

protodimension magazine



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CONTENTS

- 4 **Dithering in the Dark**
Words from the chief
by Tad Kelson
- 5 **Welcome to the UnderZone**
100 Word Challenge
By Tad Kelson
- 6 **That Howling Frontier**
Part 2: Concluding A Waziristan excursion
by Captain Obvious and Lee Williams
For Call of Cthulhu
- 15 **Fold in Space**
Part 1 of a Diabolical story
by Eric Fabiashi
- 18 **Five Piece Band**
Badlands fiction
by Captain Obvious
- 19 **Corporate Facility**
A Socotra teaser
by Norm Fenlason
For Dark Conspiracy 3
- 22 **Alternative Combat Round**
House rules
by Eric G Lyon-Taylor
For Dark Conspiracy
- 24 **Dream Police**
Lyrics that might seem appropriate...
by Rick Nielsen, CHEAP TRICK
- 25 **Random Items**
Things to spice up your DC game
by Eric Fabiashi
For Dark Conspiracy
- 26 **Salvage**
Fiction
by Captain Obvious
- 28 **Creature Competition**
A creature for horror your games
by Tad Kelson
- 31 **Vacation in Scarlet**
More Minion Hunting fiction
by Eric Fabiashi
- 34 **Last Thursday**
Post apoc fiction
by Tad Kelson
- 40 **Thoughts Run Wild...**
A one-round module
by Geoff Skellams
For Dark Conspiracy 2nd Edition
- 91 **From Under the Floorboards**
RetroTek concepts
by Lee Williams



DITHERING IN THE DARK



Happy 17th Issue everyone,

Also Happy Halloween, All Saints Day, Dia' de los Muertos, All Hallows Eve, Walpurgis Night, and Samhain to one and all. With this issue Protodimension Magazine is at the start of our 5th year. Few are the fan supported products that make it this far and we are very proud and glad that we have the support we do for our hobby and genres of choice.

Speaking of choice, in this latest issue are some awesome things to choose from to read and use in your gaming. From a teaser to more creatures, alternative rules to add a difference to you Conspiracy Lives! Game, and a healthy dose of fiction, we have it pretty much covered for our core and loyal readers. Systems supported include Call of Cthulhu, Conspiracy Lives!, and even for Little Fears: Nightmare Edition. If there are other systems you want material for go ahead and ask, or better yet come up with it and submit it. We here at Protodimension Magazine are always looking for new talent as well as submissions from prior contributors and without your help, PDM would not be as awesome as it is.

So there you have it. Welcome back to another fine issue and we here at 3 Hombres thank you once more for reading and participating in this our hobby of choice, Role Playing Games.
Good Gaming.

Tad Kelson
Editor in Chief
Protodimension Magazine

WELCOME TO THE UNDERZONE

From our family-friendly rides to the quaint fall-themed decorations the *UnderZone* is the perfect family destination for a fun-filled time. Track cars will take your children on a tour of the *Pumpkin Patch* as well as a visit to the *Shady Acres* play-zone complete with headstones and fun activities for all to participate in, as well as a shopping spot to get that special something to take home to remember the trip for the rest of their lives. Decorated in an outdoor style the *UnderZone* is the perfect place to visit. Stay awhile why don't you?

—Tad Kelson
100 Word Challenge



Wish you were here!

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THAT HOWLING FRONTIER

Part 2: Concluding A Waziristan Excursion

by Captain Obvious and Lee Williams

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

Conclusion of the 1920s
CoC Adventure started
in Issue #14



PART II: WAZIRISTAN

UPON ARRIVING AT R.A.F. Base Miram Shah, the investigators and their escorts will be greeted by the base commander, who will insist on an immediate meeting and tea. In the officer's mess, he will introduce them to the two Mullahs and back brief them on the disappearances of both tribes' children. Even more curious will be the silent Aircraftsman Shaw, who will only be introduced as their "Local Government Liaison"

Both Mullahs are both convinced that the disappearances are the work

of foreign 'Thugee'. If shown a sketch of Stein's Grand Totem statuette, they will animatedly swear to have seen drawings in ash at abandoned isolated farmhouses.

The investigators will be led to the abandoned maddrassa by the two Mullahs and their guards (each a group of ten experienced rifle-armed tribal warriors). To the best of their ability, the Commander and the Mullahs are keeping the nature of this mission secret. If anything, it will most likely be misinterpreted by outsiders as most likely something of a mass-homicide investigation and possibly a forlorn hope of a rescue mission.



AIRCRAFTSMAN SHAW



(LT. COL T.E. LAWRENCE, DSO)

STR: 10 DEX: 12 INT: 13 Idea: 65
 CON: 12 APP: 10 POW: 13 Luck: 65
 SIZ: 10 SAN: 65 EDU: 14 Know: 75

Damage Bonus: None

Magic Points: 10

Hit Points: 11

Skills: *Archaeology* 60%, *Motorcycle* 75%,
Rifle 75%, *Riding* 70% (*Horse/Camel*), *Bargain*
 65%, *Hide* 50%, *History* 80%, *Handgun* 60%,
Persuade 55%

Languages: *English* 75%, *Arabic* 70%,
Pashtu 35%, *Urdu* 30%

Weapons: Shaw carries a .455 Webley revolver and
 a .303 Enfield.

Shaw is familiar with the Frontier and relatively gifted with languages, being fluent in Arabic (viewed as a Divine language amongst the local tribes) and having enough Pashtu, Urdu and Punjabi to get. In fact, Shaw is capable of donning the persona of a Pir or fakir (a Muslim spiritual guide) and holding his own with all but the most learned Imams.

Keeper's Notes: any travelling in Waziristan is by permission of the tribal chiefs. For anyone not of the Islamic faith, let alone being an outsider to the region, to do otherwise invites their wrath. The presence of the two Mullahs and their escorts is mandatory to ensuring safe passage. If the investigators should find themselves separated from these guardians, they will become targets of anyone they encounter.

