to slug it out toe-to-toe with the conspirators.

From this point onward, it is up to the Storyteller to make this a terrible battle on a truly epic scale. Characters may die; if so, let them go in a moving and heroic fashion. Explosions will rock the streets of Kiev, missiles may be launched, there will be fire and panic and terror. The conspirators will fight, with neither conscience nor mercy nor remorse. The characters will probably be fewer and their situation more desperate, but all they need to do is to hold the elites long enough for help to arrive (hopefully before Szlaniskovich can touch base with enough nations to shut down any attempts to divert the conquest).

Doing so, however, will be no mean feat. This is the culmination of years of ambition, a plan to which the characters are the only real impediment. With that in mind, the conspirators will kill everyone in Kiev, if need be, to destroy the characters.

There is no "perfect moment" at which to bring in the cavalry, have the conspirators break and run or end the scenario in any other way you feel comfortable with. The most important part is that the characters fight the good fight, take their lumps, make sacrifices (perhaps, for some of them, even the greatest of sacrifices) and generally live up to all that is best in novas, no matter how they choose to define that. However, whenever you feel it right, provided the characters succeed (something neither the players nor the Storyteller should take for granted), a small force, consisting of both baselines and a handful of novas, will enter Kiev at the direction of the very newly, very hastily, temporarily elected Russian Confederation president, Natalya Vasily (who will probably end up holding onto the title even after this mess is cleaned up). Whether they arrest, kill or simply drive off the conspirators is up to you and whatever serves your series best. And so, for better or worse, a year-long conspiracy of conquest comes to an end. Perhaps all nine will stand trial for crimes against humanity. Then again, perhaps Radu Szlaniskovich's flag will cast its shadow over Kiev when next the sun rises. It's up to you and the players.

The Aftermath

What happens now? Granted, Szlaniskovich and the other elites have likely lost their jobs with DeVries, one way or the other, but what else? That's also yours to de-

Leveling the Playing Field

While Szlaniskovich has no intention of getting directly involved in this affair — he prefers masterminding from a distance — you as the Storyteller may wish to alter the flavor of this scenario somewhat and have him show up personally as the climax of the story. If you decide that you do want a clean resolution to this scenario, feel free to tone down all nine of the novas involved in the operation or even to delete a few from the equation entirely. Just make sure to keep the antagonists powerful and clever enough that they have a valid reason to believe that they can actually pull this off. "Dominion" was intended to be an extremely difficult scenario to complete successfully, and while it is understandable if you don't want the characters to have to compromise their sense of victory, you also don't want this to be a cakewalk. It simply cheapens the experience and downplays the horror of realizing what could happen if this notion became more popular among the nova populace.

So, to sum up, then: It's your nickel, and if you want to kill off all of the bad guys at story's end, cool, but don't automatically rule out the idea that this scenario can be enjoyable without having to satisfy the standard expectations. Moral ambiguity and shades of gray are, in part, what **Aberrant** is all about.

cide. How neatly (or messily) do you, as Storyteller, want everything to wrap up? Do you want the Russian Confederation to break up into warring nation-states? Go for it. Does your series cry out for a more globe-spanning conflict (and the novas to avert a WWII-level of worldwide destruction)? Sounds great. Or do the characters get medals pinned on their chests in UN headquarters, hearty salutes from all present and a rousing cheer as the credits roll? It's all a matter of how you want things to wrap up.

There are two different ways, regardless of who the characters are, that you can go with this. First of all, let's look at what might happen if the characters successfully overcome Szlaniskovich and his conspiracy.

Unfortunately, Utopians (including Proteus operatives) and agents of the Directive have the least to take away from this scenario (but then, they had it easiest coming into it). In large part, such characters must simply be content to have fulfilled their group's agendas and continue on from here. If, however, you don't want such a standardized, cookie-cutter "Good vs. Evil" conclusion, you can feel free to fabricate plausible reasons for dropping tidbits on the less-savory goals of the group of the characters' affiliation. (This is easier to do with T2Mers and regular Utopia personnel; Proteus and Directive operatives don't really have that many illusions about what they're doing and what their organizations are, in all likelihood, doing to them.) But then, those who get involved with global peacekeeping organizations usually aren't in it for the perks (or, at least, they can't seem to be).

Aberrants can be gifted with one of the greatest rewards of all: legitimacy. For a pseudo-secret society of downtrodden underdogs led by a globetrotting queen of "high art" crime and a rowdy young hedonist with a vendetta for his former bosses, that's probably more than enough. Such a moral victory might just begin to show people that these aren't just malcontents who have it in for Utopia. After all, the characters will have put their lives on the line (indeed, some quite possibly made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty) and pulled off what Utopia didn't. While Caestus Pax and his crew were off breaking up elite skirmishes two-on-one in the hidden corners of nations so small and transient most people don't bother learning their names, the Aberrants picked up the ball and did what was right. And what might that say to the world about who has their priorities in order? About who the *real* heroes are?

Terats, on the flip side of the same coin, may also actually win some sympathy for their position (among people other than beer-swilling 18-to-35-year-old white American males who do not fully appreciate the irony of their testosterone-induced appreciation of such a movement). Since when has anyone heard of the Teragen doing something *good* in the name of separatism? For once, the baseline chimps might get it through their thick primate skulls that this is an *ideology* (as opposed to a metahuman collection of thugs, a la "Supervillains' Union" or any other such ridiculous convention of the comic book industry), and it is as good for their kind as it is for their

evolutionary betters. Of course, such an act of charity, regardless of its philosophical justification, is likely to leave some Terats questioning their beliefs. Not to say that they are guaranteed to have a change of heart about their place under Darwinian law but that a few might just find *The Null Manifesto* lacking in answers to their questions. Genuine humanitarianism sometimes has that effect.

And what if the characters fail (provided, of course, that any or all of them survive)?

Members of Utopia and the Directive can expect a running uphill battle against the forces of this new and heinous quantum tyranny. Perhaps still more elites (and others) get ideas about planting their flag in one fertile stretch of land or another. Remember the Directive's references to "worst case scenarios predicted back in '98" in the Teragen section of the **Aberrant** Introduction? Perhaps China will step up the timeframe for their drastic ultimatum. Such a thing could certainly be the spark that ignites another Great War. Maybe the characters have to try to stop that war or, even worse, find that it's far too late for that and now they have to be a part of it. Regardless of how things turn out, if Szlaniskovich's flag flies over the Ukraine, events are guaranteed to turn ugly sooner or later, and *that* is the fallout that members of international peacekeeping organizations will be heir to.

Aberrants, if they don't end up enmeshed in a planetwide war, will probably discover that Utopia ends up cleaning up the situation (most likely through a joint effort between all the branches of Team Tomorrow) and finds itself in a position to leverage yet more "advisory power" over the UN Security Council. In fact, Utopia's "honorary seat" could swiftly blossom into a more elaborate arrangement; Utopia could easily end up the One World Government with fodder like this for its fire. With that in mind, the Aberrants' ethical disputes can very easily grow into something more akin to a crusade, with the characters taking on the role of active freedom fighters, doing battle with the savior who turns out to be the oppressor.

Teragen who cannot successfully overcome the conspiracy will witness the unfolding of the horrors that are the ultimate expression of the differences between baselines and novas. Instead of reaching toward their destiny and ultimate potential, Szlaniskovich and his elites sink into the depths of decadence and depravity, polluting the gift of the Mazarin-Rashoud node with base lusts. The Teragen has a Romantic notion of what novas can become and what role they are to play in the world. Next to that, no autocracy of intermingled species, no matter how prosperous or wealthy, is worth what one must lose. To dedicated Terats, this is the road that falls just short of the promised land but beckons seductively enough to blind those who walk it to the truth of who they are. Should you wish to run with either of them, the WWII scenario and the Utopian takeover are both thoroughly appropriate to supply ongoing struggles for the Teragen. Or perhaps the Teragen movement falls apart altogether. Or it calcifies into something more cohesive. Maybe Divis Mal himself

has something to say or something he feels he needs to do. Maybe, for whatever reason, he intends to make the characters a part of it.

Win or lose, there's a lot for independent novas to do in the wake of the conspiracy's actions. Too much, in fact, to adequately cover. Corporate novas might be "encouraged" to find some way, no matter how things turn out, to turn a profit for their employer. If that employer is DeVries, the stakes get even higher. Truly independent novas *will* have made names for themselves, regardless, provided they were not already in the limelight (as novas go). Perhaps the major factions vie for their allegiance, trying to turn their success into an advantage. Or maybe they are targeted for elimination by a mysterious party, due to the displeasure they have incurred for their failure. If the characters don't work for DeVries, the company will sure as hell try to rope them in with lucrative contracts and promises of the good life after all of this.

The characters will also have new friends, enemies and interested observers when the dust settles. Loose ends will probably abound, suggesting even more new directions to follow. "Dominion" may just be the beginning....



The Official Word

Naturally, there is a way that this scenario is intended to wrap up in the "official" **Aberrant** universe. After all, there is no mention in the **Trinity** timeline of a Sznaliskovia, Independent Ukraine, Nova-Ruled Chunk of Russia or any other such in 2014 or any other year. Thus, one can safely assume that Sznaliskovich's nova uprising is, in the primary game timeline, successfully crushed (probably by Utopia, though other possibilities definitely exist; as this event will be so buried by the Aeon Trinity by 2120 that it will be borderline impossible for anyone to confirm who was responsible for what, you have a lot of leeway as to how you want to see this situation resolved, should you wish to keep with the "official" word).

As for Sznaliskovich himself? So long as his involvement isn't uncovered or, if it is, he successfully manages to escape justice, who is to say? After all, he has at least several more centuries left in him. Perhaps the world has not seen the last of Radu Sznaliskovich. Time will tell.

Radu "Impaler" Sznaliskovich

Background: Ever since he first killed a nova elite as a baseline mercenary, Radu Sznaliskovich, the man who would one day come to call himself (behind the mask) Impaler, understood one simple fact: The enlightened pursuit of invincibility and absolute power is not beyond the means of one with a flawless sense of ambition and a perfect, subtle patience. His eruption came to him as no surprise, and his three extremely lucrative years of very low-profile elite work gave him a solid base from which to build his fortune. Shortly after the merciless Slav hung up the mask, he found himself filthy rich,

astonishingly powerful and the recipient of a stellar offer from DeVries. Combined with his years of experience with guerrilla warfare as a baseline and his quantum-powered struggles and ultra-high-class, post-eruption lifestyle, Sznaliskovich's time behind the desk taught him true appreciation for the nuances of power. More than a simple bully or tyrant, he is a consummate master of all arenas: physical, intellectual and emotional. He appreciates all that power has to offer without becoming lost in its seductive embrace. He learns from yesterday, enjoys today and plans for tomorrow. He is, in short, the perfect man to orchestrate, from behind the scenes, the conquest of a nation.

Image: Sznaliskovich is a savagely handsome man, with an obviously predatory air about him and a raw, sensual appeal. Though not as powerfully built as some novas, he is tall and statuesque. His sartorial choices are invariably stunning (whether that be a tuxedo for dinner and dancing or the ridged and articulated iridescent black armor used for those now-rare combats) and of the finest eufiber money can buy. Sznaliskovich's black hair falls, straight and thick, to his narrow waist, and his molten blue eyes are framed by pale and angular features. The mercenary's voice is deep and sonorous, with a strong accent.

Roleplaying Hints: You have worked hard all of your life to be more and better tomorrow than you are today. Even in a world of demigods, you have been uniquely ambitious and have pursued that ambition with all the patience of a man who knows he will live for at least the next several centuries. You are unfailingly polite and genteel, in an Old World sort of way, but you could tear an infant in half if you thought it would bring you half a pace closer to your ultimate goal. Your only morality, ultimately, is self-advancement.

Gear: Flawlessly tailored eufiber suit, hair brush, straight razor, cell phone.

Nature: Visionary

Allegiance: DeVries (on paper, at least; in reality, none)

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Appearance 5, Manipulation 5, Charisma 5

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Biz 4, Brawl 5, Command 4, Computer 3, Drive 2, Endurance 4, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Interrogation 5, Intimidation 5, Intrusion 3, Linguistics 4 (Native: Russian; Arabic, Cambodian, English, Spanish), Martial Arts (Muy Thai) 4, Melee 2, Might 3, Rapport 4, Resistance 5, Stealth 2, Style 5, Subterfuge 5, Survival 3, Weave 4

Backgrounds: Allies 5 (elites), Backing 5, Cipher 5, Contacts 4, Eufiber 5, Node 5, Resources 5 Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 10, Taint 3

Powers: Mega-Strength ••• (Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity •• (Physical Prodigy), Mega-Stamina ••• (Adaptability, Hardbody, Regeneration, Resiliency), Mega-Perception • (Quantum Attunement, Ultraperipheral Perception), Mega-Intelligence • (Mental Prodigy: Financial and Tactical, Taint Resistance), Mega-Wits •• (Enhanced Initiative, Quickness x 2), Mega-Appearance ••• (First Impression, Seductive Looks), Mega-Manipulation • (Persuader, The Voice), Mega-Charisma ••• (Commanding Presence, Seductive), Armor •••, Claws ••• (Aggravated, Armor Piercing), Psychic Shield ••••



Big Time

Background: Big Time is a gargantuan thug — nothing more, nothing less. He respects and appreciates secrecy (in his life as an elite, he has had to), but for him, it all comes down to who dominates whom. Big

"We're Supposed To Fight Them!?"

You may have noticed that the nine elites comprising this pact seem a bit... well, extraordinarily powerful for your "average" (or even not-so-"average") band of novas to handle.

That's because they're not supposed to.

Sure, they may off one or even a couple, but this scenario is going to be a sore disappointment for those players who are accustomed to the completion of a story entailing the deaths of all the adversaries. "Winning," in this case, probably means little more than preventing these nine sadistic monsters from carving a nation for themselves (which, in and of itself, should be a major victory to any character with a shred of conscience or decency). These are nine novas who make their living by conflict and are exceptionally amoral and depraved, even for elites; there is no "easy way" or "sure-fire victory plan." They are very good at killing people and will not allow themselves to make stupid mistakes. They will not waste time with witty repartee. They will not walk blindly into traps. They will not strike to incapacitate.

They *will*, on the other hand, torture one character to locate the others, threaten innocents (and make good on their threats) and pretend to walk into a trap... only to spring one of their own. What this means is that the characters will have to actually stop relying on the advantages of their nova powers (as it is undoubtedly they, in terms of raw power, who are at the disadvantage here) and attempt to outwit and outthink the nine. It is only through clever planning, careful (and unorthodox) uses of powers, both mundane and superhuman, and probably no small measure of luck, that the characters can hope to defeat this juggernaut.

Even then, between money, connections and favors owed by various national and international interests, any novas who are brought to the authorities are likely to beat the rap and simply walk. Contrary to the common wisdom, which says that characters should feel exhilarated by success, this scenario is likely to leave the players' novas feeling screwed for doing the right thing (regardless of their motivations for doing so). They will have made powerful enemies (and if Sznaliskovich does not reveal himself, as he most likely will not, even one they are not aware of...), taken serious lumps (the stakes here are high and the likelihood of one or more characters dying is strong) and will probably have their faith in justice and the fundamental goodness of humanity and novas (if indeed they buy into such notions) shaken or even shattered by the experience.

This is good.

Even months after the fact, Ms. Mayhem will have it in for that bastard who wrecked her career with DeVries, and nothing gives a character greater satisfaction than putting down a brute like Big Time a year later to avenge the friend who died at his hands. A Paragon who is scarred by her confrontation acquires a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices undertaken by those who would serve as an example to others, while a marauding bully of the Teragen might actually gain an *understanding* of the fundamental philosophy behind his organization, rather than seeing it as a justification. And Radu Sznaliskovich, of course, almost certainly has cards left to play. In addition to illustrating a different kind of victory, this scenario can serve as a springboard for all sorts of developments in *your* game — plot hooks which do not wrap up easily, questions of morals and ethics for novas to ponder and a taste of the gathering storm fast approaching...

Time relishes fear and really likes to hurt his enemies. While this doesn't really amount to too much of a liability when one is slaughtering baseline rebels in a brush war, when dealing with other novas, Big Time's sadism may well be his one true weakness in battle (as it was, he was Szlaniskovich's last pick: brutish but, unfortunately, useful). The only reason he doesn't bed down with the Teragen movement is his greed and profoundly self-centered attitude; he couldn't give a damn about the rights and freedoms of other novas unless it's going to pay him, benefit him or exalt him.

Gear: Pocketwatch with monofilament fob (used like a whipsword, see **Aberrant: Elites**, p. 69), cell phone

Nature: Bravo

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Appearance 2, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 5, Endurance 5, Intimidation 4, Linguistics 1 (Native: Greek; English), Melee 4, Might 5, Resistance 5, Survival 2

Backgrounds: Attunement 1, Cipher 3, Contacts 2, Resources 4

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 6, Taint 5 (Aberrant Eyes [roiling white energy], Colored Skin [steely gray-blue])

Powers: Mega-Strength ••• (Crush, Lifter), Mega-Stamina •••• (Durability, Resiliency), Armor ••, Body Modification (2 extra "Bruised" Health Levels), Sizemorph (Grow) •, Temporal Manipulation ••• (Internal Clock, Age Alteration, Dilate Time)

Cinder

Background: Cinder is a volatile, temperamental creature. She is an avatar of flame, burning down all that stands in the way of her ambition. Her cruelty is matched only by her efficiency. Cinder has no conscience to speak of, amoral as the element from which she draws her power. She is greedy,

selfish and lusty, living to indulge her passion for acquisitiveness and carnage. And, of course, the opportunity for both of the latter is the reason she signed on in the first place.

Gear: Cell phone, flak jacket.

Nature: Bravo

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 4, Manipulation 4, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Firearms 3, Intimidation 3, Intrusion 2, Linguistics 2 (Native: English; Chinese, Portuguese), Martial Arts 3 (Judo), Melee 3, Rapport 2, Resistance 3, Style 2, Survival 2

Backgrounds: Allies 1, Attunement 2, Cipher 3, Contacts 3, Node 3, Resources 4

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 6, Taint 4 (Aberrant Eyes [bright red irises])

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Crush), Mega-Dexterity •• (Rapid Strike), Mega-Stamina •• (Resiliency), Mega-Perception • (Ultrapерipheral Perception), Mega-Wits • (Quickness), Bodymorph (Fire) •••• (Density Control [Decrease] ••, Invulnerability [Fire] ••), Flight ••, Quantum Bolt (Fire — Lethal Damage) ••• (Burning)

Diecast

Background: Diecast is in it for the excitement. This is perhaps the greatest forbidden thrill yet known to baseline or nova. The risks involved in such a conquest fuel the ongoing adrenaline-rush that is Diecast's life. For once, he might be able to put himself in the path of something (namely, a good number of the novas on Earth with the decency to try to stop him) that could conceivably kill him. And *that* is a rush no petty dictator with a tank or a helicopter has been able to provide him in longer than he cares to think about. But, then again, Szlaniskovich pulled



him in for his nigh-suicidal disregard for his own personal safety in the face of a bold and audacious undertaking.

Gear: Hand-held railgun (see **Aberrant: Elites**, p.70), cheap sunglasses, black eufiber fatigue pants and combat boots, cell phone.

Nature: Thrillseeker

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Drive 2, Endurance 5, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Intrusion 2, Linguistics 1 (Native: English; Spanish), Melee 3, Might 3, Resistance 5, Streetwise 1, Survival 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Cipher 3, Eufiber 1, Contacts 2, Node 2, Resources 4

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 6, Taint 4 (Changed Flesh [perfectly smooth and hard])

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Crush), Mega-Stamina •••• (Adaptability, Durability, Hardbody, Regeneration, Resiliency), Armor •••, Bodymorph (Metal) •••• (Density Control [Increase] ••••)

Megalith

Background: Megalith, considering his massive size and mercenary outlook, can be a disarmingly charming and pleasant man. He knows that he is not the world's smartest or most well-spoken nova, but without any kind of exaggerated opinion of his own social skills, he can make a good impression when he needs to. Often, however, he is simply businesslike and works with dogged determination to achieve his immediate goal and have done with it. When it's time to fight, he is merciless and dreadfully efficient, and his desire to win, no matter the cost, comes second only to his desire to survive the confrontation.

Gear: Cell phone, bandoleer of assorted grenades.

Nature: Survivor

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 5, Drive 2, Endurance 4, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 3, Linguistics 2 (Native: English; Cambodian, Spanish), Might 5, Resistance 4, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Attunement 2, Cipher 4, Node 1, Resources 4

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 6, Taint 4 (Bulging Muscles)

Powers: Mega-Strength ••••• (Lifter, Quantum Leap, Shockwave), Mega-Stamina ••••• (Durability, Hardbody, Regeneration), Armor •• (Impervious)

Ms. Mayhem

Background: Ms. Mayhem basically just wants to retire from the elite lifestyle. The only reason she got involved with it in the first place (other than her lack of any real principles) was the ease with which she could accrue a vast fortune. At least, that's what the recruitment pitch was. The reality has been somewhat less encouraging and has resulted in too many brushes with death to just keep writing off. So, while Szlaniskovich's offer promises to be the most dangerous yet, the potential payoff just couldn't be ignored.