On another note, there is precedence for women travelling in the Tribal Areas while on official missions so female investigators are viable for this adventure. Having some sort of skills or reputation that would impress the Mullahs or tribal chiefs would go far in influencing them. Another consideration is whether females should travel disguised as men (and risk being shot just as readily) or as women (and risk occurring undue attention). At the very least, whatever their choice they must respect local customs by keeping their heads covered.

Memories of Mollie Ellis' kidnapping are still fresh in everyone's' minds up along the border. In April 1923, Khyber tribesmen killed Mrs. Ellis and took the 17 year old the daughter of a serving British Army officer hostage. Two notorious criminals, brothers lived in the Bosti-Khel Valley near Kohat.

Three rescuers were dispatched; Zaman Khan (a tribal leader from the Khyber region), Khan Bahadur Kuli Khan (the Assistant Political Agent for the Kurram Valley, Khyber region) and Lillian Starr (matron at the Peshawar Mission Hospital). While the full story goes beyond this presentation, Mollie Ellis was rescued and the entire party returned to Fort Shinawari, successfully concluding one of the most dramatic events ever to occur on the Frontier. Never before had a British woman ventured so far into tribal territory; Lillian Starr's presence in the expeditionary

party ruffled the locals' feathers but they concluded that the British must be "strong" since they sent a woman to do a man's work.

Upon arriving at Miran Shah, the Investigators will be assigned a Liaison from the RAF. This is, of course, Lieutenant Colonel T.E. Lawrence, masquerading as a lowly mechanic but in reality an intelligence operative. His ability to instigate tribal conflict dovetailed nicely with Whitehall's desperate desire to topple the Soviet sympathizing, radically modernist King Amanullah.

Shaw arrived in Karachi on January 1927 and was stationed at the RAF base at Drigh Road until April 1928, when he was moved to Peshawar and then on to the border town of Miran Shah (Miran Shah, the 'smallest RAF station in India') in North Waziristan, where a few 114 Squadron Bristol fighters are based some ten miles from Afghanistan.

The soft-spoken, unassuming Shaw has an incredible gift for making friends, even among sceptics and potential adversaries. When a broken-down truck delayed him in Jandola, Shaw talked his way into the South Waziristan Scouts Officer's Mess and kept them enthralled by ripping tales of far-off Arabia.

Shaw's biggest liability is his uncanny ability to provoke the ire of lesser men. When first posted to the frontier, his commander learned of his true identity and became deeply distrustful of his special correspondences to his 'big wig' bosses back in Britain. Only the intervention of a higher-ranking friend prevented Shaw from being transferred to a less-effective position. The old station commander was relieved but the new one was just as antagonistic, so Shaw was moved to Miran Shah to continue his work.

Shaw's not entirely benign interest with the Investigators is three-fold; to keep them out of trouble, to keep tabs on whatever they discover and to further his own work.

FERAL DOG

(AVERAGE STATS)

STR: 4 POW: 9 Move: 15
 CON: 9 DEX: 13 Hit Points: 7
 SIZ: 3 DB: -1d4

Skills: Listen 50%, Track 80%.

Weapons: Bite 35%, 1d6 Damage.
 (5% chance of a bite becoming infected)

MIRAN SHAH

The Tochi Scouts of North Waziristan Agency post at Miranshah, about twelve miles from the Durand Line and 10 miles from the Afghan border, was laid out in 1905 and gradually enlarged to a fort 400 yards square. By 1925, it had a small fortified township for the Royal British Air Force and an airfield for carrying out operations in Waziristan. A duty pilot was always on stand-by to help a patrol of the Tochi Scouts, Kurram Militia or South Waziristan Scouts in trouble.

“So efficient were the communications - a carrier pigeon from patrol to fort, thence by telephone or radio to Miranshah - that within half an hour of calling for help a patrol could expect a plane overhead.”

Packs of several dozen feral dogs roam the area around the outpost and may occasionally attack lone wanderers, particularly at night. In the daytime the sentries will shoot at any that get too close to the gate, or onto the airfield itself.

THE THREAT OF ANOTHER JIHAD.

Shaw's mission is to keep the Wazirs (settled tribe) who occupy Northern Waziristan and the border raiding Mahsud in Southern Waziristan in line and, if possible, ready to

turn against the King of Afghanistan. At the moment, the less-enlightened political agents on the Frontier are building a case against Khan Sahib Zanghi Khan, chief malik of the Madda Khel tribe, for opposition to the British government and harbouring of outlaws. Prior to the discovery of the Lesser Totem, Shaw was convinced that Zanghi was behind the missing children – possibly selling them into slavery in Afghanistan.

Given the recent history on the Frontier for the last two generations, British authorities know better than to underestimate the menace of a tribal Jihad.

In 1896, a fakir known as the Mad Bareheaded Mullah began a strange jihad to stir the country-side with fantasies of an anti-British revolt. Also known as Saidullah, Mullah Mastun or the lewanai faqir in Pashto and coming from Kabul, he went among the tribes claiming to be sent from Heaven to tear the infidel out of the hills and throw them back into the plains of the Punjab. Promising the support of untold hosts of horsemen and footmen concealed in the hills, men fed with food from Heaven, the madman declared that he needed no other mortal support – he could go single-handed against the Infidel; even alone, he would have armies of Heaven's angels making him invulnerable and invincible.

British intelligence records didn't reveal much information on the Fakir's personality or his life prior to the summer of 1897, other than detailing a man who lived outside the boundaries of normal social interaction. They scoffed at his claims to be able to turn invisible thanks to otherworldly sources, chalking them up to the “extraordinary credulity” of the locals and the Fakir's own remarkable skill at manipulating people. The Fakir was also thought to have travelled extensively, perhaps to Central Asia or Arabia and rumoured to have met with the Afghan Amir in Kabul.

He was in fact was a sorcerer who attempted to open a bridge to the Plain of Leng. Thanks to the actions of an Indian Political Officer and a young Lieutenant Churchill, the madman's rite was disrupted and the armies from Leng never made the crossing.

That failure didn't stop the lewanai faqir, who went north to preach his message of insane hatred in scores of villages and soon rallied crowds of tribesmen to the cause. Promising



EGNATIUS (DR. LEO TANDLER)

MINOR MYTHOS SORCERER

STR: 11 DEX: 14 INT: 13 Idea: 65
 CON: 13 APP: 11 POW: 10 Luck: 50
 SIZ: 13 SAN: 50 EDU: 12 Know: 60

Damage Bonus: None

Magic Points: 10

Hit Points: 13

Skills: *Conceal* 30%, *Dodge* 30%, *Hide* 40%,
History 30%, *Library Use* 50%, *Listen* 50%,
Occult 45%, *Persuade* 40%, *Ride* 35%,
Rifle 35%, *Sneak* 30%

Languages: *Cantonese* 20%, *English* 25%,
German 60%, *Latin* 35%, *Urdu* 15%.

Spells Known: *Augury*, *Bring Haboob*
(Sandstorm), *Cloud Memory*, *Create*
Gate (see text)

Weapons: Mauser C96 pistol with 50 rounds,
 Mauser G98 rifle with 200 rounds

Known to his henchmen only by this one name, the Tcho-Tcho's human leader is a secretive and sinister "agent of the Counter-Initiation," a tool of hidden forces serving dreaded "unknown superiors" who constantly thwart and misdirect human enlightenment.

plunder such as they had never dreamed of and abundant loot from his own treasury, he worked up his followers that they fought against British forces with incredible fanaticism; stones and sticks against modern rifles, sheer anger against shrapnel shells.

In August 1914, the notorious anti-British Mullah Haji Sahib of Turangzai, gathered several thousand Pathan hill men and a handful of Hindu fanatics in the Ambela Pass and prepared to invade British territory. With them were again fakirs of many kinds, reputed miracle workers and fanatics marked by self-inflicted torture – but none with the skills of the Mad Mullah. No sooner had Haji Sahib's assault repulsed than an even more formidable gathering of hill men (between 17,000 and 20,000 strong) under the fakir known as the Sandaki Mullah swarmed down the left bank of the Swat River to invade the Lower Swat. The British and Indian forces were hard-pressed to stop this uprising, but once again triumphed.

From the recently published 'Manual of Operations on the North West Frontier':

"The poverty of the country drives the inhabitants to raid their neighbours, and the Pathans, bred in an atmosphere of robbery and blood feuds, are intensely independent and jealous of intrusion into their country.

They are active, hardy and skilled marksmen, adept in all the arts of individual warfare, always seeking and seldom missing an opportunity. As a rule they neither give nor expect quarter, and a wounded Pathan should always be regarded with suspicion, and precautions taken against possible treachery. Their armament at present consists of rifles, including a considerable number of modern high-velocity weapon, swords and knives. Their supplies of ammunition are precarious."

Dr. Leo Tandler (his current name, just one of a series matching his Monogram L.T.) is a specialist in the art of subversion and part of a wider network of mercenaries currently meddling with human events. Tandler currently sports a large Russian-style beard and shaved head, while dressing in tribal garb. He is stoutly built but of average height, with a distinctive Roman nose. He carries a Mauser C96 Broomhandle pistol and, when warranted, a Mauser G98 hunting rifle.



FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

EXAMPLE MINION

STR: 14 DEX: 9 INT: 15 Idea: 75
 CON: 10 APP: 10 POW: 8 Luck: 40
 SIZ: 12 SAN: 40 EDU: 11 Know: 55

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Magic Points: 8

Hit Points: 11

Skills: *Club* 50%, *Conceal* 40%, *Dodge* 30%,
Grapple 50%, *Head Butt* 25%, *Hide* 30%, *Listen*
 40%, *Occult* 20%, *Pistol* 40%, *Rifle* 35%, *Spot*
Hidden 50%, *Speak Arabic* 30%, *Speak English*
 25%, *Speak Pashto* 25%, *Sword* 35%, *Track* 50%

Weapons: Clubs, daggers, rifles, swords,
 revolvers—choose as needed for each individual.

Tandler has embraced the occult over the last decade and a half, intriguing all along the way ; working as a double agent for the Germans during the Great War, then linking up with a laundry list of fringe political factions (monarchists and reactionaries from all over Europe, as well as the Kapp Putsch). Exiled from Austria, Tandler fled to China and worked for several warlords before claiming finding a door to the Plains of Leng.

Having stolen a Lesser Totem and the scroll containing the spells necessary to open a doorway from an old Chinese shaman, on the night of October 31st, 1925 Tandler sacrificed the poor man on the roof of the Astor House Hotel in Tientsin. As he wrote later on, "I made the great renunciation, I quitted the world... I forced the doors of the lunatic asylum open and - walked out".

Tandler is now a sorcerer with formidable skills and able to open gates to the Plains of Leng at will, as long as he has sufficient blood sacrifices for these totems. However, the two totems currently in his possession are lesser ones - and one of those is now damaged, meaning that anyone attempting to use it invites considerable risk.

TANDLER AND THE FORTY THUGEE

Having heard of Professor Stein's discovery, Tandler travelled through the Plains of Leng, from China to the Tribal areas with the intent to steal the statue and possibly discover other Tcho-Tcho artifacts. Not counting the scouting party dispatched to Fort Sandeman, Tandler has a well-armed gang of dozen Tcho-Tcho and two dozen human outcasts accompanying him.

However, he and his minions have been delayed with the weight of greater plans they have been tasked with and only got as far as Waziristan before the investigators showed up in Karachi. Having taken over an old madrassa about a day's walk southwest of Miran Shah and sacrificing the lone elderly mullah to their foul gods, Tandler's Thuggee commenced a campaign of terror and sacrilege. They are responsible for the missing children, whom they view as no more significant than delicacies.

By allowing his Tcho-Tcho to harvest children from the two tribes and leaving clues that point towards some of the primarily-Hindu Indian Army troops in the area, Tandler hopes to pit the local tribes against the British. At worst, the two tribes will turn on each other but either path will likely plunge Waziristan into chaos long enough for the Afghan King to finish arming and training his forces. The Indians would of course send troops to pacify the tribal areas, which would inspire the Afghans to cross the border to help their brothers drive out the Indians. With any luck, the Soviets would be pushed by others to move south during the chaos and be pitted against the Indians.