Gear: Cell phone, BFG (see **Aberrant: Elites**, p. 71), lucky rabbit's foot.

Nature: Conniver

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Appearance 5, Manipulation 3, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 5, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Drive 1, Endurance 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 4, Intrusion 3, Linguistics 3 (Native: English; Cambodian, French, Ta-



galog), Melee 4, Might 3, Resistance 4, Streetwise 1, Style 4

Backgrounds: Cipher 4, Eufiber 3, Contacts 4, Node 3, Resources 4

Quantum 5, Willpower 7, Taint 3, Quantum Pool 30

Powers: Mega-Strength ••• (Thunderclap), Mega-Dexterity •• (Physical Prodigy), Mega-Stamina •• (Hardbody, Regeneration), Mega-Appearance •• (Seductive Looks), Disorient •••, Entropy Control • (Bioentropy Storm), Flight ••

Shinobi



Background: Shinobi is an extraordinary spy, a talented assassin and a woman who really and truly wants to create something of lasting importance. She believes that this new nation could be the start of a trend toward novas taking a more active hand in the governance of the world. To her, this can only be a good thing. Baselines have been screwing it up for 10,000 years. She is a no-nonsense elite, with little time for small talk and no patience for compromise. Sometimes, in order to get the right thing done, you have to be the monster everyone fears.

Gear: Shuriken, smoke grenades, cell phone (set to vibrate), carbon-fiber garrote (see **Aberrant: Elites**, p. 69).

Nature: Architect

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Appearance 5, Manipulation 4, Charisma 4

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Computer 5, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Etiquette 4, Firearms 3, Interrogation 4, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 5, Investigation 3, Linguistics 4 (Native: Japanese; Cambodian, Chinese, English, Russian), Martial Arts (Chin Na) 4, Medicine 2, Rapport 4, Resistance 3, Stealth 5, Style 4, Subterfuge 4

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Attunement 3, Backing 3, Cipher 5, Contacts 4, Dormancy 3, Eufiber 3, Resources 5

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 7, Taint 3

Powers: Mega-Strength • (Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity ••• (Catfooted, Flexibility, Rapid Strike), Mega-Stamina • (Adaptability), Mega-Perception ••• (Blindfighting, Ultrapерipheral Perception), Mega-Intelligence • (Enhanced Memory, Mental Prodigy: Investigative), Mega-Wits • (Enhanced Initiative), Mega-Appearance • (Appearance Alteration, Mr. Nobody), Mega-Charisma • (Dreadful Mien), Claws ••••, Invisibility ••• (Enhanced Effect)

Ultra-Violence

Background: Ultra-Violence is a Grade-A sociopath. He really, *really* likes to make people hurt and is, in fact, hopelessly psychologically addicted to the intense rush of pleasure that accompanies the agony he inflicts on others. DeVries had to do quite a bit of work covering up U-V's past before taking him on as an agent; it wouldn't do to have people knowing that one's corporation was employing a murderer who had successfully evaded capture by the authorities. For U-V, this is his vindication and the chance to be who he is without fear of reprisal ever again.

Gear: Cell phone, corkscrew, pliers and other implements of torture.

Nature: Bravo

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 5, Drive 1, Endurance 3, Intimidation 4, Intrusion 2, Linguistics 2 (Native: English; Portuguese, Swahili), Martial Arts 2, Melee 4, Might 2, Pilot 2, Resistance 4, Streetwise 2, Survival 1



Backgrounds: Allies 1, Cipher 5, Eufiber 1, Contacts 5, Node 4, Resources 4

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 5, Taint 5 (Sadism [experiences others' pain as erotic pleasure], Anima Banner [bleeds from the eyes when using his quantum powers; no special effect])

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Thunderclap), Mega-Dexterity ••• (Enhanced Movement, Physical Prodigy), Mega-Stamina •• (Durability, Resiliency), Mega-Perception • (Quantum Attunement), Mega-Wits • (Quickness x 2), Claws •••, Immolate (Electricity — Lethal) •••

Whisper

Background: Whisper is in this for the payoff. Nothing more, nothing less. He has no high-minded ideology, dreams of conquest, beliefs in genetic superiority or any other such justification. He knows what he's doing is wrong, and he doesn't care. He's too busy looking forward to the life of sickeningly decadent wealth and privilege that will follow this little venture, should it prove successful. He is exceedingly skilled in almost any black-op you can name and takes pride in his capabilities. Then again, he's happy to take pride in pretty much anything people will give him credit for.

Gear: Cell phone, whipsword, maser gun.

Nature: Hedonist

Allegiance: The Conspiracy

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Appearance 4, Manipulation 4, Charisma 5

Abilities: Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Computer 3, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Etiquette 4, Firearms 4, Interrogation 4, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 5, Investigation 3, Linguis-



tics 3 (Native: English; Cambodian, Spanish, Swahili), Martial Arts (American Submission Fighting) 4, Melee 1, Rapport 4, Resistance 3, Stealth 4, Style 4, Subterfuge 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Attunement 1, Backing 3, Cipher 5, Contacts 3, Dormancy 4, Eufiber 4, Resources 5

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 6, Taint 3
Powers: Mega-Strength • (Quantum Leap), Mega-Dexterity ••• (Physical Prodigy), Mega-Stamina ••• (Adaptability, Regeneration), Mega-Perception •• (Bloodhound, Ultraperipheral Perception), Mega-Wits •• (Enhanced Initiative, Quickness), Mega-Appearance • (Seductive Looks), Mega-Manipulation • (Persuader), Poison •••• (Projectile), Telepathy ••, Warp ••

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Ibiza Town: The Amp
Room Battle*, aired
May 28th, 2015

• **Matt Heston:** If you're just joining us, welcome to this exclusive N! and CNN late-breaking story. To recap on the events of the last 10 minutes: At 9:50 PM, Greenwich Mean Time, Team Tomorrow Europe raided the Amp Room in Ibiza Town, Ibiza. We're fortunate to have with us reporter Kim Blakesdale and a camera crew from N!ertainment at the scene of the battle right now. Kim, are you there?



• **Kim Blakesdale:** Yes, yes, I'm still... holy [bleep]! Matt, are you getting this? "Ironskin" Andy Vance and Jake "Dragon" Korelli just KO'd Ragnarockette through the wall. The fighting's spilt into the streets; the night sky looks like the Fourth of July. It's insane.

• **Matt:** Incredible, Kim. Can you tell us what's happening?



• **Kim:** Michael, there! Thorn's trapped three novas in his vines. Sorry, Matt, but as you can see, the fighting's intense, with neither side giving ground. We were covering a fashion show in the Amp Room when the ground started shaking. Suddenly vines broke through the tremor cracks and T2M crashed through the skylight.

• **Matt:** Kim, you said neither side's giving ground. Who's involved in this conflict?

• **Kim:** Anybody and everybody. I saw Count Orzaiz here earlier, but he's gone. He fought Thorn briefly. Initially it was the Amp Room against T2M Europe. Now it seems to be everybody against everybody else. A lot of people are settling old scores here tonight Matt. There's fighting in the streets... and... wait, tremors again.

• **Matt:** Kim, Kim! What's happening?

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• **Kim:** Ground's shaking... tremors... we're moving... c'mon... outside now!

• **Matt:** While Kim's relocating, we'll fill you in on the current developments. Project Utopia has declined comment so far. They will issue a press statement later this hour, but our sources say the Amp Room raid was necessary as a preemptive measure. Against what is anybody's guess. Currently, as near as we can tell, there are at least 20 novas involved in the conflict, including Thorn, Psyche, Tremor, Griffin Armstrong and Ragnarockette (from T2M Europe), Count Raoul Orzaiz, "Ironskin" Andy Vance and Jake "Dragon" Korelli, as well as a handful of independent novas, some with reputed.... Wait, I'm told we have Kim again. Kim?



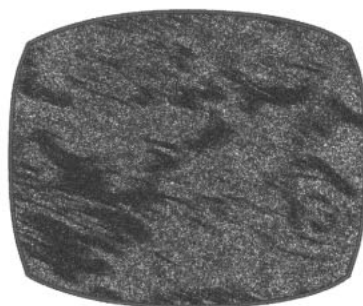
• **Kim:** Oh God! Matt this is... it's incredible! Tremor triggered a landslide, which nearly buried the Amp Room and the surrounding countryside. The northern face of D'Alt Vila fortress is wrecked, Matt. A site that withstood French and Turkish invasions, destroyed in a matter of seconds.

• **Matt:** Any idea on why T2M attacked? Were they after the Teragen?

• **Kim:** I... I don't know. It did look like T2M was searching for someone, yes. No clue on whom and the fighting's too intense to get near them. I can tell you as an eyewitness, though, that there weren't enough Terats in the Amp Room this evening to justify this kind of destruction. Ibiza Town is on fire tonight. Whatever Project Utopia was after... [static]

• **Matt:** Kim? Kim? I'm sorry folks, but it looks like we've lost our satellite feed. While we reestablish contact with Kim, we'll switch over to our panel of experts on T2M's operation in Ibiza....

[END TRANSCRIPT]



Private Memorandum

From: Director Thetis
To: Director Justin J. Laragione
Re: The Oswald Gambit
Date: August 12th, 2014
Mr. Laragione,

In regards to our conversation the other day, your reticence is noted. The Aeon Society, however, agrees to the necessity of our plan. I have full sanction to pursue this mission as I see fit. I believe I have your full cooperation? Good.

The Aberrants and the Teragen have both proven a collective thorn in our side, one that we would do well to eliminate. Unfortunately, dealing with either requires more resources than Proteus can currently muster. The sudden and swift removal of subversive novas would also draw undue public attention given the visibility of some Teragen members. As such, I have devised a plan whereby we can deal the Aberrants and Terats a crippling blow while still maintaining a façade of respectability. This is where Project Utopia's reputation and *your* cooperation are required. You work for me Mr. Laragione. Try not to forget that.

The operation is called The Oswald Gambit. We circulate rumors that a member of an Internal Affairs Investigation Team wants to defect from Project Utopia's fold. Given the sensitive nature of his work, he can't leave without suffering reprisals and needs help disappearing. This defector carries with him the truth behind the Rashoud facilities as well as other negotiable tidbits. He'll sell the information to the highest bidder on condition that the deal also includes a new identity for him.

The agent I have in mind is a nova named Maurice Lourté, code-named U-boat. He possesses two active personalities in a two-tiered thought process. We're unsure which of the two identities is the original, but suffice to say, the dominant one is loyal to Project Utopia and in control. The submissive personality is a buffer psyche and completely protean. Maurice can program it into forgetting his double existence and into believing that he's escaping Utopia over real philosophical misgivings. He's virtually resistant to mental probes. Anyone scanning his thoughts will encounter the first, or programmed, façade that actually believes in his actions. Nobody thinks to probe for Maurice's dominant, but submerged, personality.

Once Maurice contacts our adversaries and is ready to "defect," he'll arrange a meeting with both the Aberrants and the Teragen. When both parties are present, we spring our trap. That's where I need your cooperation, Mr. Laragione. T2M must launch the raid. They are the strongest novas in our employ and the ones who can deal with opposition the quickest. Additionally, the publicity will do your administration good considering Slag's and Slider's unfortunate deaths, as well as Caestus Pax's defeat at the hands of Divis Mal. Hopefully, this victory will help divert public attention from Project Utopia's more noticeable blunders.

Director Thetis



Private Memorandum

From: Director Justin J. Laragione

To: Director Thetis

Re: The Oswald Gambit

Date: August 15th, 2014

Director Thetis,

While your plan is certainly imaginative, I have reservations as to its effectiveness. The Teragen and the Aberrants haven't survived this long by falling for Hollywood ploys. Secondly, have you forgotten about Project Utopia policy, which states: "Team Tomorrow shall not engage enemy novas unless T2M outnumbers opponents by a ratio of two to one or better."

You're right Director Thetis, Project Utopia needs a victory, at the very least, for the sake of private and public morale. I will not, however, see another Hiram Goldberg sacrificed on the altar of higher ratings or for some half-baked scheme to frighten Terats from the brush.

Finally, Director Thetis, I just want to remind you that we don't work for each other. We work for the Aeon Society and cooperate with one another. It'll be my pleasure, however, to help you smooth out The Oswald Gambit's rough spots and glaring oversights.

Director Justin J. Laragione

Private Memorandum

From: Director Thetis

To: Director Justin J. Laragione

Re: The Oswald Gambit

Date: August 22nd, 2014

Mr. Laragione,

While I can appreciate your reservations in the matter, The Oswald Gambit will work. Yes, I agree the plan is straightforward; most successful operations rely on simplicity, however. Secondly, T2M will not encounter the combined forces of the Aberrants and Terats. More likely, each side will send a representative or, at best, a delegation, to conduct negotiations (I'm surprised you overlooked that possibility Mr. Laragione). Once they attend the meeting, T2M arrests them on charges of conspiracy. From there, we can detain the delegates for questioning and use Allison "Psyche" Pfaltzgraff to probe their thoughts for more information. Conceivably, we can unravel either organization then or, at the very least, set them back a few years. In either case, I have the Society's full sanction on this matter. I expect your cooperation regardless of your concerns.

Please see Director Miller is brought up to speed on this operation. We need Internal Affairs to start an investigation of Maurice Lourté immediately. His loyalty should be called into question, thus setting the groundwork for his defection.

Director Thetis



Private Memorandum

From: Director Moses Miller
To: Director Thetis
Re: The Oswald Gambit is a go.
Date: January 29th, 2015
 Madame Director,

Your suspicions paid off. Somebody accessed Internal Affairs' files on Maurice Lourté through an unauthorized terminal. We made it hard to gain entry into IA's systems, but whoever did was a pro, possibly even a nova. He covered his tracks well and even went through other records to blur the trail. It was only because we were expecting it that we noticed Lourté's files had been accessed. We need stricter encryption methods for future reference, but for now, our mystery hacker has shown us new weaknesses in our system. Thank heavens this wasn't over truly vital information.

Director Moses Miller

Private Memorandum

From: Director Thetis
To: Director Justin J. Laragione
Fw: Director Moses Miller
Re: The Oswald Gambit
Date: April 23rd, 2015
 Gentlemen,

Our perseverance has finally paid off. Maurice Lourté has not only gained the confidence of his Aberrant and Teragen contacts, but they're willing to negotiate for his secrets. Lourté has arranged to meet both delegates at the Amp Room in Ibiza Town, Ibiza on May 28th for the final negotiations. More information will follow. For now, however, I need Coordination Director Carstens brought in on a need-to-know basis. Tell him about the defector and the suspected meeting but not the sting operation. Let T2M Europe (this falls under their hemisphere mandate) believe they're actually averting a conspiracy plot. Allow them to play the heroes.

Additionally, we need the Diplomatic Corps to prepare their contacts within the Spanish government. Also inform PR, but only a day or so before the operation. We want to minimize the number of people who know about the raid.

Director Thetis

[Emergency Burst Transmission from Lt. Miguel Haverio, Spanish Forces in Ibiza Town]

• **Lt. Haverio:** ...repeat, this is Papa Papa 12, requesting help. We need heavier artillery against the rampaging novas. More novas have appeared in Ibiza Town, and we're ill equipped to deal with them.



Aberrants

[Encoded OpNet Audio Message]

From: David Henries

To: Sophia Rousseau

Subject: Utopia Defection

Date: April 15th, 2015

Sophie dearest,

I don't mind telling you, this reeks of ambush. I met with Maurice Lourté and scanned him during our meeting. He reads genuine enough, but Utopia's betrayal dominates his thoughts and actions so extensively, I thought I was interviewing Christ. This boy's martyr material. He's single-minded enough to be frightening. Something doesn't smell right. Do we *really* want him with the Aberrants?

Yours,

David Henries

[Encoded OpNet Audio Message]

From: Sophia Rousseau

To: David Henries

Subject: Re: Utopia Defection

Date: April 15th, 2015

David,

I trust your instinct, but I say we arrange a meeting. Tell me the specifics of your rendezvous, and I'll have two or three guardian angels keeping watch over you. If anything happens, they'll whisk you to safety. Better you not know who your protectors are, in case Lourté reads minds.

Sophia

[Encoded OpNet Message]

From: Sophia Rousseau

To: Meztiszo

Subject: Urgent

Date: May 28th, 2015

Meztiszo,

I've aborted the mission and pulled David from Ibiza. Rania received heavy temporal flux for the meeting that's supposed to be happening now, and that can only mean a big event of some consequence. Send in a team, the situation is about to degenerate, and I want to know why. This could have some impact on future events, and we need to investigate this before someone silences the matter.

Sophia

[Encoded OpNet Message]

From: Meztiszo

To: Sophia Rousseau

Subject: Re: Urgent

Date: May 28th, 2015

Already on it, but Rania's warning came too late. Turn on CNN. It's bad. A team is on its way. Looks like Utopia slipped up big time.

Meztiszo



Encoded OpNet Message

From: Meztiszo
To: Investigation Team
Subject: Mission Parameters
Date: May 28th, 2015
 Here we go again folks,

As you've probably just heard, T2M Europe blitzed the Amp Room a little under a half-hour ago. What you won't hear is we had a meeting set up to handle a defector from Utopia but pulled out at the last second. We don't know whether this is a set-up or if our defector is legit and Project Utopia is actually *this* worried. Regardless, we're sending your team into the Ibiza hot zone as observers.

Mission Objectives:

- 1) Find out what happened at the Amp Room that precipitated this level of violence. News reports are already putting the death toll in the hundreds, and communication in and out of Ibiza Town is down.
- 2) Locate our "defector," Maurice Lourté (see enclosed picture). T2M Europe is still fighting, and that can only mean they didn't get what they wanted yet. Find out if he's ambush lure or genuinely willing to defect.
- 3) Stay out of the fighting, if possible. I'm not going to tell you to ignore what you see around you, but weigh whatever decision you make against the importance of this mission. You're walking into a war zone, which means it's a thousand-and-one tales of personal tragedy.

Start your investigation at the Amp Room ruins, and work your way from there. People you should regard as non-hostile contacts for questioning are:

- **"Ironskin" Andy Vance and Jake "Dragon" Korelli:** Andy is the Amp Room front man and Charlotte Holden's ally (she knew Jennifer Landers, AKA "Slider"). Call it "six-degrees of separation" reasoning, but Andy's proven sympathetic to Aberrants in the past whether he knows it or not. Both Andy and Jake, his partner, were in the thick of the fighting and might know something.

- **Count Raoul Orzaiz:** I know we've had our problems with the Teragen in the past, but Orzaiz is one of their few redeeming qualities. Reporters mentioned he was at the scene of the fighting. If you can speak with him, great. If you can help him, even better. Orzaiz would be a good ally to cultivate, especially if he owes us a favor.

If you need immediate transport to Ibiza, I'll send in Slipstream to pick you up. She can fly you there in an hour. You then have 10 hours before Slipstream returns to the Amp Room to pick you up. If you're not there, she'll return in another two hours. After that, you're on your own.

Good Luck

Project Utopia

[EXCERPT OF CONFERENCE PHONE CONVERSATION BETWEEN DIRECTOR OF PROJECT UTOPIA JUSTIN J. LARAGIONE, I.A. DIRECTOR MOSES MILLER AND NOVA COORDINATION DIRECTOR NIGEL CARSTENS]

- **Laragione:** What the hell's happening in Ibiza gentlemen?
- **Miller:** A minor setback sir. The timetable's been delayed, but our objectives remain the same.
- **Laragione:** The hell with the objectives. Tremor brought down D'Alt Vila fortress on live broadcast. Diplomatic Corp and Public Relations are already up to their necks in shit. The operation is a bust.
- **Carstens:** With all do respect Mr. Laragione, the operation would be a failure if we pull out now. I agree with Mr. Miller. We are still within sight of mission objectives.
- **Laragione:** Not anymore. If we keep T2M in Ibiza, NATO will send in troops to deal with the fighting. It's just a matter of time. Christ! T2M was supposed to be in-and-out in under 10 minutes. What went wrong?
- **Miller:** We're looking into the matter right now, but according to what we've seen so far, it's probably heavier resistance than anticipated.
- **Laragione:** We'll have plenty of time to review the intelligence later. Right now, I want T2M Europe evacuated from Ibiza and fast. We can't keep communications suppressed for much longer. We're impeding rescue operations.