If he is unable to infiltrate his agents into the Witch's Hill expedition, Tandler will lure the Investigators into Waziristan with a smaller and far less important but nearly identical totem. Tandler's intent is to draw some or all of the investigators into an ambush, capture as many as he can and leisurely torture them until they reveal the location of Stein's totem.

If and when the investigators reveal that the totem is at the Mohatta Palace, Tandler will pick one investigator to return to Karachi and steal the totem, keeping



GHOUL (AVERAGE STATS)



STR: 16 INT: 13 Move: 9
 CON: 13 POW: 13
 SIZ: 13 DEX:

Damage Bonus: +1d4

Hit Points: 13

San Loss: 0/1d6

Skills: *Burrow 75%, Climb 85%, Hide 60%, Jump 75%, Listen 70%, Scent Decay 65%, Sneak 80%, Spot Hidden 60%.*

Weapons: *Claws 30%, 1d6+DB damage, Bite 30%, 1d6 damage and automatic "worry"**

*Ghouls can attack with Bite and Claws simultaneously. If a Bite attack succeeds then the ghouls will stop using its claws and lock its jaws, continuing to do 1d4 damage automatically each combat round. A successful opposed STR roll by the victim will dislodge the ghouls and end the automatic damage.

Special: firearms and other projectiles only cause half damage to ghouls. Round up any fractions.

any other investigators as hostages to ensure that the chosen one stays honest.

Of course, Tandler will dispatch his own party of picked henchmen and Tcho-Tcho to pre-emptively infiltrate south and shadow the escorted hostage. Their mission will be to get as close to the totem as possible, steal it from the hostage investigator if opportunity presents itself and prevent any pursuit if needs be.

If the investigator returns with the totem, Tandler will of course sacrifice that individual along with any remaining investigators - in front of the item, as a token honour for their service.

runs through this area. Without Egnatius/Tandler's knowledge, they have been subsisting on the leftovers of his blood sacrifices. If seriously threatened they will attempt to escape, and will only fight if literally backed into a corner.

A more enterprising Keeper may even wish to directly tie the ghouls in with Tandler's group, using them to keep an eye on the area when he is off about his business.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER - MADRASSAH GHOULS

To spice things up a little, the Keeper may wish to add a little extra. The abandoned madrassah already has something of a reputation as an unclean and tainted place, according to local gossip. This is due to a pair of recently displaced ghouls who set up a temporary home in a dried-up subterranean river that



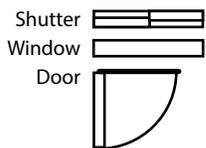
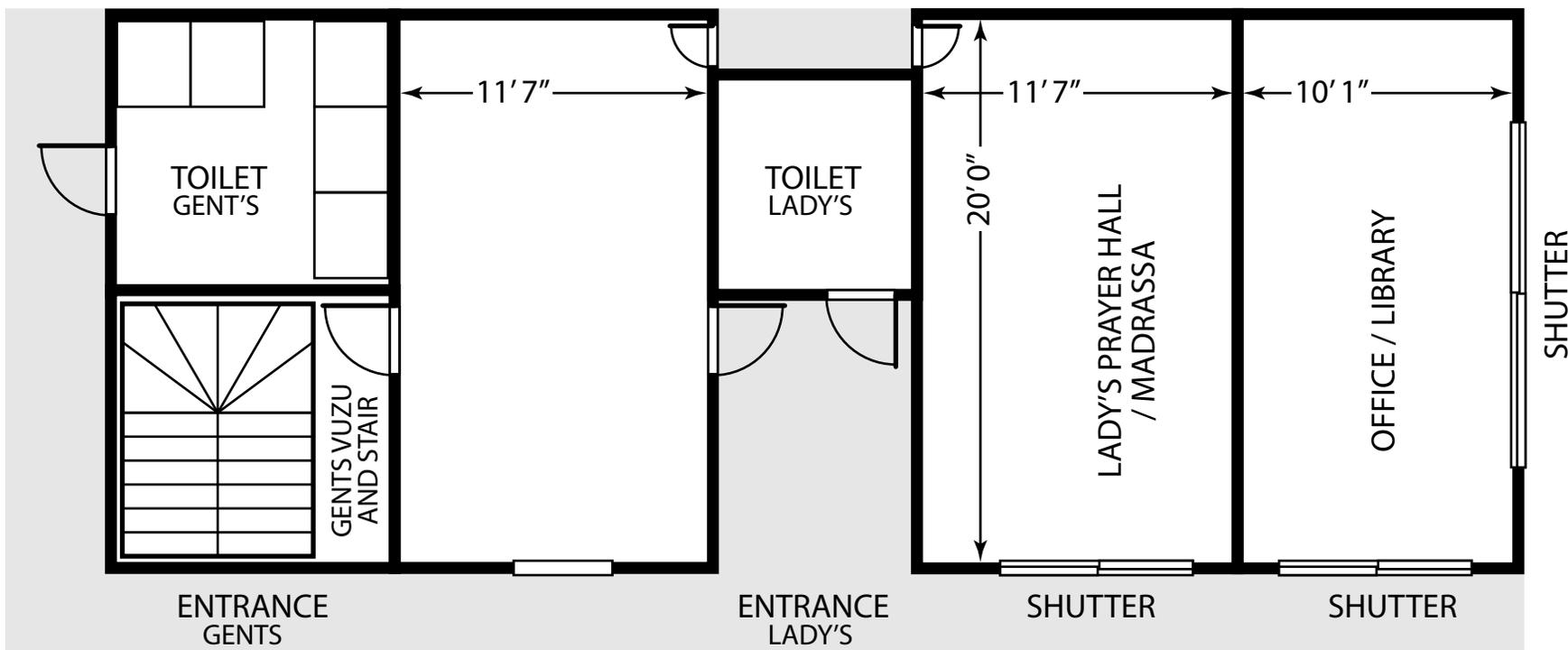
RELEVANT WEAPONS

Weapon	Base %	Damage	Range*	Attacks	Rounds	HP	Mal
.303 Lee-Enfield	25	2d6+4	110 (310)	1/2	10	12	00
.455 Webley	20	1d10+2	15	1	6	9	97
Lewis Gun	15	2d6+4	80 (480)	burst	47	14	98
Vickers MG	15	2d6+4	150 (750)	burst	250	18	99
Tribesman's Musket	25	1d10+4	60	1/4	1	12	95
Martini-Enfield	25	2d6+4	80 (290)	1/3	1	12	00
Mauser C96	20	1d8	20	2	10	9	98
Mauser G98	20	2d8	100 (300)	1/2	5	12	00

* Captain Obvious has provided what he feels are more realistic range bands, in the interests of a more realistic being-shot-at experience! His recommendations are in parentheses.