- **Carstens:** Hold on Mr. Laragione, we still have an immediate concern.
 - **Miller:** That is?
 - **Carstens:** Gvuthbjörg Danielsdottir, codenamed Ragnarockette, is still missing.
 - **Miller:** We saw Ironskin and Dragon clock her on CNN. Looked nasty.
 - **Carstens:** Thorn and the others are trying to locate Ragnarockette, but they need more time. They're continually locked down in combat. We haven't seen this level of action since the Ladakh Mountain offensive of 2002. Pax, Pratima and Montoya-Bernal have all expressed their desire to enter the combat zone.
 - **Laragione:** Absolutely not! Tell Thorn and his team to pull back for dust-off. They're too high profile right now. The longer they wait, the worse this becomes. We'll send in another team; somebody low-key.
 - **Carstens:** But Thorn's there....
 - **Laragione:** Nigel! I won't jeopardize our standing on the UN Council for this. I won't lose Guggi either, especially after Hiram's death. Find another team, preferably one with a low visibility quotient. Tell Pax and his crew to be ready in case we can still pull this mission off. Otherwise, they're on stand-by only.
 - **Carstens:** Fine! But I'm going on record as being against this action. I will not take responsibility for the loss of lives.
 - **Miller:** Sorry, Mr. Carstens, but there is no "record" here. This conversation never happened.
 - **Carstens:** Sonuvabitch! [click]
 - **Laragione:** I'll talk to him tomorrow. Right now, we've got another concern.
 - **Miller:** U-boat?
 - **Laragione:** Yeah. We have to pull him out too.
 - **Miller:** Very well. I'll issue a private directive to Carsten's rescue operation team-leader to find Lourté for "questioning."
 - **Laragione:** If the Aberrants or Terats haven't gotten to him. I want to salvage this operation before it gets pinned on me. I'm not letting Thetis squirm away this easily.
 - **Miller:** Director Thetis won't be happy about this.
 - **Laragione:** She doesn't have to be. She wanted this mission, but it's up to us to clean up her mess. We went into this on her terms. We're getting out of it on mine! Besides, you can be damn sure the Directive's sending in guns-for-hire to find out what's happening. We've got to find U-Boat before they do.
- [END EXCERPT]

From mission profile folder

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At 21:50 GMT, T2M launched a raid against the Amp Room for reasons currently classified as an Internal Affairs Directive. During the raid, T2M member Gvuthbjörg "Ragnarockette" Danielsdottir was knocked out of the Amp Room and remains missing. Her emergency transponder-locator unit was also damaged, making it impossible to track her down. With the world press focused on Ibiza Town, we cannot send a high-profile rescue team given the sensitivity of the current situation. Therefore, it is your responsibility to find Ragnarockette, activate your transponder transmitter and withdraw to the emergency evac-site at Playa de Figueratas (a beach in southern Ibiza Town).

Your mission objectives are as follows:

1) Locate Ragnarockette at all costs. Her safety is paramount.

2) Stay out of the conflict. We've already ordered T2M Europe to withdraw from the situation. If the press wants images of novas fighting, it won't be us they're showing.

Remember that your entry into Ibiza Town is strictly unofficial. If you are caught, Project Utopia will deny sanctioning this mission. You're acting on your own. As such, you cannot arrest anyone, including the two novas responsible for the attack on Ragnarockette — "Ironskin" Andy Vance and Jake "Dragon" Korelli. In fact, you may need to question them, since the Amp Room is your first investigative lead in this mission.

Good luck, and remember, a woman's life rests in your discretion.

Director Nigel Carstens



Team Leader's Eyes Only

From: Director Justin J. Laragione

This is a classified protocol known only to Director Miller, you and myself. Divulging the contents of this directive to anyone else is considered a treasonous offense and grounds for imprisonment.

Know first that Team Tomorrow Europe conducted the raid on behalf of Internal Affairs, with full sanction from the Spanish Government. Therefore, you are not being asked to commit an illegal act. The T2M raid was to halt the exchange of sensitive information between nova agitators and a spy within Project Utopia named Maurice Lourté (find attached photograph). In addition to locating Ragnarockette, you have sanction to capture Lourté, should the situation present itself, and return him unharmed for questioning. Lourté was at the Amp Room during the attack and may still be in Ibiza Town. Proceed with caution and your best judgment.

Teragen

From: Geryon

To: Undisclosed Address List

Subject: Action Now!

Date: May 28th, 2015

Heads up mates,

We got troubles. If you're awake, then you know about T2M's raid on the Amp Room an hour ago. We got some brothers and sisters who're there right now, trying to fight off Thorn and his T2M twits. Orzaiz isn't answering his cell phone, and communication in and around Ibiza Town is wonky, presumably jammed; we can only assume Orzaiz's in trouble.

It's time to step up to the plate and earn your keep as Terats. Rule number one is you rag on one of us, you rag on us all. Problem is, Utopia knows this; they attacked us for a big reason. We don't know if this is a Utopia preemptive strike against us or a ploy to draw our members away from vital locations like the Nursery or Club Zmei. Either way, we're not playing their game.

Heavy-hitters like Leviathan, the Confederate, Epoch, Gauze and myself are going in to put God's fear into T2M Europe. We need some of you, preferably you low-key Terats, to stay out of the fight and find Orzaiz and the others. You're our eyes and ears. They'll be expecting Leviathan and me to show, so we aren't going to disappoint them. They won't be expecting, or even know, you. Use that to your advantage.

If you're game for this mission, ping me back a response now, and I'll backtrack you through Synapse. After we got your location, Blinker will pop in for the pick-up. You've got an hour to settle your shit. Enjoy the party, boys and girls; there's never a dull moment in Ibiza.

Geryon

It's not just a way of life; it's survival.

Teragen Mission Parameters

From: Geryon

To: Undisclosed Address List

Subject: Your Objectives

Date: May 28th, 2015

Hey, chaps,

Bloody good to have you along for the ride. Here's what you need to know. Orzaiz was in Ibiza negotiating for the defection of some Frog in Utopia. Looks like the meeting was a set-up, so we need you to ride in and find Orzaiz. Start at the Amp Room, and work it from there. My mates and I are going in ahead of you by an hour, so we'll drag the fight elsewhere. Find Orzaiz; that's your principle order.

Attached is a picture of the "defector," Maurice Lourté. If you spot him, bring him back alive, and you might get a big wet one from Leviathan. Get him killed, and I'll make sure Leviathan gives you a big wet one. Just as a point of reference, Orzaiz was tight with "Ironskin" Andy Vance, the Amp Room's PR face. He's OK for a poofteh, so ask him for help if you need to. Otherwise, stay out of the fight, and keep low. Nova Vigilance and me are going in to crack the skulls. You're in to find Orzaiz.

Geryon



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...Dead: 1,240
Injured: 3,893
Missing: 487
Property Damage: \$2.9 billion....

[NATO press release excerpt concerning ongoing inquiry into the Amp Room battle]

...In conclusion, despite the severity of damage, we cannot attribute sole blame on T2M Europe for the fight resulting from the Amp Room skirmish. Attached witness reports all confirm the presence of nova and baseline agitators, possibly with Teragen ties, who took advantage of the situation. Therefore, while Project Utopia has assumed responsibility for restorations to D'Alt Vila and neighboring Sa Peña district, they are not accountable for



surrounding regions including Sa Marina, Puig Des Molins or Es Soto Complex.

The issue of remuneration for survivors remains unsettled at this time.

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[Scene from *The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow*, OpNet movie about the events in Ibiza Town, Ibiza on May 28th, 2015. Power Mistress' (played by Christina Montgomery) Act III monologue at the ruined fortifications of D'Alt Vila]



• **Power Mistress:** "No! You're wrong Ace. We can't point fingers elsewhere and blame others; not this time. We're all responsible for this destruction, every one of us. We hold the stars in our hands, but everything we touch crumbles and dies. Look around you. The best intentions caused this devastation. Hundreds are dead... countless more wounded or homeless. I—I don't know what to do. I can fight Geryon to a standstill and out-fly jet fighters, but I don't know how to better the suffering of those around me. We fought one another over old grievances and hatreds, but it's the baselines who suffered the injuries we meant for each other. We always counted victory by our performance in battle, but we never once dared to measure defeat by the lives we destroyed. Back there, in that last fight against the Bushmaster, who was in that building we collapsed? Did we kill a family who hadn't evacuated or a frightened child who was still hiding? Oh, God! The people. Tell me, Ace, did we save even one?"

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boards

legal stuff

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us

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N! the News, "Man on the Street," La Llotja Emergency Shelters on Palma de Mallorca, Mallorca Island — May 29th, 2015

• **Interviewer:** We're here in Palma de Mallorca, at the arrival station for refugees being ferried in from neighboring Ibiza. Pardon me, can we get your reaction to the events in Ibiza Town?

• **Berthold Piezer:** It was... incredible? No, "horrible" better word. These novas running around like gangsters... shooting "pow, pow," destroying buildings and killing without caring. How could they do such things?



• **Daniel Weiss:** It all happened so quickly. We were bar hopping in Sa Penya when the fight spilled out from the Amp Room. They were knocking each other through buildings and throwing cars around like toys. Christ, the cars still had people inside them....



• **Susanna Fortier:** My son... he... they killed him. Nobody helped. They just kept fighting like we weren't there.



• **Rita Perraduchi:** Fight? There was no fight. I saw novas breaking down walls and robbing stores just for pleasure. They were murderers. Someone should put the fuckers down like any rabid dogs.



• **Ziad Khouri:** What a disaster. So many beautiful sites knocked down. I could see bodies of other tourists, like me, but dead. They were stuck under rubble. We tried to help, but it wasn't safe. The novas, they fought like nobody else existed. It was their world.



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From transcript of N! the News and CNN simulcast. Live coverage of *Conflict in Ibiza Town: The Amp Room Battle*, aired May 28th, 2015

• **Matt Heston:**...sporadic contact. Project Utopia says it's ordered T2M Europe to withdraw from Ibiza, but these live shots clearly show them fighting local novas. **[Bright flash of light]**. What was that?!? Somebody's emerging from the....



Ladies and gentlemen, as you can clearly see, known Teragen guerillas Leviathan, Geryon, Gauze and two others we can't identify right now have just emerged from the bright light. They're engaging T2M Europe. Any hope of a quick and peaceful end to this conflict just vanished. The Teragen have entered the war....

Ciudad de Ibiza: Welcome To Paradise

Please note: Due to recent events in Ciudad de Ibiza, this site is currently under construction. We've attached damage reports to pertinent sections and will keep you current on the latest developments in Ibiza as we learn them.

Management

Welcome to the capital of Ibiza — Ciudad de Ibiza to the locals and Ibiza Town to our international friends. Whether you come for our renowned nightlife, our pristine beaches within reach of the city or our warm weather, Ibiza Town has everything to offer chic, world-traveling partygoers looking for reasonable prices.

Take it from personal experience, Ibiza's lure is its easy access to soft drugs and casual sex. Many people find themselves enamored with the laissez-faire attitude of the natives and fellow travelers, so it isn't uncommon for tourists to settle down in the region. The two big no-nos, however, are *irresponsabilidad económica* (no money) and *conducta antisocial* (antisocial behavior including drunken and disorderly conduct). Both are grounds for deportation and are commonplace, given the island's hedonistic nature.

Tourist season runs from May through till October, though Ibiza Town's newfound status as a nova-resort has turned it into a year-round party. Additionally, Ibiza is a gay mecca, surpassing Mykonos, and heightening the city's already festive atmosphere. The locals pride their city on its old-world architecture and contemporary sensibilities.

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CURRENCY RATES TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE CITY MAP HISTORY
IBIZA AT A GLANCE SHOPPING AND HOTELS NIGHTLIFE

A Thumbnail History

Ibiza Town traces its history back before the birth of Christ, when the Carthaginians founded the port settlement. After falling under the rules of the ancient Greeks, Romans and Moors, the Balearic Islands became the Kingdom of Mallorca before merging with the Kingdom of Castile in the mid-1300s.

Ibiza Town has kept much of its medieval flavor. The buildings housed inside D'Alt Vila's walls date back over 500 years. Because the larger Mallorca attracted most tourists until the 1950s, Ibiza has preserved much of its ancient charm. Ibiza's rich atmosphere, however, caught the eyes of artists and writers seeking inspiration, turning the city and island into an art colony. It was only natural that during the 1960s, Ibiza attracted the European counterparts to the American Hippie movement, giving it a unique charm that tourists enjoy to this date.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS GETTING AROUND IBIZA TOWN
CURRENCY RATES TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE CITY MAP HISTORY
IBIZA AT A GLANCE SHOPPING AND HOTELS NIGHTLIFE

Places of Note: A Look at Ibiza Now

Many tourists are surprised to find medieval buildings in this day and age, especially in a tourist haven like Ibiza Town. Due to huge development projects that threatened to destroy both Ibiza and Mallorca's mystique from the 1960s to the 1980s, however, the Spanish Government enacted laws protecting 35 percent of the island chain from development. As such, while the suburbs surrounding Ibiza Town are all of modern design, the old core of D'Alt Vila which overlooks the marina and the Vara de Rey main strip remains a quaint nest of narrow cobblestone streets and whitewashed houses with flat roofs. It isn't uncommon to see olive, fig, pine, palm and almond trees in the local landscape or to wander the shop-lined avenues and come across "hippie" markets filled with beautiful handwoven crafts.

Surprisingly, the beach scene was, up to a short time ago, the least attractive feature of Ibiza Town. The rocky and jagged coastline rarely gave way to beach, and the parts that did were horribly overcrowded. The Spanish government recently allowed a team of novias to create more beachfront property, expanding Platja de Figueretes to within five minutes of the trendy Sa Penya district and improving Platja de Talamanca.

To better orient yourself to Ibiza Town, pretend you're standing at the top of a coastal hill. Immediately surrounding you like a crown is the old town of D'Alt Vila with its tight winding streets. Around you is preserved history, whether it's the *catedral* right behind you, the Museu d'Art Contemporani to your immediate right or the Museu Arqueològic straight ahead. Just outside the walls of D'Alt Vila to the north is the equally old and charming Sa Penya district where tourists shop and browse. Beyond that lies Sa Marina with its yacht-filled harbor and streets lined with cafés and umbrella-covered tables.

Vara de Rey (later becoming Avenida España) runs west of D'Alt Vila and is the Hollywood Boulevard to Ibiza's California. Along the way, more modern buildings appear and bloom, until you hit the mega-hotel resorts like Hotel Isla Blanca — small communities in their own right.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS GETTING AROUND IBIZA TOWN
CURRENCY RATES TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE CITY MAP HISTORY
IBIZA AT A GLANCE SHOPPING AND HOTELS NIGHTLIFE

The Essentials

• **Hospitals:** Ibiza Town's hospital is the Hospital Can Mises in the westernmost Barrio Can Mises. It's well equipped to handle most emergencies given the diversity of its clients.

<<Ibiza Town update: Hospital Can Mises was woefully unprepared for the near war conditions of the Amp Room conflict. The army, in conjunction with the Red Cross, opened an emergency field hospital in Parc de la Pau to handle the overflow and evacuated the non-critically wounded on ferries to Mallorca.>>

• **Communication:** While Ibiza is on par with the rest of Europe, communication technology is not as widespread. Local laws prohibit the use of dishes and landlines in areas like Sa Penya and D'Alt Vila to protect the local architectural aesthetic. All the modern hotels on the edge of the city, however, have full communication amenities and links to OpNet, while businesses like Euro Centro at the corner of Carrer de Abel and Carrer de d'A vincena provide OpNet terminals.

<<Ibiza Town update: When satellite communication with Ibiza Town failed due to rioting, only a few places could still transmit data. Included was the Telefónica phone center opposite the Formentera Ferry Terminal (which was the emergency debarcation zone for residents) and the Hotel Isla Blanca. The army commandeered the Telefónica phone center while the international press made Isla Blanca its home.>>

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS GETTING AROUND IBIZA TOWN
CURRENCY RATES TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE CITY MAP HISTORY
IBIZA AT A GLANCE SHOPPING AND HOTELS NIGHTLIFE

Ibiza Under the Sun

• **Beaches:** We've already mentioned the two major beaches: Platja de Figueretes and Platja de Talamanca. Unfortunately, both beaches are full by 11:00 AM and absolutely stifling by 1:00 PM. Tourists in the know usually head north or south along the coastline, but don't be surprised if you hit nude beaches like Playa Cavallet. Stay away from Playa d'en Bossa if you can, however; the novas have taken it as their private strip and pay the local shopkeepers enough pesetas to keep them happy. These novas aren't likely to kick you out, but you never know these days.

• **Sporting Activities:** Ahmara Centro Deportivo is the physical-fitness complex for Ibiza island. Sure, the top-notch hotels have their own gyms, tennis courts and swimming pools, but the Ahmara also holds hot tubs, a sauna, a hamam (Turkish bath), a restaurant, grill and bar among other amenities. One word of warning though: Check your egos at the door, folks, because the customers here aren't slackers. This facility is a close second to California's Muscle Beach. Many novas can out-press you by a good ton on your best day, and the Ahmara makes sure it can handle any nova strength rating.

• **Shopping:** Novas may be stronger, faster and more resistant than you, but shopping's the great equalizer. Sa Penya is the place to be, folks. Sandwiched between D'Alt Vila and Sa Marina, it holds the small but highly chic Amp Room and a dense concentration of world renown restaurants and shops. The streets may be small and comfortable, but the shopping experience is singular. With the hippie influx of the 1960s, Sa Penya boasts couture uniquely Ibiza and attracts models and designers worldwide. Unfortunately, Ibiza's hungry tourist trade either makes or breaks local fashion designers. Still, most ply their craft quietly, making enough money with quality items to last them through off-season winter.

<<Ibiza Update: Novas wrecked a good portion of Sa Penya, destroying a rich cultural heritage in the span of a few hours. Project Utopia promises to rebuild Sa Penya with a special eye to preserving her uniqueness, but I'll believe that when I see it.>>

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS GETTING AROUND IBIZA TOWN
CURRENCY RATES TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE CITY MAP HISTORY
IBIZA AT A GLANCE SHOPPING AND HOTELS NIGHTLIFE

Ibiza's Nightlife

As odd as it sounds, not everybody comes to Ibiza to party hard. Both the Dizzy and Sunset Café offer a laid-back and quiet atmosphere for people looking to socialize. Also available are the cabaret spectacles at the Hotel Isla Blanca and Casino de Ibiza, or the fantastic Drag Queen floor shows at Samsara in Ibiza Town's unofficial gay district (the easternmost portion of Sa Penya). If bars aren't your game, then an ocean night-dive or a midnight yacht party is always good to enliven the evening.

Then again, Ibiza Town specializes in its clubs, and it never disappoints. Famous, or infamous, as the birthplace of the rave, the city itself upholds certain traditions. Be warned though, door fees can run you \$50 US and over on an average night (though most places offer a complimentary drink). Additionally, the nightlife never falters and even taxes the endurance of some novas. Only veteran club-goers can withstand the week-long parties in Ibiza Town.

Here are some of the trendier locales among the hundreds flourishing in the city:

• **El Divino:** The diva of discos, El Divino caters to the elite and to entertainment's most affluent celebrities, whether they belong to the fashion or movie industry. Even well known nova beauties such as Alejandra and Narcosis often flit between El Divino and the notorious Amp Room when in town. A visit to Ibiza is nothing if you don't party here at least once. A word of warning, however: Leave the sandals and tropical beach shirt at home. El Divino is the barometer of trendy, and the doormen ensure it stays that way.

• **Privilege:** Formally Ku (not to be mistaken for Ku2), this disco is six kilometers from town. Not to worry, most hotels provide shuttle service to Privilege if they aren't already situated near the disco. Built to handle over 5000 patrons, Privilege is a maze of bars, rooms and private nooks for those customers looking for a quickie. The party starts at midnight and runs past sunrise. Special events include English Mondays where the club imports London's hottest DJs.

• **The Amp Room:** Built within eyeshot of D'Alt Vila's Baluart de San Juan, the Amp Room is Ibiza Town's most infamous establishment, despite being two years old. Although it caters to a nova-only clientele, that doesn't stop the crowds from clogging Calle Obispo just to get a glimpse at the who's who of the erupted. It's the only place where backroom Teragen, DeVries' Elites and T2M's samaritan novas rub elbows. Few outsiders really know what happens inside, but the raw sexuality and animal power exuding of most novas is enough to shame Ibiza's resident erotic club, The Blue Rose, so the action must be hot.