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THE ABANDONED MADDRASSA

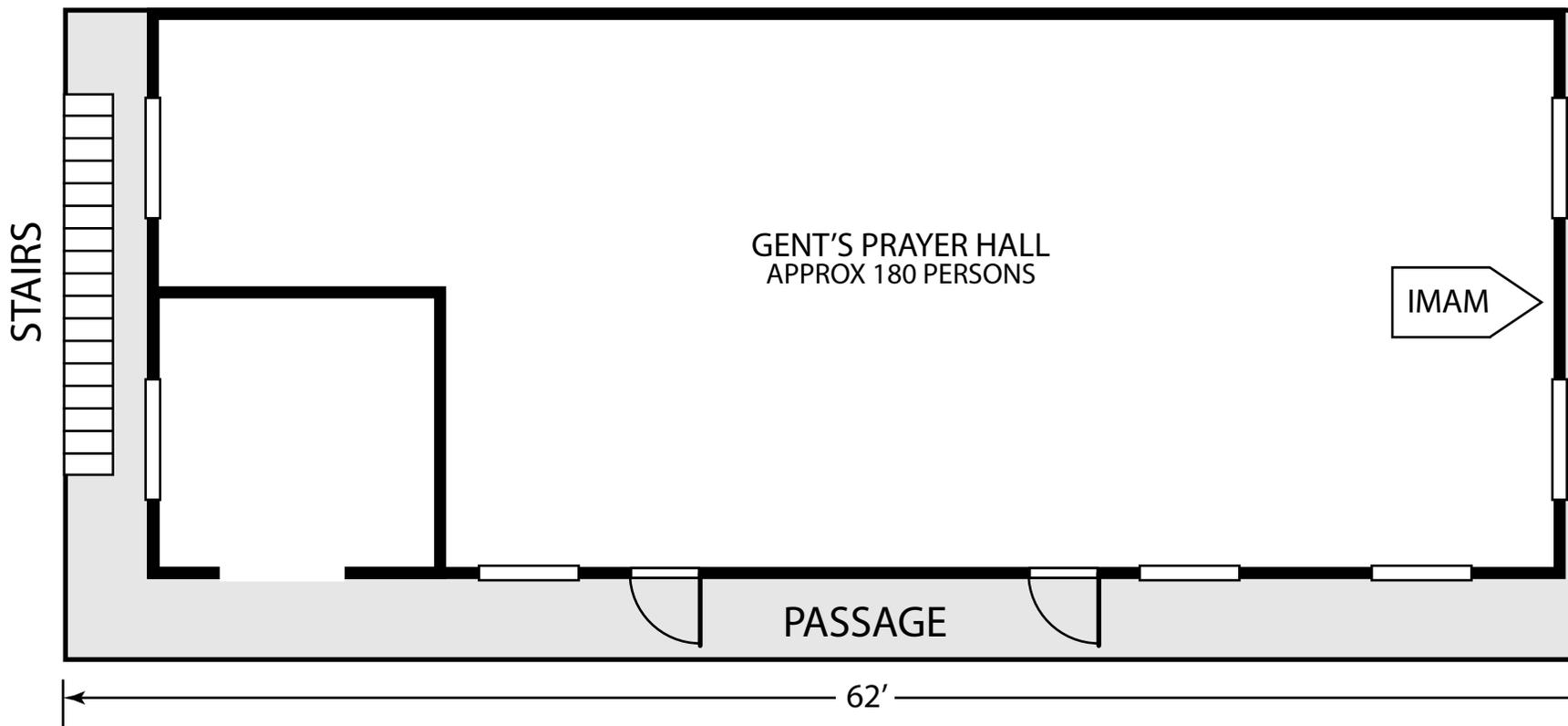


THE LOWER FLOOR

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

THE ABANDONED MADDRASSA

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU



THE UPPER FLOOR



FOLD IN SPACE

Part 1 of a Diabolical story

by Eric Fabiashi

RICK WAS TWENTY five now and the escape from the Morlock nest had cost him two fingers and part of his team. It took two days of his cell fighting below Old Detroit to eliminate the Morlock threat and he still had the dreams about his uncle's voice tumbling through his head at night. Mary gave birth to a healthy baby daughter at the end of July and his nights of peace were over in a good way. His mind was someplace back with his little girl. But his marriage and heart went on a shelf in soul as he started preparing.

Right now he was high over Moscow air space on an old Douglas DC-3 corporate clone air craft. The thing threatened to shake ever part of him apart but his mind was with his daughter. He relaxed his mind and flexed his body just as his father had taught him. Each and every muscle group responded to his command. His mind was going through the exercises his wife taught him. Even though he wasn't an empath. They helped with some of the sanity bending damage he had sustained over the last couple of years. Sanity he could and would never get back. He had lost every trace of childhood below ground fighting monsters, aliens, and gods from beyond time itself.

The dull roar from the guitars woke him right out of his empathic yoga induced haze. The team's empath shook him. 'Com'in man its time.' words were lost within the

I Cube's music routine. Nearby 'The Diabolicals' stood ready. Guns cocked, ammo locked, and they were ready to rock. The window before the Russian authorities scanned the plane was closing fast. They would soon find the team as well as their equipment unless a gate was opened and very soon. The team's empath had already started 'The Process' which also meant listening to dead rock star's screams and music. The act was someplace between magic and science but resembled neither. That's when the team heard the soldier's voices right outside the airplane. They tried the handle.

Ricardo concentrated and from between his fingers space time split itself apart like a ripe red fruit and a hole opened between dimensions. Doc Ellington was first through the hole and he hefted the machine pistol like a man on fire. The portal led to a desert like world about 30 million light years away on a world some place between primal and primitive with touches of HP Lovecraft seen through a lens of Hunter S. Thompson. The black pavement etched in organic glass bothered the team the most. Or maybe it was the flaming alien skulls.

All eight of 'The Diabolicals' made it. The soldiers spread out with their mock up WWII machine guns and swords by

their sides. They would not have a repeat of Honduras. They lost some good people.

'The Pale' were waiting for them past the silver etched pyramid like buildings if that's what they were. The warrior things were on them instantly as the temperature sank like a stone. Rick could see his breath and the safety from his FNX-45 went snap into place. Hand signs were passed among the group. 'The Pale' weren't even remotely human but humanoid. They carried sword like weapons and were rivals to the 'Dark Elves'. Although such terms were purely human though. These things were as alien as it gets. They were a race if such a thing can be applied to expressionless horrors that merely killed and did the act with gusto. The machine gun fire rang across the world and brass flew as the bullets and the physics of the place tried to assert itself on them. Pale ceased to exist as bullets tore through internal arrangements if those things were organs at all. The 'Pale' attacked from behind the cover of some sort organic barrier and then they brought the ranged weapons. The 'barrier' moved on twelve legs and the "Pale" moved with it. One soldier was hit by a weapon that seemed part of the 'Pale's' flesh. His skin was charred and frozen at the same time and he was frozen dead when he hit the ground. The sound was both solid and sickening at the same time.

The team got to the organic /silo temple very quickly and protected their 'empath' the whole time. The interference of the place was open to the elements of this world and so Rick's talents weren't really needed. He heard and felt the splotch from above and behind him. Fully formed 'Pale' were birthed here basking in the eldritch light of the object that 'the Diabolicals' were sent to retrieve. They weren't aware of the team at the moment because Murphy the team's tech had hotwired some of 'the Pale's' instruments two missions ago.

Rick saw 'the Pale's' featureless face rise in front of him. He held the gun inches from under the thing's chin. And the naked flesh of the thing glistened in front of him. It was sexless and ageless. A thing processed from the raw organic factory that they found

themselves in. Rick raised the gun above his head and shot the wire line into the organic walls of the place. The second line found its purchase as well as the first and he began to climb. Muscle, limb, and power worked as one and his team protected him with a fierce determination born of desperation.

He saw the 'Ax of Bethara' spinning in space and time. Suspended there eons ago when it was taken by the Pale as a prize when they defeated 'the fey' over feeding rights for the humans of the Carpathians. 'The Pale' fed on its power and birthed themselves on it as they slowly digested the thing's magic but it would take thousands of years if ever. Rick worked his way over to it and that's when he saw it had guardians. Alien spider hybrid monsters confronted him. They're mandibles were sharp, hungry, and from what Rick had heard they fed on more than mere flesh. His soul would be theirs and his flesh spun into another of them. It took a combination of silver darts, silenced 45 caliber bullets and luck to finish these things. It also took him two hours of combat and that only left 20 minutes time to make the window and get out of this Giger inspired hell world.

He moved the box his tech had made three days before into place. There was a very special crystal lodged into the circuitry of the thing. With a click the signal activated and the ax stopped spinning! It also dropped! And then a long howl from something between a birth cry and alarm sounded!

Every Pale turned as one to Rick and 'The Diabolicals.' 'Ax of Bethara' sat in the middle of the team and Ricardo had it! Rick's FMX-45 barked in time to his heart killing 'Pale' around the team as they worked their way to the interference. Rick loaded another line and shot into the obsidian floor working quickly down his guide wire and nearly tearing his shoulder in half doing it. He would feel that in the morning if they made it out. He worked his way to his team.

Fire, cover, and practice just as they had drilled for months were what saved the seven remaining team members. The Pale had tried to swarm them at least

eight times by the time they got to the spot. The horror that confronted them was part way between demon and a fungus induced nightmare. A thing of tendrils, tentacles, and a very bad attitude. Waves of negativity washed over them and still they would not give in. They found the spot behind what might be rocks or debris.

"Ricardo open the damn door man. I want to go home" The order was barked or coughed out so fast that it almost didn't make sense.

The young empath stared blankly at Rick. "I'm sorry but I can't. The Dark Ones are coming for the ax."

Rick hit the empath so hard that the crack made his hand hurt. "Open the door now man. Or I swear that I'll send a bullet through your head next. Don't make me tell your mother what you just said man. Open it right now and that's an order". The young empath looked shocked and amazed by the blow.

The young empath shook himself free of whatever dark and sinister thing had a hold on his mind just as a Pale's blade almost took off his head. The bullet found a target but it wasn't him. He opened the portal in moments and it split with the sound of tearing flesh and physics. Seven soldiers left through the portal and found themselves hitting solid Moscow concrete.

'Welcome back Herr Menendez and friends. What is it you call yourselves? Oh yes. The Diabolicals' Rick and company found themselves looking into the spitted eyes of Enaugwe the dark elf in the employ of the Midnight Lady 'The Princess Who Never Smiled.'

Enaugwe was Rick's opposite number and was standing in the hall of 'Section 60' which meant that he and his team had taken it over. That meant everyone in the Russian facility was dead and compromised. 'I'll be taking my lady's property now Rick. No hard feelings'

That's when Richardo opened another gateway and 'The Diabolicals' found themselves floating down another rabbit hole.

To be continued...



HAPPY HALLOWEEN!



FROM ALL OF US AT PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

FOR CALL OF CTHULHU

FOLD IN SPACE

FIVE PIECE BAND

Badlands fiction

by Captain Obvious

DON'T SHOOT THE *Piano Player*

Strange things happen when you zig when you should have zagged. The bullets started flying and while everyone else went right, I went left into the stairwell to the floor below and into the corridor...