<<Ibiza Update: The Amp Room is trashed, but "Ironskin" Andy Vance is negotiating with Ibiza Town to reopen the club. Unfortunately, the local hotel owners and shopkeepers are mounting stiff resistance to another nova-only club, claiming the last incident may have irreparably damaged the tourist trade. We'll see, however. Tourist agencies are already reporting record numbers for round-trip packages to Ibiza next year. The battle at the Amp Room may have increased Ibiza Town's popularity, given society's attraction to novas and their lifestyles. Already, a number of new hotel chains have promised to build and be ready by next summer!>>

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS GETTING AROUND IBIZA TOWN
CURRENCY RATES TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE CITY MAP HISTORY
IBIZA AT A GLANCE SHOPPING AND HOTELS NIGHTLIFE

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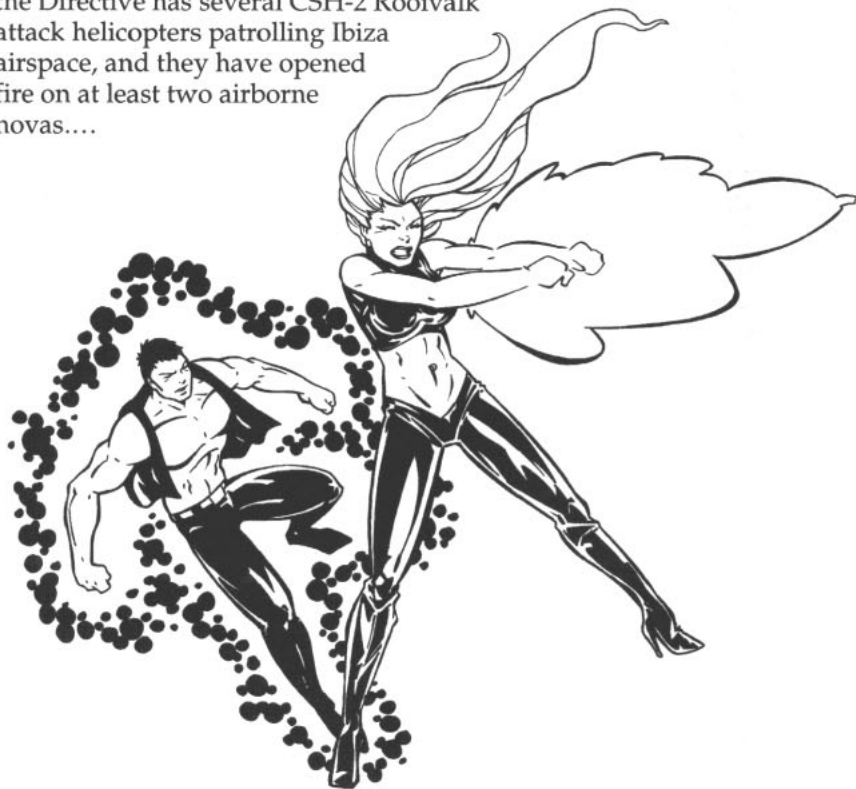
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From transcript of N! the News and CNN simulcast. Live coverage of *Conflict in Ibiza Town: The Amp Room Battle*, aired May 28th, 2015

• **Matt Heston:** ...continued coverage of the crisis. A conflict that began in the Amp Room has now spilt into Ibiza Town. Reports tell of novas rioting in the streets and spreading further damage. Unfortunately, communication with Ibiza Town is sporadic, and we've lost contact with Kim Blakesdale, one of our veteran reporters on the scene. Meanwhile, the Spanish government issued an ultimatum to Ibiza Town's novas to cease their hostilities. From what we understand, the military will take lethal action against any nova considered dangerous. The Spanish army, in conjunction with the Directive, has secured the Formentera Ferry Terminal and is evacuating citizens to nearby Mallorca.... Sorry, I'm receiving an update ladies and gentlemen. If you'll bear with me.... We've just received confirmation that, yes, the Directive has several CSH-2 Rooivalk attack helicopters patrolling Ibiza airspace, and they have opened fire on at least two airborne novas....



Act I: Introduction

Ibiza Town, home of the summer-long raves, Sodom's lascivious cousin and envy of decadence, is literally on fire tonight. What started as a raid on the Amp Room degenerated into a full-fledged nova riot. Smoke fills the already darkened sky, and though electricity is down across the city, burning buildings and anima power-flares illuminate the night.

The action begins two hours after the Amp Room battle. Team Tomorrow Europe is fighting hit-and-run style combat against the Teragen bad-boys, while dozens of other novas run riot for no particular reason. This is the height of chaos, when nobody's in charge and everybody's got a gun. The military can only contain the violence, but each crack of thunder or flash of unnatural light destroys another 500 years worth of history. For the characters, their mission parameters are simple. Find person X and, if you have the time, sequester person Y. In this light, the mission is straightforward. War, unfortunately, is rarely so accommodating.

During the course of this adventure, the team will encounter war's tragic vignettes. It's about the survivors and what they're suffering through right now. In previous conflicts, the characters probably didn't notice their unintentional victims. Here they have no choice. Here, wherever they turn, another hand begs for help. Throughout the course of this adventure, the Storyteller can play out several tragic vignettes that have nothing to do with the adventure and everything to do with the real victims of this conflict. By the same token, the adventure is open-ended for the Storyteller to ignore optional mini-scenes and play the high-action scenarios alone. Additionally, the Storyteller can add scenes, including baseline rioters looking for answers to the devastation, looters robbing Ibiza's historical wealth and rape gangs taking advantage of the chaos.

Scene One: The Amp Ruin

The destruction of Ibiza Town is painfully evident. Many homes and businesses wear the scars of machine-gun fire and blast marks, while entire buildings lie in piles of rubble and detritus. The sky is alive with thunder of varying pitch, pops of multi-hued energy discharges and the muffled, dull stutter of patrolling helicopter gun ships. Meanwhile, trains of refugees, shell-shocked and saucer eyed, carry their life's remnants on their backs and stumble away from the city's core. Only the dead sleep in Ibiza.

On a side note: Some characters with Bloodhound, ESP, Luck or Pretercognition might try to circumvent scenes and acts by using their powers to track down Ragnarockette or Orzaiz directly. While the Storyteller shouldn't frustrate the players and make them feel useless, this investigative method will not work. There is so much destruction and misery in the air that isolating two individuals among a population of 40,000 locals (not to mention the thousands of tourists) is impossible. The smell of exposed sewers, the dead and all the dust eliminate tracking through scent (+8 to difficulty). Cognitive abilities reveal a dozen deaths with each glance. Probability-affecting powers lead the characters to baseline victims on the verge of expiration; while quantum-discerning senses illuminate a web of power from the many novas.

The Setting

The Amp Room, situated on Calle Obispo, rests in the heart of Sa Penya at the base of the once-magnificent D'Alt Vila. The devastation is overwhelming. T2M's Tremor accidentally collapsed

Travel Tip #1: Don't Fly Around Ibiza Town

The Directive uses the CSH-2 Rooivalk combat support helicopter for their nova-suppression requirements. Designed by South African manufacturer Armscor, the Rooivalk works with highly mobile ground forces. During various equatorial conflicts, however, it proved a popular choice against enemy novas and far cheaper than the highly capable, American-built stealth chopper, the RAH-66 Comanche.

The two-man Rooivalk possesses air-to-air missiles, laser-guided anti-tank missiles, 68mm rockets, a hydraulic-actuated 20mm gun mount and a 30mm cannon. Its onboard systems include a highly advanced targeting array, recording devices and fire-resistant flight controls, while the heavy armor protects the crew, ammunition bays and vital fluid systems. Additionally, it can stay in the air for extended sorties thanks to its hypercombustion engines. Armscor approached the Rooivalk design with this philosophy:

If detected — avoid being hit; if hit — avoid crashing; if a crash is unavoidable — ensure crew survival.

Rooivalk

Safe Speed	Max Speed	Maneuver Passengers	Armor	Cost	
360	600	9	2	4 [10]

Rooivalk's Heavy Weapons Chart

Type	ACC	Damage	Range	RoF	Capacity	Mass
20mm cannon +2	7d10 L [5]	700	21	1000	50	
30mm cannon 0	8d10 L [5]	800	21	1000	50	
Air-to-air missiles +4	10d10 L [8]	4 km	1	10	140	
Antitank missile +4	12d10 L [10]	2500	1	8	120	
68mm rockets +2	14d10 L [12]	40 km	1	12	150	

a portion of D'Alt Vila fortress and the northern hillside buildings of Sa Penya like a domino chain. A slope of rubble and rock, a truckload high, rests along many north-south axis streets, eventually petering off a few blocks away from Sa Marina. Traveling toward D'Alt Vila, is an exercise in rock climbing. Anyone scaling the mountain of debris must succeed in a standard Athletics roll. Otherwise they'll stumble, trigger a mini-landslide and bring down 2d10 B damage on their heads.

Darkness covers the entire area. Electricity is out for several days, and snapped pipes spill running water into the streets. The east-west axis roads are tiny islands trapped at the intersections by veins of debris. Rubble surrounds the Amp Room like a wave breaking around a swimmer. Debris one story high chokes Calle Obispo, while adjacent Calle Jaime I is a small, isolated block-long pocket free of detritus, but pinched off at either corner. The only accessible entrances to the Amp Room are a partially knocked down wall on Calle Jaime I, the completely shattered skylight and the third-story windows.

The Amp Room's interior is a write-off. Stress and tremor fractures riddle the floor and walls, every glass fixture is broken, and many balconies in the once-airy interior are either missing or in danger of falling. In fact, the only things keeping the Amp Room together are air and Thorn's vines. Realizing Tremor's landslide was bringing the building down, Thorn quickly reinforced the walls with a latticework of roots and vines before escaping. Now the Amp Room interior looks overgrown and neglected, like a decade's growth of jungle reclaiming abandoned ruins. A green web of vines creeps across the walls, while thick roots weave through the broken floor like stitching. Thorn's quick fix won't last, however. The Amp Room is structurally unsound

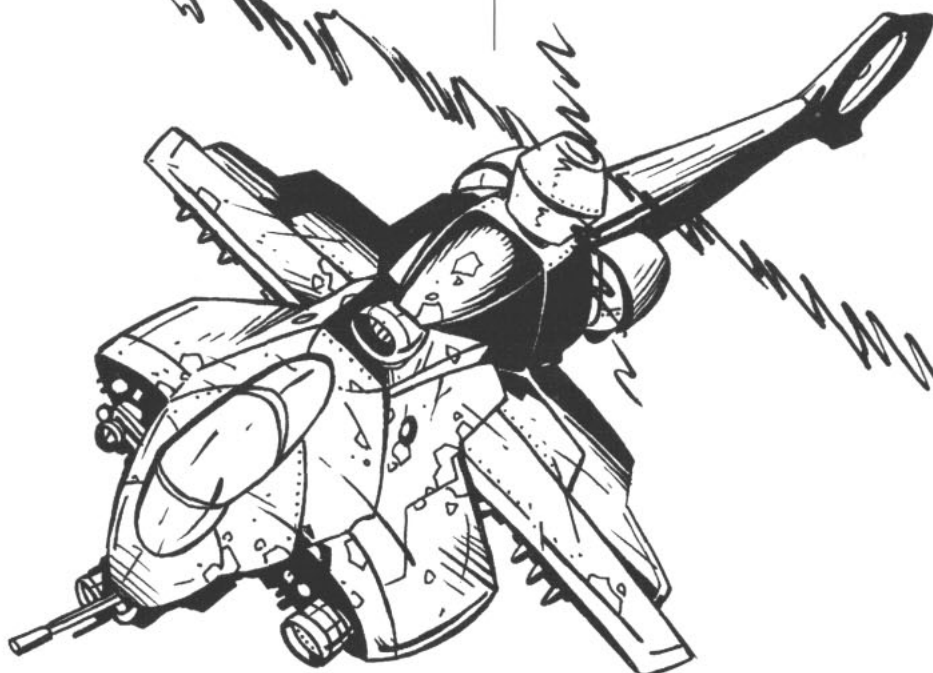
and looking for any reason to fall. Only the ground floor can support weight.

Searching the Ruins

When the characters arrive, they aren't alone in the Amp Room. A nova bouncer by the name of Agathe Hembrook shifts through the rubble looking for survivors. The only light slips in through the shattered skylight or comes off Hembrook's anima nimbus. Hembrook isn't looking to fight; she's exhausted and crying a steady stream of tears while clearing debris from bodies. She doesn't even acknowledge the team's entrance. Instead, she liberates corpses belonging to Amp Room staff whom she worked with for several months. Many were her friends. Hembrook continues crying as the confirmation of each death hits her like a train. She continues digging because the hope of finding survivors is the only thing she has left. Without it, the significance of the situation will overwhelm her.

If the characters stand around and pester Hembrook with questions, she'll scream at them to help her. She's desperate to find survivors amidst all the death. If the characters work alongside her to clear away rubble, they can coax the following information from her:

- Team Tomorrow Europe raided the Amp Room and triggered a massive riot. Several groups took the fighting outside, after which, Hembrook saved those she could.
- "Ironskin" Andy Vance and Jake "Dragon" Korelli took the wounded to the hospital, but Hembrook heard from a passerby that there's a field hospital in Parc de la Pau handling the overflow. Vance probably went there, since it's closer.
- Hembrook was in the middle of the melee and saw Vance and Korelli knock Ragnarockette through the northern wall. Sure enough, there's a hole near a sec-



ond-floor window. Using line-of-sight trajectory to find Ragnarockette won't work, however.

- While Hembrook saw Orzaiz briefly during the combat, she lost track of him. If the characters are looking for Orzaiz or anybody else, they can check the bodies that Hembrook pulled out of the rubble.

There are a dozen corpses and unconscious novas strewn about the premises, with several more buried beneath rubble. Those strong enough to walk already left, despite Hembrook's pleas for help. The Storyteller can lighten the scene through Optional Vignette #2 (further down).

Maurice Lourté is among the dead, his back snapped from falling debris. The characters should find him easily since he's part of the team's mission objectives regardless of their affiliation. This apparently ends that portion of the investigation, but this little clue will haunt them later when they confront the Terat shapeshifter Turncoat, who's currently posing as Lourté. This takes place in Act III.

If, for any reason, the characters forcibly hinder Hembrook from her work, she flies into a rage. The characters are stopping her from searching for survivors, the only thing keeping her sane. Hembrook isn't a murderer, but she has seen her friends and loved ones killed. She isn't rational right now. Hembrook's write-up is at the end of Act I.

Optional Vignette #1: Woman in Crisis

After the characters exit the Amp Room and are ready depart for their next objective (likely the field hospital in Parc de la Pau) they hear cries for help. A woman, nine months into term, clambers over rocks and debris trying to reach the heroes. One wrong step and she'll likely crack her neck in the fall; she appears oblivious to the threat. She stops every few seconds and clutches her belly in pain. She's about to give birth, and she's desperate.

If the team helps the woman, they can't fly her anywhere, especially with the current skirmishes between flight borne novas and the Rooivalk choppers. The woman's name is Sandia, and she beseeches the team; she doesn't want her unborn baby to die amongst this devastation. As if emphasizing her point, she stumbles against a wall and lowers herself to the ground. She's breathing rapidly and crying out in great pain. Anyone with the Medicine Ability knows she's going into contractions and is about to give birth. The Storyteller can certainly play this scene out with a simple roll, asking the character to succeed in a standard Medicine test, but where's the fun in that. Instead, the Storyteller should roleplay the situation.

Any character with Medicine knows he'll need clean blankets to keep the baby warm and some means of sterilizing whatever implement's used to cut the umbilical cord. Another character will need to keep Sandia company. Lastly, somebody must provide illumination.

If nobody possesses Medicine, then Hembrook can help with First Aid (if she's conscious). She needs the team's help, but it's up to them to decide who completes which task. In any case, Hembrook assists to the best of

her abilities. Additionally, if the team knocked Hembrook out before she could relate any information, Sandia provides an excellent lead-in to the field hospital. She was on her way there when her water broke. She and her newborn baby require proper care, and the field hospital is her best bet. The team must transport her there.

Optional Vignette #2: The Show that Brought Down the House.

In this scenario, the characters find a nova survivor pinned beneath rubble. Whether this occurs after Sandia's birth or when the characters are about to leave, they hear a voice crying for help from beneath a pile of debris. If Hembrook is present, she locates the voice and pulls rubble away. If the characters ignore Hembrook's plea for assistance, so be it. While walking away, the characters hear a rumble from behind them. The Amp Room collapses completely, killing Hembrook, the would-be survivor and three or four unconscious novas. The Storyteller should emphasize to the team that their indifference just resulted in six more deaths in a city already choked on bodies.

If the characters help Hembrook clear the debris, they notice that the balconies and surrounding structure are groaning under the pressure. The rubble is partially supporting the weight of the walls. Clearing it collapses the building. If the characters point this out to Hembrook, she will listen. She isn't suicidal or stupid; she's simply eager to save one more life in this hellhole. Hembrook will not abandon the survivor, however, and insists they all find a way of supporting the walls long enough to clear the debris.

The victim is currently under two tons of rubble and too weak to use his abilities. Moving the debris without supporting the surrounding walls causes an immediate cave-in well before the team reaches the victim. The resulting collapse incurs 30d10 B [20 health levels instantly]. Of course, there are ways around this dilemma, mostly involving powers and abilities. The key is not brute strength, but the manner in which it is used.

Several powers, including Plant Mastery, Elemental Anima, Gravity Control, Magnetic Mastery, Matter Creation, Mega-Strength, Sizemorph (Grow) and Telekinesis are all viable means of supporting the walls while the team clears the rubble. Disintegration, Molecular Manipulation, Density Control (Decrease) with the Affect Others Extra and Warp can also extricate the victim immediately or remove debris. In both cases, however, these powers either displace rubble or provide structural support in the wrong places. The proper way to clear the debris while keeping the Amp Room standing is through an Engineering skill roll at +1 difficulty. If the character succeeds, he can use available resources to rescue the victim without engineering a collapse. If the characters do not possess Engineering, they can use a default Intelligence roll at +3 difficulty. If they fail, their last hope is to provide as much overhead support as possible, clear the debris and hope they can withstand the collapse.

Travel Tip #2: Please Don't Annoy the Heavily Armed Natives

The Spanish army knows better than to enter Sa Penya or D'Alt Vila where the fighting is heaviest. They'll send occasional patrols into the "No Man's Land" sandwiched between Sa Penya and Calle Obispo Huix to the west and Avenida Bme. De Rossello to the north. This area is partially affected by fighting, with one or two destroyed structures per block. Otherwise, most buildings suffered only superficial damage.

Army jeeps and APCs barricade Calle Obispo Huix itself, while the defenses at De Rossello are under heavier attack. Several novas have already ventured as far as the Formentera Ferry Terminal to the north, but the combined contingents of Directive Rooivalks and army jeeps have successfully fortified the De Rossello barricades. Consequently, military vehicles are concentrated to the north, with less support in the west.

Anybody approaching Obispo Huix or De Rossello must stop at the checkpoints. Soldiers will likely detain novas during questioning, asking them about their business in Ibiza, when they arrived and if they're responsible for the fighting in Sa Penya. The soldiers are obviously nervous, however, and do little to aggravate the already volatile situation. If novas are bringing wounded to the field hospital, they can pass. If novas refuse to stop for questioning, are caught sneaking through the roadblocks or are otherwise involved in the destruction of property, the Storyteller can use the following templates for the Spanish soldiers who will try and arrest them.

Spanish Soldier

Physical Attributes and Wits 3, all other Attributes 2; Awareness 1, Brawl or Martial Arts 2, Bureaucracy 1, Drive 2, Firearms 3, Interrogation 2, Might 2, Resistance 3, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2; Willpower 4; automatic pistol, SMG or assault rifle (with grenade launcher mounted underneath), jeep, flak jacket.

Vehicles

Vehicle	Safe Speed	Max Speed	Maneuver	Passengers	Armor
Army Jeep †	125	200	6	5	5
Armored Personnel Carrier	80	120	4	5	5 [10]

† The jeep is armed with a 30mm cannon (see *Aberrant*, p. 276).

The nova victim in this instance is a blank slate and dependent on the Storyteller for life. The Storyteller can introduce a new team ally through the victim. Initially, he or she will be barely conscious and needs a week to recover from the ordeal. Subsequently, he seeks the team out to reward them for saving him. Unusual roleplaying scenarios include a would-be villain who fosters an uneasy respect for Project Utopia-style heroes, a mass-murderer whose new lease on life sends her on a murderous binge in the name of her saviors, a future love-interest for one of the rescuers or a nova who aspires to emulate the team's philosophy (the ultimate Terat, the deadliest DeVries Agency elite, more heroic than Caestus Pax, etc.). Until then, or unless healed, the new nova needs hospitalization.

Scene Two: Rendezvous at the Field Hospital

Whether the team arrives with patients or not, the emergency field hospital in Parc de la Pau should be their next stop. Everyone and anyone injured within Sa Penya district is heading there as well, carefully avoiding streets where novas still clash. The field hospital is also a safe zone of sorts where there's no fighting. Several blocks east, at Calle Obispo Huix, the Spanish army has drawn its line in the sand with barricades and overturned cars. It patrols the streets and controls the intersections to ensure no fighting spreads further west. Unfortunately, a few battles do occur behind their border, but these skirmishes are rare and quickly terminated when the Spanish army shows

up with their 20mm gun mounted jeeps. For possible encounters with patrols, see the Travel Tip #2 sidebar.

The Setting

Parc de la Pau is an island of green grass and shade-giving trees in an otherwise crowded city. Tonight, the park is a little slice of hell on earth. The army rushes to erect more tents around the injured lying on the soft grass, and they've already built a central pavilion for surgery. There aren't enough cots to go around, forcing many to sleep on blankets beneath the temperate summer sky or under a canopy of branches. When the team arrives, the field hospital is a hive of activity, with army doctors and first aid trained civilians doing triage on the spot. The sound of wailing and crying fills the air.

The conditions in Parc de la Pau are so stifling that the doctors are moving injured into the smaller, but immediately adjacent park Mercat Nou. The Spanish army, meanwhile, commandeered neighboring Hostal Aragón as its headquarters during this crisis. Many tourists are either fleeing to the western hotels that are already booked beyond capacity or crowding Es Codolar International Airport, five-and-a-half kilometers east of Ibiza Town.

Parc de la Pau itself consists of one large central pavilion for surgery, three smaller pavilions for triage of the critically injured who can't be moved and hundreds of patients lying down wherever exhaustion claims them. Army engineers set up two tents for the emergency generators, but only the main pavilion has any power yet. The overtaxed doctors, nurses, orderlies and drafted helpers are unable to institute any semblance of order, leaving behind a hectic maze of injured and dying. Attendants move through the crowd with wheelbarrows, picking up the dead and

transporting them to pickup trucks waiting in the streets. These corpses are bound for the emergency mortuary. Patients, meanwhile, reach out to anyone moving past them, pleading for help, begging for someone to remove their pain.

Searching for Ironskin and Dragon

Searching for "Ironskin" Andy Vance and Jake "Dragon" Korelli in this sea of suffering is not easy. Only a handful of people (mostly doctors) know the two novas are currently in the main pavilion helping the surgeons treat a nova patient. Otherwise, the characters must search the park and walk among the wounded. Even if the team heads straight for the pavilions in the center of Parc de la Pau, they'll still pass the rows of injured. This is a difficult situation for anyone, especially characters with Healing, Natural Empath or the Medicine or Rapport Abilities. The Storyteller should require anyone with Rapport or Natural Empath to roll against their ratings, using their dots in either as the difficulty value (therefore somebody with two dots in Rapport rolls against +2 difficulty, while a person with three dots rolls against +3). The Storyteller can require the same of characters with Healing or Medicine but at base difficulty. If a character fails her roll, she feels obligated to stay and help unless she spends Willpower to continue with her mission. Should anyone use Medicine to help a patient, the doctors immediately come over and press the character into service. They are overwhelmed and need help desperately.

Should a character unthinkingly use Healing, however, they become the center of a storm of injured who run, stumble and crawl to them. In this case, neither the doctors nor the Spanish army are willing to let the character leave. People die by the handful each passing minute and the local medical personnel are beleaguered by the destruction. If the characters insist on leaving, the doctors ask, rather upset: "What can be so important that it's worth more than a person's life? Every minute you stand here arguing, somebody dies. We can't heal everyone, but you can. You can help dozens in the time it takes us to treat one person. Please, don't let these people die."

Meanwhile, Vance is in the central pavilion with Korelli, helping the doctors hold down a badly burned nova. Second- and third-degree burns cover the nova, but his powers quickly metabolize all painkillers or sedatives, lessening their effects. The man screams in agony and thrashes about, preventing the doctors from treating the burns. Only Vance and Korelli have the strength to hold the man down and inject the drugs past his already hardened epidermis. Eventually Korelli uses a nerve-strike to knock the nova unconscious. This allows Vance to speak with the characters briefly. Korelli, on the other hand, eager for action, gives Vance a kiss and heads back to Sa Penya to help the army bring down some troublesome novas. The adrenaline-deprived Korelli hasn't seen this much action in months.

Vance, if unfamiliar with the characters, is suspicious of their motives but too tired to really hold back on infor-

mation. The quickest way to gain his trust is if the characters mention their friendship or ties to Orzaiz. The slowest is if the team says they're looking for Ragnarockette. Vance isn't a killer; he's a nice guy, but he's currently infuriated with T2M and Project Utopia for sanctioning a raid that's responsible for devastating Ibiza Town. Vance was there, and he knows T2M's culpability in the matter. Anyone who asks Vance about the attack receives an earful. He isn't looking to fight, but he wants an explanation for whatever action necessitated this level of destruction. As far as he's concerned, T2M Europe was negligent and should be held responsible for all this death.

Since Vance isn't protecting any secrets, the characters can learn the following during the conversation.

- Seconds before the raid began, a nova seated at the rear of the nightclub screamed in pain and staggered from his chair, clutching his head. Orzaiz, sitting two tables away with Lourté (Vance recognizes him only by his picture), made a move for the man, as did Vance. Before either reached him, however, tremors ripped through the ground.

- Vance lost track of the patron during the fight and never got a clear look at him. It was Turncoat disguised as Lourté; Orzaiz brought Turncoat to secretly scan the defector's thoughts, but the process backfired. Unbeknownst to anyone, Turncoat now believes he's Lourté and has assumed his personality. Vance does recognize Lourté's photo (if the characters show it to him) as having arrived a few minutes earlier and sat down with Orzaiz. According to Vance, it couldn't be the same man who screamed in pain since Lourté was seated with Orzaiz when the attack happened.

- T2M Europe triggered the riot through a raid on the Amp Room. They unsuccessfully tried using tremors and flash-bang grenades to disorient the nova crowd. Since T2M didn't present an arrest warrant or any other official papers stating their business in relation to their duties with Project Utopia, both Vance and Korelli treated them like any hostile nova patron.

- Initially T2M focused more on Raoul Orzaiz than anyone else, but they were looking for other people in the crowd. Several novas, however, protected Orzaiz and kept saving the Teragen spokesman from being overwhelmed. Vance eventually lost track of Orzaiz when the fight completely degenerated.

- Yes, Vance and Korelli were responsible for knocking Ragnarockette out of the building, but he has no clue where she landed. Vance acted in defense of the nightclub. Once the fight moved outside, they had done their job, and neither Korelli nor he pursued further hostilities. Unfortunately, a landslide forced him out of the Amp Room. Vance and Korelli spent the remainder of their time digging survivors out from the wreckage. By the time they made their way out of Sa Penya, the field hospital was already gathering injured.

- On a final but very important note, Vance does remember one thing that could help the characters. There was a news crew for N! filming a nova fashion show in the Amp Room that evening. They caught most of the fighting on disk, but their film may also show Orzaiz's disappearance or the mysterious

nova that fled in pain. Unfortunately, the reporter and her team got in the way of a nova battle shortly after the destruction of D'Alt Vila. The reporter died, while the cameraman, Michael Graff, was badly injured. Graff pocketed the film before Vance and Korelli took him to the field hospital.

Vance takes the characters to the ER tent where he brought Graff. Unfortunately, the cameraman is no longer there. The doctors inform them, Graff died from head trauma injuries shortly after arriving. The attendants took his body to the makeshift morgue set up in a gymnasium, a kilometer north of Ibiza Town along Route C-733, near the community of Puig d'en Vallis. Any possessions went with him to facilitate identification. This leads into Act II.

The Hospital Brawl

After the characters finish speaking with Vance, a loud explosion rocks the park and a fireball demolishes a building one block south of Parc de la Pau on Avenida España. Windows in a three-block area, including those facing the park, shatter, sending out a rain of cutting shrapnel. Falling glass hurts dozens of people; it's doubtful anyone survived the building's destruction. Snow then begins falling on the hospital, and temperatures dip a noticeable five degrees. Vance yells, "We have to stop this before they reach the hospital," and runs down Calle Canarias, toward the demolished building.

Two novas, Henry "The Bomber" Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze, just blew through the army's barricades on Calle Obispo Huix. They're currently in a destructive brawl in the middle of the street. Further east, the Spanish army races to the scene in three jeeps and will arrive after five turns. Two Rooivalk choppers are another three turns behind the ground forces. Vance, however, is two turns away from reaching Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze. If the characters do not intervene, Vance cannot stop the two novas on his own. To worsen the situation, the Spanish army arrives and opens fire on any nova in the area, including Vance. Initially, all three novas resist the ground fire, but when the Rooivalks appear, all hell breaks loose.

Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze enter Parc de la Pau, hoping to lose the Spanish army and Vance, but they end up dragging the fight through the injured masses. Maybaker, along with 40 innocents, dies in the melee, while Blitz-Freeze is knocked out. It is only through the doctor's intervention that the Spanish army releases the unharmed Vance from custody.

If the characters help Vance against Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze, then the team can hopefully stop the two novas before they cause more damage. From the time Vance heads for the brawl, the team has five turns to get there and stop Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze. After the five turns, three army jeeps with 20mm machine guns arrive and order everyone to stop fighting. Obviously, Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze will not, forcing the Spanish army to open fire, unless the characters can convince them otherwise. If the situation is not resolved by the time the Rooivalks appear (three turns after the ground forces first arrived), Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze break for the hospital, hoping to lose their pursuers. Unwilling to incur further casualties, the Spanish army opens fire on all novas to stop them before anyone reaches the park.

The best option is to stop Maybaker and Blitz-Freeze before the army arrives and leave quickly. Otherwise, the Spanish authorities will try to detain the team for questioning and won't release them until they can confirm their stories. This obviously takes a few days, since the rioting takes precedence. Of course, the characters can always escape or leave, but that makes them fugitives. Whether the soldiers open fire is



up to the Storyteller and largely dependent on how the characters reacted to the situation.

Optional Vignette #4: Caught in the Act

A CBN television news crew reporting from the field hospital recorded the characters in action, whether it was the Maybaker/Blitz-Freeze brawl or a character tending to the injured. This is a direct violation of the team's mandate to stay hidden. Now the characters must decide how they'll treat the matter. Will they steal the recording with them on it or ignore the reporters. Obviously, the taping wasn't a direct feed, given the problems with communication in and around Ibiza Town. This means the characters have time to retrieve the optical DVD.

The lead reporter is Thea Wong; the cameraman is Marcus Esellinger. Both are baselines and no match for novvas. The characters could simply strong-arm the disk from the two, but not without a dozen witnesses to the attack. By the same token, Wong and Esellinger won't simply surrender the disk even "in the interests of international security" (if the team is stupid enough to try a line like that). Instead, this piques Wong's curiosity even more. She and Esellinger subsequently shadow the team, recording their movements and continually badgering them with questions as to their presence in Ibiza Town and their political affiliations. Essentially, they'll hamper the characters' activities.

Mega-Social Attributes and enhancements like Awe-Inspiring, Persuader or Commanding Presence are the quickest and quietest solution to the situation. Using mental powers such as Hypnosis or Telepathy to steal the recorded disk and alter Wong and Esellinger's thoughts are also viable, if risky. If the characters attack the television crew, but allow either Wong or Esellinger to see them, Wong will hunt for the team's identities after Ibiza Town. CBN will even post computerized renderings of Wong's assailants on its OpNet site, with a \$500,000 reward for any substantiated lead on the team. If the characters have been recorded in the news before, Wong will discover that and accuse the characters of theft. This can prove rather tiresome for teams trying to keep their identities hidden or their records spotless. Wong filed her accusations with Project Utopia, meaning the characters now have criminal records for theft and assault (if they didn't already). Of course, if the team works for Project Utopia, the complaint is conveniently lost, and the characters are privately reprimanded for the lapse in judgment.

Optional Vignette #5: No Tears for the Dying

Typical with emergency situations such as this, doctors move through the crowds, making snap-decisions as to a patient's condition. Using colored rags or plastic twist-ties, the doctors mark individuals according to perceived priority. Only the red tags receive immediate attention and surgery. The yellows are for later treatment, regardless the severity of complaints, while the blues are left for

dead. As brutal as this sounds, beyond-critical patients require too much effort and time to treat. Even then, their life expectancy is slim to non-existent. With the influx of injured, the doctors can't afford to spend too many resources on one person. They must weigh their decision against the needs of everybody else.

In this scenario, a distraught man by the name of Richard makes his way to the most imposing or charismatic character. He holds a boy in his arms. Eight-year-old Emmanuel is near death; none of the doctors will help him because of the blue twist-tie around his wrist. Richard is desperate for help, any help. He begs to character to look at his son... talk to a doctor... anything! Just save his boy.

A Medicine roll of standard difficulty reveals what the doctors already know. The boy's suffering from serious internal injuries. His kidneys are perforated and poisoning him, and the doctors don't have a dialysis machine to keep him on life support or a kidney transplant to save him. Toxins have already entered the blood stream and will kill Emmanuel within the next half-hour. Flying the boy to a major hospital outside Ibiza Town might work if only to place Emmanuel on a dialysis machine. Again, time is of the essence. Healing him is another option, though this opens a different can of worms, as discussed previously. If the characters have neither alternative available, Emmanuel will die.

If the team asks a doctor to save the Emmanuel, the physician quietly explains the situation. As heartless as it sounds, Emmanuel is already dead; his body simply hasn't expired yet. There's nothing for them to do. Operating on him requires serious surgical procedures to seal the failing kidney, and even then, the chance of success is negligible. The doctors can't spare the resources or manpower when the Ibiza conflict isn't even over yet. Characters with Medicine (Surgery) can attempt the reparation themselves if they can convince the doctors to give them a chance (and they can prove their medical acumen). The surgical procedure is a Medicine roll at +4 difficulty. Even then, Emmanuel will only survive for another day. He needs a dialysis machine and a proper implant.

If the character succeeds, then the impressed doctors bring him more trauma cases. Again, they need help. If the character refuses, the doctor asks, "By what right does this boy alone deserve your skill and nobody else? How can you fight for one child and not save another?"

Dramatis Personae

"Ironskin" Andy Vance

Background: Born and raised in small town Cody, Wyoming, Andy Vance has the dual distinction of being openly gay and a nova of some repute. As the first meta-normal to erupt in his state, Andy has since gone on to champion gay rights, work PR for DeVries and co-manage the Amp Room during Ibiza's summer-party season. Well built, well traveled



and well spoken, Vance is in his element when dealing with people and laying on a generous helping of his nova charm.

Vance knows and likes Count Raoul Orzaiz. Vance may not agree with the Teragen, but he recognizes and respects Orzaiz's skills in public relations. Vance and he are not so different.

Image: Playing the PR shtick to the hilt, Vance is always well dressed in public and exceptionally handsome. With a cut body surpassing most novas', Vance knows how to play up his sensual and flirtatious nature and enjoys showing off his developed assets in the Amp Room. Around other novas, he can be quite the exhibitionist.

Roleplaying Hints: You know how to use your body and sensuality to catch other people off guard. You aren't cheap, however, and understand the nuances between flirtatious and slutty. You keep strangers at a distance, playing your privacy with a charm that makes you seem mysterious and coy. Behind your toothpaste-ad smile and soft eyes, however, is a keen instinct for understanding people and their intentions. Your body, while on public display, is meant for one person alone: Jake Korelli, your husband.

Gear: Cell phone, white Versace suit.

Nature: Hedonist

Allegiance: The Amp Room

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 5, Manipulation 4, Charisma 4

Abilities: Arts 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Endurance 5, Etiquette 4, Intimidation 1, Linguistics 3 (Native: English; Arabic, German, Spanish), Resistance 5, Style 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3 (Travius Diaz and Jake "Dragon" Korelli), Backing 2, Contacts 5, Influence 3, Node 2, Resources 4

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 6, Taint 1

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Crush), Mega-Stamina ••••• (Hardbody, Resiliency), Mega-Wits • (Artistic

Genius), Mega-Appearance •• (First Impression), Mega-Charisma ••• (Dreadful Mien, Seductive), Armor •••••, Force Field ••, Invulnerability (Mental Attacks) •••••, Invulnerability (Cutting Attacks) ••, Invulnerability (Energy Attacks) ••• (Broad Category)

Jake "Dragon" Korelli

Background: Once upon a time, Korelli was a successful DeVries Elite with a dozen notches for completed missions, wars and sorties. Ever since his marriage to Vance, however, Korelli has stayed by his husband's side with nary a complaint. Still, he can feel his once razor-sharp skills dull and aches for the rush of combat and warfare. While the events in Ibiza Town are a tragedy, Korelli can't help but thrill at the prospect of life-threatening battles. Vance doesn't like this aspect of his husband but knows Korelli has sacrificed much for the marriage, and he cannot begrudge Korelli this battle. During the Ibiza conflict, Korelli prowls the streets, fighting and arresting rampaging novas for the Spanish army.

Gear: Karate uniform.

Nature: Thrillseeker

Allegiance: "Ironskin" Andy Vance

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Appearance 4, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness (Troublemakers) 4, Command 2, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Intimidation 1, Martial Arts (Shotokan Karate) 5, Resistance 3, Survival 2

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 6, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Strength ••••• (Quantum Leap, Thunderclap), Mega-Dexterity ••••• (Rapid Strike), Mega-Stamina ••••• (Resiliency, Regeneration), Mega-Perception • (Blindfighting), Mega-Wits ••• (Enhanced Initiative, Quickness x 3), Boost (Stamina) •••••, Claws



●●●, Force Field ●●, Luck ●●●, Quantum Blast (Fire Breath — Lethal) ●●●●

Agathe "Sunbolt" Hembrook

Background: For Agathe Hembrook, life began when she erupted. Before then, she believed she was nothing, a docile woman willing to put up with an abusive husband because he feigned interest. During a particularly nasty altercation, however, she erupted, blinding her husband with an unintentional blast of white light. For the following months, guilt kept her by her man's side, even after he lashed out with his fists. He couldn't hurt her anymore, and with that realization, her fears vanished. Hembrook lost her guilt and gained power over her life for the first time in years. Exhilarated by the quantum rush, she never wanted to be normal or vulnerable again. She abandoned her baseline life and went to work for the DeVries Agency. From there, she made friends with Jake Korelli, her martial-arts instructor, who eventually offered her a summer job at the Amp Room.

Gear: None.

Nature: Caregiver

Allegiance: The Amp Room

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Appearance 4, Manipulation 2, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 2, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Endurance 3, Firearms 1, Intimidation 2, Linguistics 2 (Native: English; Spanish, French), Martial Arts (Shotokan Karate) 2, Medicine 2, Might 1, Rapport 2, Resistance 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (Andy Vance and Jake Korelli), Resources 2

Quantum 2, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 7, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Strength ● (Lifter), Mega-Dexterity ●● (Rapid Strike), Mega-Stamina ●●● (Hardbody, Regeneration), Absorption (Kinetic) ●●●, Bioluminescence ●●,



Strobe (Light) ●●●, Quantum Bolt (Laser Blast — Lethal) ●●

Henry "The Bomber" Maybaker

Background: Maybaker's a living bomb, a perpetual explosion of plasma energy. He's also the rudest git on both sides of the English Channel. Even before his eruption, he was the sort of fellow who'd attend soccer matches just to start a riot, which he did, many times. Finally, one day, he pushed the wrong fans too far, and they ambushed him outside the stadium. He didn't erupt until they set him on fire, but when he did, his flash flare turned five attackers into piles of scorched offal. Maybaker discovered he liked killing people even more than starting riots and hired himself out to local gangs as an enforcer. He's been murdering innocents ever since.

Gear: Rolex, flak jacket.

Nature: Thrillseeker

Allegiance: Individualist

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Appearance 3, Manipulation 2, Charisma 2

Abilities: Athletics 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Drive 2, Endurance 4, Firearms 2, Intimidation 3, Legerdemain 2, Might 3, Resistance 3, Streetwise 3

Backgrounds: Attunement 3

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 4, Taint 4 (Glow)

Powers: Mega-Strength ●●● (Crush, Shockwave, Quantum Leap), Mega-Stamina ● (Adaptability), Disintegration ●●● (Range), Immolate (Explosive Plasma — Lethal) ●●●● (Explosion)

Darren "Blitz-Freeze" Paskey

Background: Darren Paskey is an unusual candidate for a nova, much less a DeVries Elite. After erupting late



in life, the 50-year old Paskey was in much better health than his ailing wife or peers, who were already settling into Florida's retirement villages. Paskey found himself alienated from other novas because of age and from his own wife and friends because they couldn't keep up with his renewed vigor. Paskey, a former attorney, eventually left his life behind and tried redirecting his energies elsewhere. That's when he applied to the DeVries Agency. Unfortunately, Paskey is a loner and prone to brooding. His current assignment has him pursuing a British punk named Henry "The Bomber" Maybaker for arrest. He tracked the vacationing Maybaker to Ibiza and is using the chaos to go full out with his powers.

Gear: Laser electroshock pistol (see *Aberrant: Elites*, p. 70), locket with picture of wife inside.

Nature: Bureaucrat

Allegiance: The DeVries Agency

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Appearance 2, Manipulation 3, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics (Law) 4, Awareness 3, Biz 1, Bureaucracy 3, Command 2, Computer 1, Endurance 3, Intimidation 3, Investigation 2, Linguistics 3 (Native: English; French, German, Italian), Martial Arts (Tae Kwon Do) 2, Resistance 2

Backgrounds: Backing 3 (DeVries Agency), Eufiber 2, Resources 3

Quantum 5, Quantum Pool 30, Willpower 7, Taint 4 (Colored Skin [ice-blue])

Powers: Mega-Dexterity ●●● (Accuracy, Fast Tasks, Rapid Strike), Mega-Perception ●● (Electromagnetic Vision), Mega-Wits ●● (Quickness), Elemental Mastery (Ice) ●●●● (Imprison, Lethal Blast, Shield, Storm)

Act II: Introduction

The night drags into the earliest hours of the morning, and some fighting has subsided. The Directive and the Spanish army have clear authority over the skies, but the ground belongs to novas. Reports indicate T2M Europe has withdrawn from Ibiza Town due to stiff resistance and political pressure from the Spanish government, while their Teragen counterparts lay low. People fully expect T2M to launch an all out offensive against Ibiza Town, clearing out nests of novas. President Sabatini, disgusted with the events of the last few hours, however, prefers to settle the matter internally and forego anymore of Project Utopia's "help." People on the street whisper of an impending armed invasion by Spanish forces and escape the city by the thousands each hour. Many head for the safety of Ibiza's coastal villages to the west, while most evacuate to the tiny city of Sant Antoni de Portmany. The capital grows stiller by the hour.

Act II sees the characters dragged deeper into Ibiza's conflict, but now, their objectives grow clearer. There is a light at the end of the tunnel but so much interceding darkness left. Again, can the characters remain objective despite the horrors that await them? Can they be both heroes and loyal to their organizations, or is their indifference a sign of events to come?

Scene One: The Mortuary

Since the fighting in Ibiza Town continues, rescuers cannot enter the truly devastated areas in Sa Penya and D'Alt Vila. Three-hundred corpses fill the makeshift mortuary as opposed to the 1,240 who will have perished by conflict's end. Most victims still lie where they died, beneath tons of rubble and debris.