... just not the hotel corridor I was expecting.

Forward momentum fueled by adrenaline isn't an easy thing to stop, particularly when I was expecting the same sad wall to wall carpeting as the rest of the place – not slippery hardwood. While I was losing all my cool points trying not to plow into the far wall I felt the door close behind me.

Weird, because my ears had just popped like the time I'd flown to Atlanta.

The door I'd just came through was varnished wood. This corridor was smaller, darker than I expected and the wallpaper was at best weirdly retro. Back pressed against the far wall, I kept my automatic focused on the door while my blood pressure returned to something resembling normal. No teeming hoard of homicidal igors came bursting through it. That was good.

A lamp to my right hissed. Lamps shouldn't hiss. The hall was too short to my right, a window too close.

Uh oh.

I got the distinct sense that this wasn't Tulsa. This was, on the whole, bad.

Music.

Noise.

A whole roomful of folk, by the sound of it.

Somewhere from down the hall to my left. I slid close to the wall and edged towards the light. The hall opened up to a banister, a stairwell and an open barroom some 20' below. I'd spent enough time in bars to know where I was now and also know this was one where I didn't want to stay.

But I've always been one of those curious cats that can't run away when the going is good. The five guys down there must have been practicing after Closing but they weren't going to Nashville anytime soon. They stood or sat with their instruments around a copper beer kettle in the center of the room, making a racket like sound effects for a movie, mixed in with bits and pieces of sorta familiar tunes or songs. Not a one of them was on the same sheet of music as the others, but they were sure as shinola telling a story with their sounds... pretty damn avant-garde stuff.

Ever get a glimpse at a group and suddenly felt like you knew everything about them, like déjà vu but with

people? In a heartbeat, I knew these guys' handles ; the Banker, the Faro Dealer, the Barkeep, the Piano Player and the Undertaker. I suppose it was the way they were dressed but it was more that ... like a whispered epiphany.

Lights flashed inside the kettle, something stirred the waters inside and one by one, the five stopped their music. With the ebbing cacophony, I swore I heard gunfire from far off. Damned if I knew how, but the story they were telling with music was going on right now inside that cursed kettle.

The ancient clock on the wall started striking, both hands accusing midnight. At that moment, the Undertaker turned and looked back over his shoulder at me. In turn, so did the other four. I could only see the whites of their eyes. No irises.

My will went to water, right there in the hallway. I fled, back through the door whence I had come. If there was anything waiting for me in the stairwell, they'd be easier to deal with than this nightmare.

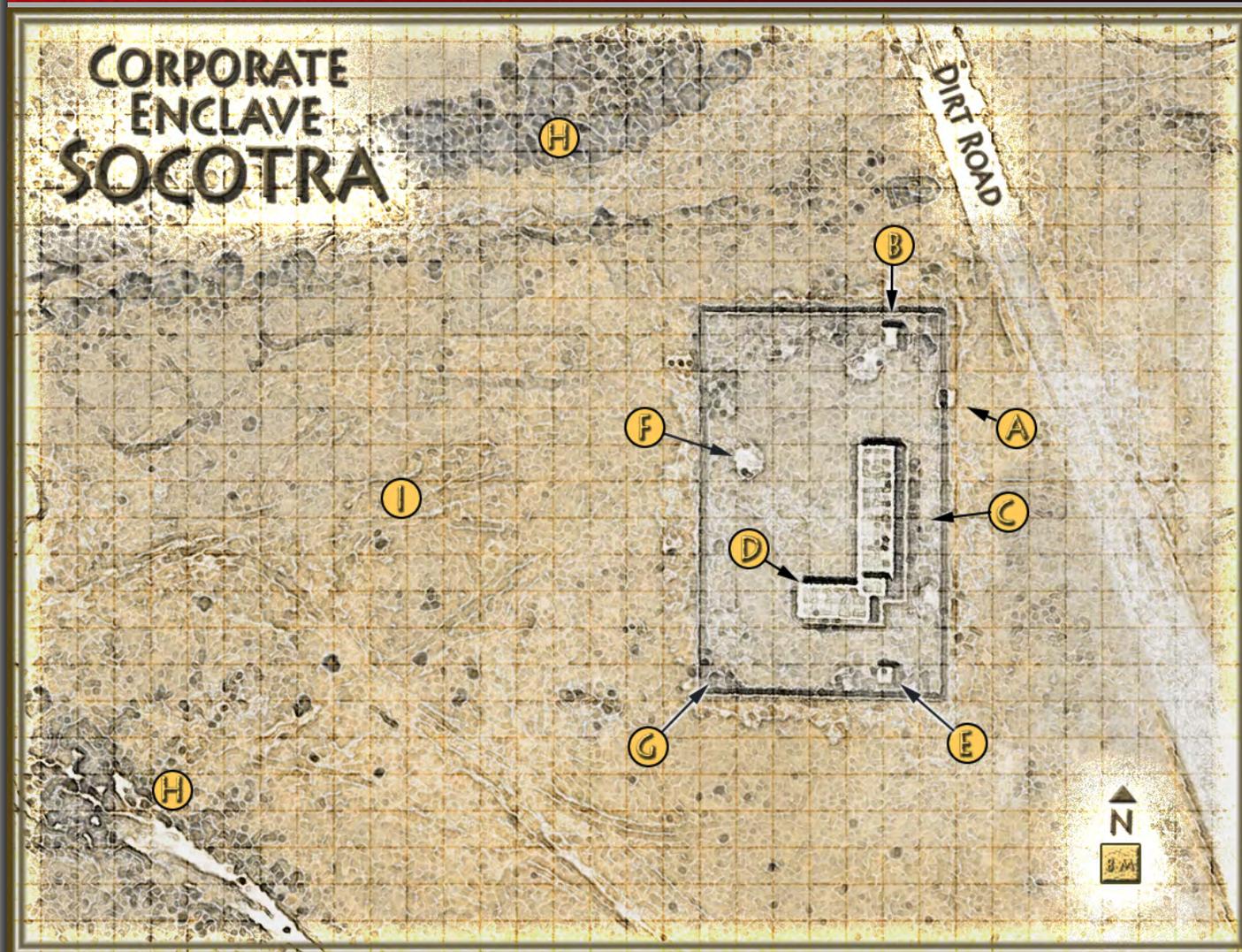


CORPORATE FACILITY

A Socotra Teaser

by Norm Fenlason

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY 3



A weather-worn dirt track passes by the front of the complex to the West. For a kilometer to either side of the complex the track has been treated with crushed seashells making the track lighter than the surrounding ground. Tall stuccoed masonry walls (5-meters tall) topped with multiple coils of razorwire completely surround the complex.