The Setting

The emergency mortuary is in a public gymnasium, north of Ibiza Town along Route C-733. This is outside the city by a mere kilometer and currently away from most of the fighting or patrols. The team can reach it from the field hospital without crossing any blockades or checkpoints. The facility itself serves as a civic center for the community of Puig d'en Vallis, and contains a basketball court, indoor swimming pool, tiny weight room and several class-rooms for the local children. Currently, it's a repository for corpses.

The bodies are all being kept in the enclosed gym, which is accessible from the exterior parking lot. It's a typical basketball court like that found in most elementary schools, with two nets, a high-vaulted ceiling with windows at the top, wood floorboards and retractable

bleachers that are currently pushed against the length-side walls. At the rear of the basketball court is a small stage with side stairs and adjoining alcove wings filled with stacked chairs and folded tables. The attendants set their work desk on the stage and are cataloguing the dead through any IDs they possess.

The military already installed a small generator to power the lights while the gym's windows and doors are open to the night air, bleeding away the inevitable stink of decay. The bodies are lined up in neat rows and sealed in either body bags or beneath a plastic tarp. All identification is placed atop the corpse's shroud to facilitate confirmation of the victim without having to look at the cadaver directly. The more valuable IDs that fetch a high price on the black market, such as charge cards, American passports and Social Security cards and Canadian passports and Social Insurance cards, are mysteriously absent. The morgue's attendants are collecting quite the nest's egg for their retirement.

Near the double-door exit are the bodies of three men (including one brought over in the next scene) so horribly obese that their skins are split open like ripe grapes. Their clothing and shoes, ripped at the seams and tattered, suggests average-sized people who suddenly gained over 800 pounds of pure fat. A network of blue veins covers their corpulent white bodies, while tracks of stretch marks are torn open. This is the handiwork of the Angel of Bones. These bodies are immediately noticeable upon entering the gym.

There is a minimum of four attendants in the morgue, with another eight driving pickup trucks and ferrying the dead like modern-day Charons. As the body count increases, so to will the number of attendants. For now, however, the attendants do not begrudge their lucrative work.

Attendants

Physical Attributes 3, all other Attributes 2; Awareness 1, Brawl 1, Bureaucracy 1, Drive, 2, Firearms 1, Streetwise 1; Willpower 4; automatic pistol

A Sea of Dead

The gymnasium is easy to spot from the road or sky, given it's the only building with electricity. Two pickup trucks from the field hospital are parked at the gym's exterior double doors, unloading their cadaver cargoes and leaving for their next batch. A moment later, a third truck arrives and unloads its sole occupant, one enormous corpse. The clothing on this individual is tattered and his description fits that of the bodies mentioned above. It requires all six attendants to move the corpse, and even then, they're all straining and groaning. It's a horrible sight. The attendants eventually drop the body just past the door with a thud and use three tarps to cover him.

After the last vehicle leaves, it'll be a half-hour before another arrives. The characters have one of three options. They can wait and spy from a distance if they possess any extended sensory abilities, they can sneak in and locate the cameraman's body without alerting the at-

tendants (Invisibility or Holo helps in this situation), or they can simply walk into the gym.

If the characters don't announce their presence and have the means to spy visually, they'll see the attendants laying out the newly arrived corpses, searching them for identification and occasionally pocketing loose cash, expensive watches, jewelry and North American passports. They do so openly around each other and even share in the spoils. They appear indifferent to the death surrounding them.

Should the team announce their presence by walking through the gym's doors, the attendants curtail their grave-robbing proclivities. The foreman steps forward with a roster in hand and asks in accented English: "Are you looking for somebody?" The morgue's open to the public to help locate and identify the dead. Any character speaking with the attendant or foreman will notice, after a successful Awareness or Investigation roll at +1 difficulty, that they're wearing expensive Rolex watches or bejeweled wedding bands easily worth several thousand dollars. These are not the possessions of blue-collar workers and are obviously stolen. Confronting the grave robbers is up to the team, but the attendants will take exception to accusations of thievery, even when true. The foreman carries around a walkie-talkie, and threatens to call the Spanish Army if the team doesn't leave.

If the characters declare they're looking for a reporter, cameraman or mention Graff by name, this obviously frightens the foreman for a quick second before he regains his composure. A successful Rapport, Awareness or Investigation roll detects the momentary panic and hesitation in the foreman's voice, even though he'll deny any such apprehension.

The foreman's concern is because Michael Graff was indeed brought in earlier. The attendants identified and tagged him according to his press badge, which currently rests atop his tarp-covered body. After the cameraman was processed, another reporter by the name of Samuel Leathan arrived in one of the pickup trucks. Leathan was at the field hospital and spotted Graff being taken away. He was acquainted with Graff from the Hotel Isla Blanca and knew the cameraman was covering a fashion show at the Amp Room that evening. Leathan hitched a ride to the morgue on the off chance Graff was carrying hidden equipment or a DVD of the T2M raid. After bribing the foreman to let him search the body, Leathan made off with the recorded DVD and paid another attendant to drive him back to the Hotel Isla Blanca. The attendants saw the DVD and know where Leathan's staying.

Of course, the attendants won't volunteer information on Leathan's bribe or his destination, since this exposes their side venture. Instead, the foreman spews empty threats about contacting the Spanish army until he realizes he has no choice but to cooperate. He tells the team what he knows, in exchange for their silence. He even describes Leathan if he thinks it'll help keep his fat out of the fire. If, at any time, the attendants and foreman believe they are in serious jeopardy, however, they'll use their sidearms (sup-

plied by the Spanish army to deter looters) in self-defense. Otherwise, they are reasonable and willing to negotiate.

If the characters simply search for Graff's body, they'll eventually find a tarp-covered corpse with a press badge resting on his chest. The older man suffered a nasty blow to the head that eventually killed him. His vest pockets are empty. If the characters don't know about the attendants' penchant for robbing the dead, they should be aware now. The Storyteller may allow the characters an Investigation or Awareness roll to notice (if they haven't already) the stolen merchandise adorning the attendants.

Sidenote: The Fat of the Matter

The final matter of note in the gym are the three obese bodies split open under the stress of their own weight. A Medicine roll at standard difficulty reveals the weight gain was sudden and traumatic. They probably died of acute heart failure. With two or more successes, the character notices a golf ball-sized lump of fat on each victim, situated either on their arm or neck. The lump is perforated as though the victim was stung and suffered an allergic reaction. The attendants know little about the three men, save they were found west of Sa Penya. They're obviously tourists and probably victims of a nova power. Nothing else can explain their traumatic weight gain.

These corpses are all handiwork of the Angel of Bones, a would-be elite trying to establish a name for himself. Unfortunately, he's indiscriminate about whom he kills. These three men were nothing more than an attempt by the Angel of Bones to spread fear in his ability. His real coups de grace are the upcoming executions of Orzaiz and Ragnarockette.

Optional Vignette #5: Necruption

While the team is in the morgue, a random character gets a rush of goose bumps after walking past a woman's bullet-riddled corpse. His hair then stands on end. Any character with Electromagnetic Vision or Quantum Attunement detects a massive surge of energy coming from the corpse. A lightning arc suddenly shoots from her mouth, melting the tarp, striking the ceiling and overloading the generator. The gym goes dark. Before the characters can react, her body convulsions, firing off random bolts of electricity that illuminate the area in quick bursts.

The corpse is Joanne Pittsfield, one of the few, unfortunate novas to get shot down by Rooivalk choppers. With power over lightning, Pittsfield's cells are like micro-batteries suffused with electricity. Now that she's dead, however, her cells are undergoing necrosis (deterioration of living tissue due to a lack of blood-derived oxygen) and leaking energy in the form of static electricity. Quickly, though, the effect cascades with the onset of rigor mortis, randomly discharging Pittsfield's reservoirs of yet untapped electrical energy.

In normal situations, a waste product called myocin causes rigor mortis, or stiffening of the muscles, within 10 hours of death. The entire body becomes rigid within 18

hours, after which the effects dissipate over the remaining 24 hours. In Pittsfield's case, however, the myocin accumulated and dispersed rapidly through her body, starting and spreading the process of rigor mortis far more quickly than normal. As her muscles tighten, they're unleashing stores of electricity in the form of erratic lightning arcs and strikes. Each blast inflicts 8d10 L damage, and this phenomena will continue for 20 turns until the electricity vents completely.

During this time, the attendants are caught in the dancing lightning field. One dies in the initial discharge (not the foreman), one more ducks under the bleachers, while the remaining two men, including the foreman, are two turns away from the doorway. The characters are no safer from the electric volleys. Each turn, five blasts arc outward. The Storyteller should roll 1d10 per blast. A result of nine or 10 means the lightning strike hits someone. If a character has mechanical armor or is made of metal, a result of seven or eight means a blast is specifically targeting him like a ground. The Storyteller should then assign values to each character and two surviving attendants and roll to see whom the lightning hits, using 5D10 L to adjudicate the attack. The third attendant, hidden behind the bleachers, is safe for the moment.

Once the team is outside, an errant lightning shot hits the bleachers near the third attendant, setting them ablaze. The attendant is knocked out and partially visible on the other side of the gym. Unless someone runs in to save the man, he will either die from the fire or from a lightning strike. Either way, as the foreman points out, the fire will consume the gymnasium and the dead bodies unless stopped, destroying any hope for relatives to identify their loved ones. The characters must decide what they want to do. Putting out the fire shouldn't be a problem using the fire extinguishers in the civic center, but somebody needs to save the unconscious man. Both require the characters to reenter the gym; both mean the characters are exposed to danger.

As a final note, it is important the foreman survive this encounter. If the characters save him, the gym or his friends, he'll tell the team everything he knows about Samuel Leathan (if he hasn't done so already).

Scene Two: Hotel Isla Blanca

It feels like a dream, but with all the death and destruction surrounding the team over the last few hours, Hotel Isla Blanca is a vision of paradise, an oasis of lights in a desert of silhouettes. At the very least, this portion of Ibiza Town bears some semblance to a Caribbean resort strip, with its hotel-lined coast and modern buildings dressed in bright summer whites. Still, the sporadic power outages along the hotel strip, the train of refugees heading west and the patrol jeeps keeping the exodus orderly mar the illusion. In fact, the only place enjoying uninterrupted electricity is Hotel Isla Blanca on Avenida España.

Travel Tip #3: Don't Screw with the Mob

Although not generally known, Isla Blanca's major financier is the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate. Hotel Isla Blanca is one of the organization's legitimate holdings and has escaped notice thus far. What few realize is that, thanks to an ex-Russian *Mafiyah* enforcer turned nova, the hotel is a front for a massive money-laundering operation and the nexus of a European drug distribution network. Known as Tolkach, or "Fixer," the nova generates warp gates that transport him as far away as Norway, Moscow or the Ivory Coast. Tolkach plays nova courier for drug and money shipments and transports criminals across international borders in a matter of seconds.

Tolkach is part of the Megasyndicate's *sportsmeny*, a term literally meaning "sportsmen." It initially applied to *Mafiyah* bodyguards (former athletes and boxers), but is now used for Russian novas serving in Camparelli-Zukhov. When the conflict in Ibiza Town began, Tolkach warped in three *sportsmeny* to protect the hotel. Disguised as hotel security, this nova trio keeps a constant vigil for troublemakers and ensures the fighting in Ibiza Town doesn't get past the hotel gates. They're damn good at what they do. Currently, Tolkach is in Russia, but he's keeping an eye on the situation, and it would be very easy for him to enter the fray if absolutely necessary. The Storyteller should keep him in mind for subsequent visits to Ibiza Town or future run-ins with the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate.

The Storyteller can use this template to design two of the *sportsmeny*. The third, Torpedo, is described at the end of Act II.

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Abilities: Awareness 2, Brawl or Martial Arts 3, Endurance 3, Might 2, Resistance 3, Style 2, Subterfuge 3; 10 other dots divided as necessary

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Crush), Mega-Stamina •• (Resiliency), six dots in other Mega-Attributes; four dots in Level One powers and two dots of Level Two powers.

Quantum 4, Quantum Pool 28, Willpower 7, Taint 3

Hotel Isla Blanca, the most expensive hotel in Ibiza Town, is a fortress. A military jeep parked outside the main gate turns away refugees looking for a warm bed with claims that the hotel is full. The only people allowed in wear press badges or are on the guest list that's being handled by a well-muscled suit. Meanwhile, on the rooftop's open-air restaurant, guests sit with binoculars and telescopes watching D'Alt Vila for sport. To the rich who don't live here, this is a unique opportunity to see novas in action. Their laughter drifts down to the street on the cool night air.

The Setting

Isla Blanca is Ibiza Town's newest and most prestigious hotel. Practically a resort itself, the 30-story Isla Blanca contains a large summer garden, a rooftop restaurant and an in-hotel discotheque to start partygoers on their evening of club hopping. The more expensive suites begin at \$800 a night and offer such amenities as free passes for El Divino and Privilege, daylong yacht rides and, if rumors hold true, an impressive range of free drugs and prostitution services. Isla Blanca is *the* hotel for Europe's idle rich already burnt out on Monte Carlo and life in general.

Currently, an army jeep and a *sportsmeny* nova by the name of *Torpedo* — Mafia slang for a contract killer — guard the front gate. With strong resistance to psychic-based scans and attacks, Torpedo prevents unauthorized entry into Isla Blanca unless the person proves he can afford an overnight stay in the hotel. Torpedo uses Telepathy to scan a person's mind if suspicious of their claims.

Backing Torpedo are 20 Spanish soldiers there on orders from Colonel Espatta, a high-ranking officer currently in Ibiza Town. When the fighting began, Isla Blanca's manager extended a complimentary room to the

colonel in exchange for some "considerations." One of them was keeping the refugees out, since Isla Blanca has its own generators to keep it operating at peak efficiency. Colonel Espatta is currently in the hotel, enjoying many of the extended complimentary services. His men may not like their orders, but at least they aren't fighting the novas further east.

A chain-link fence mounted with concealed, motion-sensitive security cameras runs the hotel perimeter. Characters can spot these through an Intrusion roll of standard difficulty or an Awareness roll at +2 difficulty. Because the cameras activate via movement, the security officers rarely keep tabs on live feeds, instead relying on motion sensor warnings to alert them. Anyone using Invisibility, Sizemorph (Shrink), Shroud, Flight, the Mega-Strength enhancement Quantum Leap or other appropriate powers can all bypass the camera's motion-field. Additionally, Cyberkinesis is also useful, though walking through the fence using Density Control (Decrease) activates the sensors.

The best entry point is through the rear garden, which runs 100 meters between the back of the hotel and perimeter fence. The front is too well lit and manned to be viable, while landing on the crowded rooftop will automatically raise the alarms. Another option is using Michael Graff's press card. Although his picture is on the card, it's nothing Holo, Copycat or Shapeshift can't rectify.

Should the characters get caught sneaking in, they'll have to contend with the 20 Spanish soldiers and the three novas. The *sportsmeny*, ironically, try and solve the situation quietly by allowing the characters to leave the premises unharmed. They don't want to frighten the guests or damage the hotel in a brawl. Should the characters refuse, however, the *sportsmeny* will not hesitate to at-

tack. If they capture the team, the characters are placed under arrest and handed over to the military. Thanks to the Directive's quick intervention in the Ibiza conflict, the Spanish army also has access to moxinoquantamine.

Isla Blanca's plush interior is unlike most hotels. The lobby alone is clothed in marble and designed with a mix of baroque and uniquely Spanish mozarabic styling. The hollow hotel core is built around an atrium design, with a multi-tiered artificial waterfall spilling down from the seventh floor all the way to the ground-floor garden pool. The last five stories contain the rooftop garden restaurant, an interior swimming pool and penthouse suites. Escalators access the mezzanine conference rooms and ballroom.

In the interest of good publicity during this time of crisis, management has partitioned the mezzanine exclusively for international news correspondents. The hotel has set up cots in the conference rooms along with a 24-hour continental buffet and allowed time-shared access to Isla Blanca's communication uplink for reporters to send out their stories. Even in the dead of morning, the hotel is a hive of activity. None of the guests want to miss the action, and news crews constantly rush in and out with the latest gab.

A Moment's Respite

If the team sneaks into the hotel or enters via legitimate means, then the Isla Blanca offers a moment of respite in this otherwise turbulent escapade. Still, the Storyteller shouldn't hesitate to play up the obvious disparity between the comfort of the guests against the horrors suffered by the locals outside. To the rich hotel patrons spoiled by a lifetime of comforts, this is the closest they'll ever get to "roughing it." They haven't seen the death outside and generally ignore the exodus of refugees streaming down the street. To them, this is an exciting thrill unlike any other. It's a game where death is a brief, but annoying, commercial break.

If the characters are obviously novas, they'll stick out in this environment. Even if they're guests, the *sportsmen* will watch them to hedge any problems. Meanwhile, rich guests badger the characters for stories of the outside, trying to live vicariously through the team's exploits. Reporters, however, attempt to interview and question the characters, asking them for their views on the Ibiza Town situation. Needless to say, this isn't helping them keep a low profile. The ideal disguise to hide all evidence of novahood is the Dormancy Background. Barring that, the team's best option is to wear their civilian attire and blend into the crowd. Even if they're disheveled given the last few hours, people will mistake them for field reporters back in from a harrowing night in Ibiza Town.

This portion of the adventure is the most open-ended because of the dozen parameters affecting the situation. The team is after Samuel Leathan, a reporter who hopefully holds Michael Graff's DVD. Finding him is simple since everyone knows the reporters hang out on the Mezzanine. Leathan is in conference room Catalunya, reviewing Graff's DVD in his camera. Unlike the other reporters,

Leathan is a mercenary who'll sell the DVD to the highest bidder, but he can't access the OpNet transmitter yet. His time-share isn't until in the morning.

Meanwhile, around him are a dozen cameramen and reporters at any given time, watching the live N! and CNN coverage of the Ibiza conflict. Some characters may be looking for the famous nova documentary team of Chris Gaal and James Najarian, but they warped back to N! headquarters once it was obvious that the best conflict footage was already in their cameras. Over the next half-hour, the room grows crowded in anticipation of a second address by President Sabatini. News anchors also report that the UN Assembly is convening an emergency session. The general consensus is that Spain will act within the next few hours, whether on its own or by allowing the UN to negotiate on its behalf. Given Project Utopia's obvious culpability in the situation, however, it's doubtful President Sabatini wants their help resolving this matter.

If the characters sneaked into the hotel and have avoided detection, talking to Leathan or wresting the DVD from him might be difficult. If the characters are in the hotel legitimately, getting into an argument with Leathan might also jeopardize their welcome. The gist of the matter is this: Leathan is unwilling to part with his treasure, and the only proof that it isn't his are the DVDs recorded contents. Otherwise, it's common for cameramen to carry several DVDs, so it's perfectly legitimate for Leathan to claim the DVD is his. Additionally, if Leathan is coerced into surrendering Graff's DVD, he'll attempt to switch it with one of his own or bargain for it in exchange for information (see What Ifs: Optional Routes into Act III section, the Bargaining for the DVD bullet).

The Contents of the DVD

Michael Graff recorded several hours worth of footage including the Amp Room fashion show, the T2M raid and the subsequent battle. The characters can replay the DVD from any reporter's camera, including Leathan's, or they can use the monitors with built-in DVD players scattered throughout the Mezzanine conference rooms. This will attract other reporters, however.

The Storyteller may run through the entire DVD in point form or just describe significant portions. For simplicity's sake, however, the following scenes are vital:

- There's a shot of "Ironskin" Andy Vance welcoming reporter Kim Blakesdale to the Amp Room. Vance stipulates that while the camera crew can film the fashion show, they are not to disturb the patrons unless approached.
- After several shots of the fashion show, Graff catches Orzaiz in a slow pan. He's sitting at a booth table, talking with somebody who's obscured from view. Likewise, Turncoat, sitting at another table, is also hidden from that angle by a column.
- More shots of the fashion show before there's a rush of commotion near Orzaiz's table. Graff catches a shot of Maurice Lourté (Turncoat actually) stumbling out



"Hey, am I on TV?" before unleashing a second blast on the building behind Michael. Michael runs, trips and falls. The footage cuts off to the loud rumble of a collapsing building.

President Sabitini's Announcement

At 3:30 AM, President Sabatini appears on television bearing an ultimatum for novas in Ibiza Town. He knows many of the 300 visiting novas have not contributed to the



from behind a column a few meters away from Orzaiz. Orzaiz looks shocked and moves to help Lourté / Turncoat who's in obvious pain. Instead Lourté / Turncoat breaks through the crowd and runs for the door. Suddenly a *second* Lourté (the real one) emerges from Orzaiz's booth and runs off. Before Orzaiz can give chase to either Lourtés, the ground shakes, knocking people off their feet. T2M Europe breaks through the skylight, dropping flash-bang grenades on their way down. Audio and video on Graff's camera goes off for a few seconds and returns to the full-out brawl of the Amp Room raid. Involved in the fight, minimum, are Orzaiz, Griffin Armstrong, It, Spinner, Psyche, "Ironskin" Vance, "Dragon" Korelli, Ragnarockette, Thorn, Tremor and a number of other novas moving at dazzling speeds.

- During the course of the battle, the camera catches Orzaiz ducking out. Characters who make an Awareness roll at +1 difficulty notice a background shot of Orzaiz, badly wounded, stumbling out of the Amp Room through a hole in the wall. Suddenly, a shrouded figure with wings of bones (the Angel of Bones) follows Orzaiz out the hole. The characters can't see anything after that.

- The scene recounted in the introduction, where Tremor accidentally brings down D'Alt Vila. Again, the knockout blow against Ragnarockette doesn't reveal her fate. The scene continues until Graff announces: "We lost the signal." From there, Michael and Kim film the various battles devastating Ibiza Town.

- Graff's last shot of a battle outside the Amp Room. Two novas are fighting amid the ruins of a street. Suddenly Kim motions to Michael's left. He trains the camera on the fake Maurice Lourté who's darting from building to building, avoiding the fights. Kim asks: "Isn't that the guy from—" Before she finishes her sentence, a nova blast cuts right through her, disintegrating her upper body. Michael turns the camera on Henry "The Bomber" Maybaker. He screams:

conflict, but those who have have created an intolerable situation. All nova expatriates must therefore evacuate the island within the next two hours (by 5:35 AM). Those who leave can do so without fear of reprisals. Any nova still pursuing hostile actions now or any non-native novas on the island after the 5:35 AM deadline will be shot on sight. Any nova not a citizen of Spain or already living in Ibiza Town will be detained for questioning. There are no negotiations in this matter. Several novas proved themselves hostile, and Spain is more than willing to return the courtesy to protect its sovereignty. President Sabatini wishes to settle the matter without further bloodshed but will not hesitate to employ his naval fleet against all "invading forces."

To facilitate the nova evacuation of Ibiza Town, the estación marítima (ferry terminal) in Sa Marina has five ferries waiting to transport ground-locked novas to Mallorca. A sizable force of the Spanish army is also in Palma de Mallorca to ensure the violence doesn't spread into that region as well. Otherwise, the Spanish army will merely oversee the evacuation of novas. The ferries will remain until 5:35 AM, after which they leave Ibiza. Anybody left behind is considered hostile.

What Ifs: Optional Routes into Act III

Scene Four has too many variables to simply plant clues and hope the characters find them — given they may not even make it into the hotel. Obviously, the following are potential threads the Storyteller can use depending on the team's situation. It isn't necessary to play them all, just enough to get the characters moving again in a positive direction.

- **President Sabatini's Broadcast:** Following President Sabitini's second address, military jeeps with loud speakers move slowly through Ibiza Town, announcing the nova evacuation in English, Spanish, French, German and Italian. A few novas helping the Spanish army or emergency services also fly through the city, spreading President Sabitini's ultimatum. A friendly nova can relate this news to characters stuck outside, saying the ferry terminal is going to be a madhouse since the airport is locked down and refusing to fly novas out. The estación marítima is their only hope. If the characters are looking for Ragnarockette or Orzaiz, maybe somebody there has information.

Additionally, if the characters hear the announcement and have seen the DVD with Maurice Lourté (Turncoat) alive and well, the Storyteller may allow them to make either an Investigation at standard difficulty or a default Perception roll at +1 difficulty to figure out their next move. Maurice Lourté is obviously frightened and on the run. Given the ultimatum and the closing of the airport, Lourté's only perceivable way out is the ferries. There's a chance they'll find him there as well.

- **Waiting for Samuel Leathan:** Within a few minutes of President Sabatini's announcement, Samuel Leathan leaves the hotel with a rush of other reporters trying to get to the estación marítima ferries. Characters unable to enter the hotel should recognize him by the foreman's physical description. The waiting taxis will only drive as far as the border to Sa Penya, after which Leathan and the others travel on foot. Leathan is currently sharing a taxi with two other reporters and cameramen. While not the ideal situation to approach him, it's the team's best shot.

- **Bargaining for the DVD:** If the characters confront Leathan and take the disk, he'll haggle for it with some juicy information. A nova going by the name the Angel of Bones reputedly has Orzaiz and Ragnarockette prisoner. He's planning to execute them both at dawn but has not disclosed the location yet. The reporters were to meet in Sa Penya, in front of the Café Mexiko, at 5:35 AM, where a guide would escort them to the actual site of the execution. The Angel of Bones has already contacted a number of reporters, inviting them to film the event.

- **Other Reporters:** If Leathan doesn't pan out as a source of information, there are other options to relate the planned execution of Orzaiz and Ragnarockette. The characters might run into a reporter who they've encountered previously and parted with on amiable terms. Maybe they know a media personality through their Contact or Ally Backgrounds who happens to be covering Ibiza Town. As a last resort, a young man mistakes a char-

acter for a reporter (if the character isn't an obvious nova) and invites him to attend the Angel of Bones' debut with the deaths of Orzaiz and Ragnarockette. The young man was simply paid to find reporters and relay the information to them. He doesn't know where the Angel of Bones is hiding.

Dramatis Personae

Mikhail "Torpedo" Khairedinov

Background: Unlike the other *sportsmeny* who trace their *Mafiyah* service back to the days of the vory, or crime bosses, Mikhail served his father, a *suki*. The vory and *suki* had been at odds since WWII, when the *suki* helped the USSR fight Nazi Germany's expansion into Russia. The vory, avid haters of Communism, retaliated by killing thousands of *suki* during the Gulag's "Scab" Wars of the 1950s. Mikhail's father survived the conflict and emerged with the desire to see the vory dead.

Mikhail carries his father's hatred with him now and relishes the fall of the old vory at the hands of Project Utopia. Unfortunately, the Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate is taking in both *suki* and vory criminals, and that's causing friction. Mikhail doesn't associate with most *sportsmeny* because of the criminal blood feud. Still, few *sportsmeny* are willing to challenge Mikhail, and he knows it. He's their best telepath.

Gear: Taser, reinforced Armani suit, onyx signet ring, light revolver in shoulder holster.

Nature: Judge

Allegiance: Camparelli-Zukhov Megasyndicate

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Appearance 4, Manipulation 4, Charisma 3



What Actually Transpired

[Excerpt from Orzaiz's report to Teragen hierarchy concerning the Amp Room incident]

First of all, I want to thank you for all your well-wishes during my recovery. It has been a trying few weeks, but the aftereffects of my incarceration under the Angel of Bones is finally subsiding. I'm sure many of you are curious as to the events surrounding the Amp Room conflict, which I will endeavor to recount to the best of my ability.

As you well know, the May 28th meeting was to complete negotiations with one Maurice Lourté, a field agent for Project Utopia's Internal Affairs division. Thanks to Synapse's raid on their files, we confirmed Lourté was indeed suspected of anti-Utopia sentiment. Still, I remained suspicious of the rendezvous and brought our resident telepath/shapeshifter, Turncoat, with me.

Turncoat and I arrived at the Amp Room separately, with him occupying a nearby booth. At 7:10 PM, Lourté arrived, and we set about negotiating for his defection. He seemed nervous and looked around repeatedly as though expecting something to happen. In turn, this made me uncomfortable. Suddenly, Turncoat screamed in pain and shapeshifted into Lourté. I could see from his expression that something was amiss. That's when the real Lourté fled from the table and the tremors began. A falling pillar made quick work of Lourté.

It wasn't until after my liberation that I discovered what had happened. Lourté, apparently, was not only a quantum manipulator, but he also possessed a two-tiered personality. The first personality protected the second one from telepathic scans and acted as a red herring. Unfortunately, Turncoat, who also suffers from multiple personas, detected both of Lourté's personalities and was overwhelmed by the two-pronged surge of information. He not only assumed Lourté's identity with all his pertinent characteristics, he believed he was Maurice Lourté. Needless to say, it didn't help when T2M crashed through the Amp Room's skylight, dropping flash-bang grenades to disorient everyone. I suppose nobody told them how loud and bright it gets in Ibiza's nightclubs, because half the novas, including the resident bodyguards, weren't even effected. That's when the situation degraded.

I searched for Turncoat amidst the chaos, but he was already gone. Recognizing a bad situation when I see one, I tried leaving, but T2M seemed insistent on detaining me. Thankfully, "Ironskin" Andy and his partner, "Dragon" Korelli, both of whom are credits to their novahood, came to my aide a number of times. The fight seemed to center around me. Finally, I escaped the Amp Room, only to be ambushed from behind and knocked out by that vulture, the Angel of Bones, before I could even react. By that point, I was in no shape to fight him. Sorriely, the Angel of Bones captured me and, later, the Utopian Ragnarockette. We were both kept hooded and gagged, victims under his "unique" and unpleasant ability. I didn't know it then, but we were to be his introduction to the world, a public execution meant to announce his prowess as an elite. Thank heavens, he wasn't the brightest of individuals when he invited the press to attend his "inauguration."

Meanwhile, Turncoat was running through Ibiza Town, believing he was Lourté, the Utopian operative....

Abilities: Athletics 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 3, Bureaucracy 2, Command 2, Endurance 3, Firearms 3, Interrogation 2, Intimidation 3, Intrusion 3, Linguistics 2 (English, German), Rapport 2, Resistance 3, Streetwise 1, Style 1, Subterfuge 4

Backgrounds: Allies 3 (various within Megasyndicate), Backing 4

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 8, Taint 2

Powers: Mega-Perception ••• (Blindfighting, Ultraperipheral Perception), Mega-Wits •••• (Enhanced Initiative, Lie Detector, Quickness), Disorient •••, Mental Blast ••••, Psychic Shield •••, Telepathy •••• (Surreptitious)

Act III: Introduction

Ibiza Town is quiet, although sporadic gunfire and errant energy blasts still pierce the morning air. Most of the battles and old grudges have died away, leaving behind those few novas still eager for a fight with Spain's forces. Drifting in from the Mediterranean are the sounds of 20mm and 40mm gunfire. The aircraft carrier and frigates are defending themselves from a couple of foolhardy novas that took the fight to the seas. The gunfire volleys are brief and effective.

Sa Penya is devastated, and while the fighting leaves with the majority of novas gathered at the docks, the team's denouement still awaits it. Orzaiz and Ragnarockette are

prisoners, soon to be executed, and there are apparently two Maurice Lourtés. Unlike Act I and Act II, both of which touched upon the baselines, Act III revolves entirely around the resolution of the team's mission. This section is straightforward. The adventure may have been segmented and disconnected at times, but wars are never about a clear sequence of events. Wars are about belief. Perhaps this adventure has forced the team to question its loyalties, or conversely, maybe it strengthened their faith. Either way, the characters should emerge transformed on some level. Something in Ibiza had to touch them.

Scene One: Dilemma with Turncoat

Turncoat, Directive nova turned Teragen sympathizer, is in an odd situation. Already afflicted with multiple personalities, the encounter with Maurice Lourté's two-tiered mental process affected him deeply. Now he believes he is Lourté, and truthfully, who can say otherwise. Turncoat's brain mirrors Lourté's own gray matter down to the neurotransmitter and synaptic levels. Turncoat possesses the spy's thoughts, emo-

tions and even drives. Even more peculiar, Lourté's hidden but regulating personality is firmly in control like a stagecoach driver steering a hitch of horses. This dominant force even takes precedence over Turncoat's original persona, Jesse Hooks.

The confrontation with Turncoat, AKA Lourté, should be an interesting encounter for the characters, if they can find the master *Doppelgänger* in a sea of faces. The docks are crowded with novas preparing to leave with their luggage in hand. Add to the mix weary Spanish soldiers, and the characters could trigger a riot even uglier than the Amp Room fiasco.

The Setting

The estación marítima, or ferry terminal, is located on a pier extending from the Sa Marina dock into a small bay. Two peninsulas straddle the bay like pincers, lending it an intimate atmosphere under normal circumstances. Normal, however, went out the window last night. The hours of fighting have ruined Sa Marina and adjoining Sa Peña, while several small yachts, boats and even cars lie half-submerged in harbor waters. Few palm trees remain standing. Novas uprooted and blasted the trees along with portions of the boardwalk. The once whitewashed façade of Ibiza is now smudged a Beirut black.

Novas crowd the estación marítima pier. Some sleep against their luggage, most mill about waiting for the next ferries to come in. Small groups gather together, making quiet casual conversation to pass the time. A handful of novas with keen eyesight gaze out across the Mediterranean, watching the Spanish fleet and staring at the four Bazán Meroka 12-barreled 20mm guns pointed their way. Crowding the docks are five ferries, anchored dangerously close to one another. No window is unattended, and no railing left cold from the dozens of novas leaning against them. The ferries are filled to capacity and the gangplanks removed as the ships are about to set sail to Palma de Mallorca with the first wave of novas. Nobody has any illusions of the military presence ready to greet them there or the fact they'll be shuttled to Aeropuerto Son San Joan with a quick... *thank you for coming, now get the hell out of Spain...* kind of reception.

Scattered throughout the immediate vicinity are Spanish soldiers patrolling on foot or keeping watch from their jeeps. Every few minutes, a Rooivalk passes overhead, either flying out to the aircraft carrier for refueling or coming in for another patrol route. Soldiers also man the gangplanks to the ferries, making sure the evacuation proceeds smoothly. Both sides eye one another cautiously, but everybody just wants to go home and forget about this ordeal. This, of course, changes once the plague of reporters descends upon the docks with cameras in hand. Suddenly, the reporters are conducting a dozen interviews at once, with news teams moving through the crowds, hoping to catch sight of a famous mug. Some reporters even try boarding the ferries, but the Spanish soldiers refuse them access. Nobody is getting on or off these ferries until Mallorca.

When the characters arrive, Spanish soldiers eye them briefly, sizing up the team's potential. Several novas do the same, though less obviously. They're just as eager as the Spanish army to stop troublemakers from spoiling this uneasy détente. Still, the number of novas standing around is impressive, given that more than half are already on the ferries. Characters might find some familiar faces in the crowds. The Storyteller could throw in a few campaign personas among the multitude of strangers, but it would be safer to exclude old hatreds and team villains given the situation's volatility. Unless, of course, the Storyteller doesn't mind running a brawl with a hundred novas that could easily devastate this portion of the Mediterranean. An encounter with old allies or rivals could be interesting, given the team's mandate to stay hidden. Additionally, the characters must be extra careful with the presence of eager news crews looking for their shot at the Pulitzer. This means the team's search for Maurice Lourté just got harder.

Reflections in the Mirror

Fortunately for the team, Maurice Lourté is on the pier, waiting to escape. Unfortunately, the soldiers and camera crews have made him paranoid. He keeps an eye out for trouble and is extremely resourceful when scared. If, by this point, the characters haven't reviewed the tape, then each character can roll Awareness at +2 difficulty. The character with the highest number of successes spots Lourté first, recognizing him from the mission briefs and as a corpse from the Amp Room. By the same token, Lourté can roll Awareness at standard difficulty to notice a nova staring at him all gape-mouthed (since the team believes Lourté's dead). If the team is expecting to find Lourté, however, they can roll Awareness at standard difficulty (while Lourté rolls at +2 difficulty to notice the characters).

If Lourté realizes he's been spotted, he ducks through a crowd of people, instantly assuming another disguise in the confusion. Trying to keep track of him requires an initial Awareness roll at +2 difficulty. If the character succeeds, he realizes Lourté can alter his appearances and manages to continue tracking him. Lourté ducks and changes throughout the chase if he believes he's being tailed. The characters, in turn must roll Awareness at +1 difficulty to keep track of him once they realize Lourté's trick. This is a dangerous gambit, however, because this continued cat and mouse game could attract unwanted attention from the already paranoid soldiers and shutter-happy reporters. Unless somebody opens fire with guns or some form of quantum power, however, the soldiers merely move in to investigate the situation with their weapons drawn. That is, if they notice there's a situation. It's up to the Storyteller to decide what happens, depending on how the team handles Lourté.

Lourté realizes the inherent danger of the circumstances and is being as subtle as possible. If caught, he speaks with the characters, knowing they can't drag him away in front of all these novas and soldiers. If worse comes to worst, and the Storyteller is ready to deal with the ramifications of this, Lourté can always assume the façade of a Spanish soldier and scream for help. The Storyteller should only employ this trick if he believes the

team can handle the repercussions of Lourté's actions or the team is being stupidly blatant about their intentions.

Dealing with Lourté

For all intents and purposes Turncoat is Lourté. He possesses Lourté's memories, experiences, emotions, neuro-chemical physiology and even the configuration of his M-R node. In fact, Lourté's mental presence is acting like a tether, linking Turncoat's multiple personalities into a near-cohesive entity. As such, he's no longer Jesse Hooks. Rather, Jesse Hooks is another mental-process identity in the multi-tiered mind of Lourté. Of course, the characters will never realize this unless they talk to Orzaiz.

Another option to unraveling the situation is through Telepathy. If the characters don't possess this power, somebody on the docks might be of service, if the team is willing to jeopardize the mission by asking around. Another option is if the team attracted the attention of a telepath while capturing Lourté. The nova surreptitiously eavesdrops on the conversation and proves sympathetic to the team's cause or allegiance. The telepath detects Lourté's fragmented thoughts and offers her assistance. Otherwise, the characters won't learn the truth unless they deliver Lourté to their superiors.

Telepathy is the quickest way to reach the truth. Multiple personalities protect Lourté's thoughts with the equivalent of a strong Psychic Shield. Jesse's identity, however, is acting as a buffer personality, which a telepath can reach at standard difficulty. Jesse's memories hold all the clues to the situation. His thoughts are deeply recessed in self-defense, however, because they conflict with Lourté's memories of the Amp Room. Lourté was there to snare Orzaiz in a sting operation, but Jesse was present trying to scan Lourté's thoughts. Essentially, Lourté was in the Amp Room watching himself talk to Orzaiz. This establishes a psychological conundrum that's key to unraveling Jesse Hooks from this mental quagmire and erasing Lourté's presence.

Of course, this all depends on the team's allegiance. Project Utopia would be eager to harvest an agent with Turncoat's shapeshifting abilities, Lourté's loyalty and Hook's knowledge of both the Directive and the Teragen. Terats would want their agent back and wouldn't hesitate to destroy Lourté's hold, after uncovering some facts about him. The Aberrants, in turn have no use for Lourté/Turncoat because neither personality is loyal to them. They'd scan him for all he's worth, erase his thoughts and return him to the Teragen as a gesture of good faith.

The one major obstacle in all this is Lourté himself. Unless the team is from Project Utopia or Proteus, Lourté won't surrender quietly. Trying to forcibly kidnap him would attract soldiers and novas who are more likely to help the outnumbered Lourté than listen to any wild accusation leveled by the characters. Fortunately, none of the novas on the docks fly (or they would have left by now) so soaring off with Lourté is always an option. Wherever the character goes, however, he better not remain airborne for too long unless he's heading away from the island at top speed. The army can call in Rooivalk choppers in less than four turns. Other abduction options include Warp, Telekinesis

to snatch up Lourté, Domination and Hypnosis to command him into leaving and Shroud, Strobe, Mirage and Holo to disguise the kidnapping (though at least two or three novas have the sensory acumen to overcome these last powers).

Novas: The Quick and Dirty Way

In case the characters decide to bump heads with the novas waiting on the docks, use the following template. These statistics also apply to the two novas with the Angel of Bones.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 4

Abilities: Awareness 1, Brawl or Martial Arts 2, Endurance 3, Might 2, Resistance 3, Style 2, Subterfuge 3; 10 other dots divided as necessary

Powers: Six dots distributed among Mega-Attributes; five dots in Level One powers and three dots in Level Two powers. The Storyteller may assign dots in Level Three powers, at her discretion.

Quantum 2 or 3, Quantum Pool 24 or 26, Willpower 5, Taint 2

Optional Vignette #6: Death from Above

This vignette can be played out anywhere in Act III, depending on how the team's doing for time. Storytellers beware, however, this vignette is a killer, but it can lead into future adventures. This must take place in Sa Penya or D'Alt Vila, where nova presence is high, civilian presence is nil and very few soldiers are bold enough to patrol.

While the characters are moving through the streets, an intense flash of heat and light blasts down from the sky. The clouds ripple like water struck by a large pebble as a tight, laser-like blast punches through the atmosphere. Seconds before hitting the earth, it breaks into several smaller blasts like a shotgun spread and peppers a nearby block. A bright flash and a flurry of loud sonic booms rips through the region, followed by the impact explosion. A block of Sa Penya is leveled by the localized kinetic shockwave. All glass in the area shatters.

Although the characters aren't hit by the blast itself, the multiple sonic booms generated by the Mach 25 projectiles are equivalent to the power Strobe. The Storyteller should roll 20d10 to determine the number of turns the characters are deafened. Fortunately, interceding buildings prevented the flash from blinding the characters as well.

While the team recovers from the orbital round, they notice in the distance, a nova stumble away from the strike zone. His ears are bleeding, his clothing is torn and particulate debris is imbedded in his skin. Before the characters can react, however, a second ripple appears in the cloud cover, and another mach 25 round strikes the area dead on. This time, the characters may roll Awareness at +2 difficulty to notice a military-looking man (use Spanish Soldier stats) several blocks away, targeting the hurt nova with a laser just before the second round hits. He's



wearing goggles and ear-protection. Because the characters are probably deaf, the Storyteller should relay this information privately to any character that succeeded in his Awareness roll. Otherwise, unless a character possesses mental abilities, the team members can't hear one another and can only communicate through gestures.

The targeted nova is shredded in the accompanying blast. If any character suffered less than five turns of deafness, the Storyteller may roll another 10d10 for the Strobe effect. Otherwise, the characters are too deaf to be further affected.

Someone is using Ibiza Town to test out their newly acquired Kinetic Interceptor Satellite (see adjoining sidebar for more information). The man painting the nova guinea pig with a laser rifle is the satellite's forward observer. He helps improve the targeting round through a constant stream of information provided by the gun. If the characters pursue the man, he's fairly easy to apprehend and capture, though if given the chance, he'll use the targeting laser on them. "Painted" characters must roll Awareness at +3 difficulty for themselves or +1 difficulty for their friends, to notice the laser dot on their body. It takes two to five turns to establish a lock for the satellite, hopefully allowing characters enough time to evade the targeting sensors and find their assailant.

Unfortunately, the man is hired help and a local. He doesn't know much beyond his assignment, which he remem-

bers only as a voice speaking to him from a shadow saying, "Take this rifle and keep it trained on novas until they explode. Stay as far away from them as possible. Do not handle the rifle without the gloves." He received the rifle, ear protectors, gloves and shades just hours after the fighting began, along with several thousand dollars American. Most of the equipment is standard, except for the gloves, which are made of eufiber and the rifle stock, which is, in fact, a sophisticated sensor. If any character handles the targeting laser rifle, the scope lights up; it's a miniature HUD (Head Up Display). On the display, the computer responsible for vectoring the laser's coordinates announces: *Target Locked; 0 Degrees x-axis, 0 Degrees y-axis, 0 Degrees z-axis*. In short, the satellite is targeting the rifle. The eufiber gloves are part of the security protocol and are as unique as a fingerprint. Failure to handle the rifle with the glove activates the self-destruct protocol. The characters have less than three turns to evacuate the area. If they take the rifle with them or attempt to disengage the targeting systems, the satellite fires off a widespread blast over their last registered coordinates.

Note: Under no circumstance can the characters use the targeting system to backtrack the location of the satellite, even with Cyberkinesis. Regardless of the outcome, the characters are now left with a mystery. Somebody possesses the technology to shoot novas from orbit. If the char-

acters managed to salvage the rifle, they uncover components whose schematic configurations are copyrighted to the Japanese National Space Development Agency, or NASDA, whose space center is located in Tanegashima, Japan. The advent of the *Saisho*, or "New Beginning," movement has propelled Japan to the vanguard of space exploration and development. Further investigation into Japan's space program reveals heavy ties to Kuro-Tek, the principle supplier of NASDA's state-of-the-art technology. From there, the team may uncover the shadowy ties to the Directive's Space Division and the organization's newest anti-nova weapon. The question is, will Kuro-Tek and the Directive allow the characters to get that far?

Optional Vignette #7: "Dragon" Korelli

This is the team's last opportunity to uncover Orzaiz's and Ragnarockette's planned executions. This works best if the characters parted company with "Ironskin" Andy Vance on pleasant terms or, at the very least, if the team confided they were searching for either Ragnarockette or Orzaiz. Otherwise, if the characters have helped baselines during this adventure, then Jake "Dragon" Korelli would have found out about it given how few novas are actually trying to improve the situation.

There's nothing significant behind this encounter aside from meeting Vance's husband, Korelli. Korelli spent the evening hunting down the more dangerous novas destroying Ibiza Town and turning them over to Spanish authorities. He's picked up some of Vance's PR strategies and is ensuring novas aren't all seen as evil monsters. In light of this, Korelli heard a troubling rumor that somebody was executing Ragnarockette and Orzaiz within the next half-hour as a publicity ploy. Unfortunately, Korelli has to help the Spanish authorities bring down a rampaging nova at the Formentera Ferry Terminal before he kills more people. Whether Korelli knows the team's objectives or simply ap-

proaches them for help, he needs the characters to get to the Café Mexiko and stop the execution.

Scene Two: The Angel of Bones

This is the climax of events in Ibiza Town. Most novas are at the docks awaiting the arrival of the last ferries before bidding the island goodbye. The curfew is nearly upon the city, as is dawn, but a few pockets of resistance continue fighting. In the heart of Ibiza's once charming Sa Peña district, a crowd of reporters gather at the Café Mexiko to witness the executions of Orzaiz and Ragnarockette at the hands of an elite named the Angel of Bones. Stopping this publicity ploy exposes the team to triple jeopardy: the Angel of Bones, the film crews and the team's presence in Ibiza after the deadline.

How the team resolves the situation is up to them, but it's obvious they must first confront the unknown quantity, the Angel of Bones, and rescue Orzaiz and Ragnarockette from him. Secondly, reporters will surround the team, taking their pictures and destroying any hope of secrecy, unless, of course, the characters locate the Angel of Bones before the reporters arrive. Thirdly, the Spanish army sets foot in Ibiza Town in full force in a matter of minutes. Once the team has Orzaiz or Ragnarockette, they must depart before the soldiers arrive and try to arrest them.

The Setting

Although the rendezvous with reporters is set for dawn at Café Mexiko, the execution takes place two blocks over, in the ruins of Los Brisa, a hostel on Calle Cayetano Soler near the base of D'Alt Vila. Fortunately, the street missed much of the landslide, even though the hostel and surrounding neighborhood were gutted during the fights.

Travel Tip #4: Never Bring a Knife to a Kinetic Railgun Fight

Initially designed as an anti-ICBM weapon, orbital Kinetic Energy Interceptor satellites have since undergone modifications to deal with potential nova threats. Ibiza Town is the first test-launch of that system. The KEI is a rotary satellite that can establish a geo-synchronous orbit. It uses an expert computer system and requires a forward observer to either paint the target with a laser or to input the strike zone's coordinates. Once completed, the KEI fires off a "bus" projectile, a foot-long bullet with a pointed ceramic head — to minimize atmospheric drag — rear guidance fins and limited propulsion. The projectile falls at Mach 25.

One kilometer away from target, the ceramic head and bus housing detach, revealing several rows of arrows made from depleted uranium, lead or both. Depleted uranium is armor piercing, while lead spreads its kinetic damage over the surface of the target. The arrows, which travel at the same velocity as the bus housing, use an explosive charge to generate a controlled spread, either focusing the target "footprint" or spreading it out over a larger area like an orbital shotgun blast.

Because of the projectile's speed, the air doesn't have time to displace; it's ionized instead, leaving a laser-like trail through the atmosphere. Even people 100 kilometers away can hear the accompanying flurry of sonic booms from the multiple rounds. Additionally, kinetic energy gathered through velocity manifests as a flash of light and heat. Strike damage within a 250 meter radius equals 50d10 B/L (depending on the mix of lead and depleted uranium), 50d10 Strobe (auditory), 50d10 Strobe (visual), 50d10 Lethal Blast (heat), 25 dots in Thunderclap and 25 dots in Shockwave. Wider field dispersal goes up to Area x 5. Each multiplier adds +4 to accuracy, but removes 3 dots off Shockwave and Thunderclap and 6 dice off damage and Strobe effects. Damage is halved for anything within blast radius x 2.

Los Brisa is nothing more than a pile of debris and collapsed rooms surrounding a courtyard.

The characters have one opportunity to beat the reporters to Los Brisa. Ten minutes before dawn, the Angel of Bones dispatches a runner to see how many reporters are waiting at Café Mexiko and if any soldiers or novas are among them. Characters who arrived early can make an Awareness roll at standard difficulty to notice a young man spying on the reporters. Aside from the characters, there are no novas or soldiers in the vicinity. If the runner spots the team and recognizes them as novas (unusually strong physiques, costumes, obvious Taint and anima signatures), he'll race back to the Angel of Bones and relay the news. Realizing it could be a trap, the Angel of Bones sends two men back. One pretends to guide the reporters to the execution but leads them astray. The second man lures two cameramen away from the rest of the group and takes them back to Los Brisa. If the characters are accompanying the reporters at this time, they might notice the second man vanish with the two cameramen through an Awareness roll of standard difficulty.

If the first runner doesn't spot the team, he backtracks to the Angel of Bones and tells him the coast is clear. The runner and the second man then return to Café Mexiko and lead the reporters to Los Brisa. In either situation, if the team is present and the characters are fortunate enough to spot the runner, they can follow him back

to the courtyard and attack the Angel of Bones before the reporters ever arrive. Otherwise, the team will have to wait until the guides bring the reporters there.

Los Brisa was a two-story, white-washed quad building built around a large courtyard. The second floor originally jutted out over the first floor along the interior, creating a covered walkway around the courtyard. It was supported by rows of columns and archways. Although the lower floor collapsed, bringing the second floor down with it, the arched gate accessing the interior courtyard remains intact and offers a relatively debris-free passage. The Storyteller can make the courtyard as big as necessary, bearing in mind one caveat. Most blocks and buildings in Sa Penya suit old-century aesthetics, not modern ones. As a result, they're smaller and more intimate.

All along the courtyard's walls are the interrupted remnants of shielded walkways with the intact columns and arches still supporting upper floor debris. Due to the surrounding destruction, however, they've been turned into alcoves and niches. Ransacked curtains and blankets cover two such archways along the courtyard's north facing. The Angel of Bones and his two nova lackeys hid Orzaiz and Ragnarockette behind the makeshift curtains; each grotesquely obese by over 1,000 pounds and unconscious due to constant beatings.

Whether the characters arrive early or not, Orzaiz and Ragnarockette are already in place, awaiting their



unveiling to the world. The first nova keeps looking out on the second floor facing into San Peña. He lets the Angel of Bones know when the reporters are in sight. He can spot anyone approaching Los Brisa from three blocks away, including characters arriving early (if they haven't taken precautions). When the filming begins, he remains on the second floor, maintaining a vigil, but he's far more distracted by the events in the courtyard. At this stage he makes his Awareness rolls at +2 difficulty.

The second nova remains in the courtyard, speaking with the Angel of Bones until the lookout announces the arrival of the reporters. He then hides in a western-side room that's partially collapsed with an exposed wall to the courtyard. He's the Angel's ace-in-the-hole. Spotting this second nova requires an Awareness roll at +4 difficulty.

The Angel of Bones, meanwhile, also hides in the shadows of an archway, waiting for his two baseline runners to announce his presence to the reporters. Angel has a bad, almost melodramatic, sense of theatrics. This is his big moment, his triumphant arrival into the world of elites, and he's going to go completely over the top.

From beginning to end, the characters have 50 minutes or so to stop the Angel of Bones and his two nova

On Par for the Course

How or when the characters act is up to them. If things go as planned for the Angel of Bones, this is his timetable:

5:25 AM: Sends one runner to confirm presence of reporters only.

5:31 AM: Runner returns with news that the coast is clear. Angel sends two men back to escort the reporters to Los Brisa.

5:35 AM: The two men arrive at Café Mexiko and ask the reporters to follow them. President Sabatini's ultimatum is now in effect.

5:44 AM: The lookout nova spots the approaching reporters and warns the Angel of Bones. The Angel and second nova hide.

5:46 AM: The reporters arrive in Los Brisa's courtyard. The two men then begin their preamble with, "Ladies and Gentlemen of the international press, I'd like to introduce you to the world's most formidable and deadliest elite... the Angel of Bones." The Angel of Bones then steps out and allows the press to photograph him in all his hideous glory. After a few snapshots, he motions to the reporters to hold their barrage of questions until after his speech.

5:49 AM: The Angel's speech is a self-serving tool meant to bolster a non-existent reputation. He isn't executing Orzaiz or Ragnarockette out of any political or social agenda. Rather, he's proving he's mercenary enough to kill both novas without fearing reprisals from either Project Utopia or the Teragen. He's a gun for hire, an elite who captured these two skilled individuals, with the guts to kill them on international television. The Angel of Bones repeatedly mentions himself in the same breath with Totentanz and Mirko "Overkill" Mirkonen. It is his intent to debut on N!'s elite chart at a very high position.

5:54 AM: Angel allows the press to ask him a few questions, mostly relating to how he captured

Orzaiz and Ragnarockette, his powers, his fees as an elite and whether he considers himself a murderer? To his credit, the Angel of Bones answers all questions, even the obviously hostile ones, with tact. He dismisses the term murderer, claiming that being a nova means living in a ranking system that places individuals like Divis Mal at the top and Hiram "Slag" Goldberg at the bottom. The Angel of Bones doesn't consider himself a murderer; he's merely competitive.

6:03 AM: The Angel of Bones reveals Orzaiz and Ragnarockette. Their condition shocks the reporters, who suddenly take the Angel more seriously. He explains that his powers enable him to inject victims with a "hyper-calorie" through his bone growths, spurring fat cell production at near-exponential speeds. What he doesn't tell the reporters is that the "calorie" is a fast-replicating cell that creates additional interstitial tissue fat throughout the body. This weighs the victim down under their own girth, stretching and even ripping their skin (which isn't that pliant) and weakening them through the physiological shock. The latter effect stems from the hundreds of miles worth of new arteries, veins and capillaries suddenly drawing blood away from the rest of the body. The Angel kills his victims through sudden and acute heart stress, though the ripped and torn skin isn't pretty either.

6:07 AM: The Angel of Bones sentences Ragnarockette and Orzaiz to death by injecting them with a fatal dose of his poison. The cameras record what can only be the nastiest death on television. The bodies gain too much interstitial fat, tearing the skin apart like ripping paper. Internal organs leak out through open abdominal tears, while the body writhes in agony. Joints pop from their sockets after rapid fat growth exerts sufficient pressure. Finally, the heart ruptures.

cohorts. If reporters are present during the battle, they will film the action. Some are even smart enough to pocket their DVDs after the show ends. Still, when it's over, the characters can expect a barrage of questions as to their identities and agendas.

There are a dozen different ways this scene can progress, from teams who sneak Orzaiz and Ragnarockette out from under the Angel's nose, to characters who watch the events unfold, hoping the Angel caps off one nova before they step in to save the other. Accordingly, the Angel's reaction to the rescue also depends on whether the characters upstaged him on camera (in which case he'll be furious) or if they surprised him before the reporters even arrived.

As for evacuating from the city, the Storyteller should possess enough background information on Ibiza to know what the characters can or cannot do. The various factions have a quick and quiet method of extraction set up, though getting to the dust-off coordinates might take work. The Spanish army is busy over the next six hours with uprooting the last novas from Sa Penya and D'Alt Vila. This leaves the characters to contend with air-support, random patrols or the roadblocks mentioned in Act 1. After this six hour grace period, the Spanish army will establish patrols and roadblocks everywhere. How the characters escape is up to them. If the characters need access to outside communication, however, Isla Blanca is their best option, if they can enter the hotel.

Aftermath

As shown, this adventure can go a dozen different ways and end in places the Storyteller never expected. If the characters are caught on tape, that won't please their superiors. Rescuing Ragnarockette and/or Orzaiz, however, goes a long way toward diffusing any reprimands. Additionally, finding Lourté/Turncoat and bringing him back alive is a feather in the team's cap no matter whose side they work for. The same applies to Michael Graff's recording of the Amp Room battle.

If the characters are Terats and the team captured Ragnarockette, then Orzaiz sanctions her release and returns her to T2M. He may not like the organization, but he believes there was enough misery in Ibiza Town without adding to it. This, of course, draws fire from other quarters of the Teragen hierarchy; Divis Mal, however, invariably supports Orzaiz's decision as a freethinking nova (and one of the few he respects). What nobody realizes is that there's now an unspoken respect between Orzaiz and Ragnarockette due to their shared experience. Meanwhile, if Turncoat was brought back, then he integrates Lourté's personality and Jesse Hooks becomes the core personality once again (after the Teragen retrieves the information it needs).

If the characters are with Project Utopia and they captured Orzaiz, then the count is eventually freed since there are no witnesses to the accusations of sabotage. Because the real Lourté died at the Amp Room, Turncoat's testimony is technically hearsay. Additionally, Count Raoul Orzaiz's lawyers have enough cause to accuse Project Uto-

pia of entrapment; given Utopia's current standing in the public eye, they drop the matter. If Turncoat was also captured, he is kept under observation and examined. Eventually, however, Lourté's personality fades into memory and Jesse Hooks once again emerges as the dominant identity. He escapes Project Utopia and returns to the Teragen.

If the characters worked for the Aberrants, then both Orzaiz and Ragnarockette are handed back to their perspective organizations. While Ragnarockette's return is through anonymous channels, the Aberrants use Orzaiz's rescue to strengthen relations between the two factions.

On an international level, Project Utopia suffers heavy sanctions for the botched raid on the Amp Room, though the accompanying violence is blamed on nova looters. Project Utopia helps rebuild Sa Penya and D'Alt Vila and earns high praise for their near-faultless restoration efforts. By the following summer, Ibiza Town is again the party capital of the world, though the island now maintains a strong nova law-enforcement presence, with DeVries' help. These elites go a long way in keeping the peace among visiting novas.

Should the Angel of Bones survive as well, the team has a new nemesis who'll stop at nothing to destroy them. Additionally, the characters also have future adventure hooks to bring them back to Ibiza, including the Hotel Isla Blanca and the orbital weapons platform (if the Storyteller used that optional vignette).

Dramatis Personae

The Angel of Bones

Background: The Angel of Bones doesn't speak of his past as Ed Carmichael. Before his eruption, however, he was overweight and unhappy every moment of his life. He bought



into all the television ads promising weight loss at the drop of a gel cap. Every diet was a lure to a better life, every fitness gym was another wasted paycheck, and every year was another outgrown pant size. Eventually, Carmichael realized it had to be all or nothing. He couldn't control himself with moderation, but he understood excess. So, he opted for nothing and started the one-finger gag regime. Carmichael erupted through starvation.

Carmichael is now the Angel of Bones, a man cursed by his own wishes. It had to be all or nothing, and now he's forever starving. He metabolizes food like it was water, and his stomach cramps are constant. Like some cruel karmic joke, he's too thin, a caricature of skin and erupted bone. He's a starvation victim who can make others fat, but can never sate himself. Still, at least he's empowered as a nova. He's one of the chosen few and plans to compensate for a lifetime of self-loathing. Carmichael never did anything in moderation. Neither does the Angel of Bones.

Image: The Angel of Bones is a starvation victim, gaunt and haunted, with onion parchment skin. Bone digests and branches erupt from his back and shoulders like a cadaver's wings, while thick ivory growths emerge from his forearms and legs like wild coral.

Roleplaying Hints: You've done the groveling "I'm shit" routine your entire life. That's over now. You've got a deadly new body, and people fear you. Sure, your hunger is maddening at times, but it's a tradeoff. You've never known a perfect day your entire life, so why bother waiting for one to come. You're going out there and taking what belongs to you. Now is your time. Christ, you're hungry though.

Gear: T2M Power/Pak™ backpack containing a bag of pork rinds, Doublestuff Oreos, tins of Spam, Ritz Crackers, Easy Cheese, a bag of Nacho Cheese Doritos, a can of spicy bean dip and a 12-pack of Jolt Cola.

Nature: Critic

Allegiance: Individualist

Attributes: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Appearance 0, Manipulation 4, Charisma 2

Abilities: Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Command 3, Computer 4, Endurance 2, Intimidation 3, Might 2, Stealth 3, Subterfuge 4

Backgrounds: Cipher 2, Eufiber 3

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 4, Taint 5

Powers: Mega-Strength •• (Quantum Leap, Thunderclap), Mega-Dexterity •• (Rapid Strike), Mega-Stamina •••• (Durability, Regeneration), Mega-Manipulation •• (Persuader), Armor ••, Claws ••, Immobilize (vs. Willpower) •••• (Supertough), Poison •••••

Maurice Lourté/Turncoat

Background: Nobody knows who the real Lourté is, especially now that he's part of Turncoat. Armed with Jesse Hook's *Doppelgänger* powers, however, Lourté can literally become whomever he wants. This will not last, however. Jesse will eventually re-assert dominance and return to his allies in the Teragen.

Gear: Pocket chip-recorder.

Nature: Conniver

Allegiance: Project Utopia

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Perception 4, Intelligence 5, Wits 4, Appearance 3, Manipulation 4, Charisma 3

Abilities: Academics (Politics) 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Bureaucracy 4, Command 4, Computer 2, Endurance 3, Firearms 3, Interrogation 4, Intimidation 2, Intrusion 2, Investigation 1, Martial Arts 2, Resistance 3, Subterfuge 3

Backgrounds: Attunement 1, Backing 2, Cipher 2, Contacts 2 (Director Thetis), Dormancy 3

Quantum 3, Quantum Pool 26, Willpower 8, Taint 5 (Psychic Mimic MPD), Chrysalis 6

Powers: Mega-Perception •• (Ultrapерipheral Perception), Mega-Intelligence ••• (Analyze Weakness, Enhanced Memory), Mega-Appearance •• (Appearance Alteration, Copycat), Mega-Manipulation •• (Persuader, Trickster), Holo •••• (anima banner effect only), Psychic Shield •••••, Telepathy •••••



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One: The Pope of Babylon (Spring, 2010)	3
Chapter Two: A Green and Pleasant Land (Fall, 2012)	41
Chapter Three: Dominion (Winter, 2014)	79
Chapter Four: Where Heaven Ends (Summer, 2015)	112