Tall poles at each corner of the wall have a sensor cluster enclosed in a partial dark glass dome. Light fixtures responding to automatic motion detection are mounted on the poles and at key points along the wall. There may be one or more white SUVs with logos indicating that they belong to the International Environmental Survey

SOCOTRA

Organization parked next to the dirt track in front of the East wall. A blue-painted double door in the Eastern wall is the only obvious entrance. Separate outdoor lights, also motion-triggered, rest on the top of the wall above the door and at the box on the right side that appears to be an intercom.

Above the wall and the concertina wire, the top of a concrete three-story building can be seen from the dirt track. Glass sensor balls are installed onto each corner of this third story. There is also a small tower reaching to a fourth story that is a structural part of the Southern end of the building. On the top of the tower is a sand-bagged bunker with firing slits, however, no weapons can be seen protruding from the small openings in the bunker. Bolted to this tower is a radio mast with multiple antennas. A sensor ball is located two meters above the bunker on this mast where the antennas are clamped-on.

To the rear of the complex on the East side, broken ground has been graded and appears to have been freshly moved. The grading is around rock outcroppings and large trees. Multiple heavy-equipment tracks criss-cross this area. A single wheeled tractor in a bladed back-hoe combination rests in the center of this area 60 meters West of the walled complex (see *I. Burial Grounds*)

A. COMPOUND ENTRANCE

The primary visitor entrance into the walled complex is in the East wall. This entrance mounts an all steel extra-wide double-door locked from the inside. The door is three-meters in height, and has reinforcing bars (on the inside) that extend into the concrete and steel jambs making it very hard to break down. To the right of the door mounted just below eye level is an intercom box with push-to-talk button and speaker. The floor of the jamb is poured concrete, but the ground leading to the door is hard-packed earth and gravel that will not show any signs of tracks. The voice answering the intercom will issue a challenge in Chinese, requesting the reason for interruption.

B. GUARD SHACK

A 12-m x 18-m flat-roofed single-story building is used as a staging point for the external security forces (the ones outside the building). Inside the shack are three rooms, two-smaller and one larger room. One of the smaller rooms houses one of two closed circuit TV (CCTV) video-feed nexus points; the other room is a small break area. The main room occupies half of the building with a counter near the door. Two Chinese corporate security goons process visitor access at this counter prior to visitors entering the other building. A few (1D6+2) security goons will be standing around smoking. Another two will be in the break room, except when the normal patrols overlap (every four hours, add 2D3 goons to this room for 20 minutes). Two more guards will be manning the security cameras. If there is an alarm in the compound, the two in the CCTV room and the two at the counter will stay inside. The rest will respond to the alert.

C. MAIN WING

The research laboratory is housed in a single three-story "L" shaped building. The main wing is the North to South part of the "L" with an entrance to the Southwest in the inside of the elbow. The building is made of steel-reinforced poured-concrete that has been left unpainted but has darkened in the weather. A one-meter tall slit of window glass encircles the third story. A concrete tower rises over the main entrance at the elbow of the "L." The roof's perimeter around both wings sports a one-meter high wall with the roof surface consisting of crushed gravel over tar. Pipes and exhausts poke through in spots, but none of the usual roof-mounted equipment is visible, and there are no apparent entrances onto the roof.

The only entrance to the Northern wing is through a disproportionately grand main entrance. This entrance is made of glass with a guard station blocking access to the locked doors behind it. The guard station is also poured concrete, but this time it is painted with desert pastel colors that matches the cheesy artwork on

the wall. Four corporate security goons are located in the main entrance at all times.

Beyond the locked doors lies the bulk of the research facility (see the Trans-Dimensional Laboratory). Offices located on the third floor are accessible by elevator and stairwell in the center of the building. An internal mobile response team of six armored security goons is located on the second floor.

D. WEST WING

The West wing is composed of two parts, the Western side contains the power supplies needed for the experimental machinery in the laboratory in the Eastern side. This generator system powers the whole complex, including the laboratory, and is behind heavy concrete walls with portions of the system extending into the basement. The laboratory is normally accessed through a very large and heavy "blast door" that takes several minutes to open and close. Heavy bars and large machinery parked in front of the small access doors on the outside of the Western wall prevent the doors from opening. Both the security centers receive inputs from sensors on the these doors.

The laboratory side of the West wing is one large four story room (the lab is open to a basement story, see the Trans-Dimensional Laboratory). This room contains a lot of machinery and instruments. In the center of all this machinery is a bubble-portal glowing a washed-out yellow-orange. The glow does not spread very far, the bright sodium lights overhead prevent all shadows. This bubble portal is IESO's current object of study.

E. INDUSTRIAL ENTRANCE

To the South of the compound, a wide concrete gate in the wall provides industrial access. This gate is concrete like the rest of the compound and rides on an electromagnetic flux when it opens and closes. A special grid is under the earth and gravel that provides the magnetic flux, whose interaction with a similar grid on the gate provides a cushion to move the gate

open and closed. Special motors on the gate wall open and close the gate. Once fully opened or closed, the gate guards turn off the flux-drivers allowing the gate to settle to the ground, immovable. The strong flux from the grid on the ground will draw ferrous objects to it when passing through the gate opening while the flux is active.

The small building houses generators and a power distribution system that provides electricity to the gate as well as all external lighting. The camera and security systems have their own power source inside the building.

Support people for the scientists parked some of their heavy machinery on the outside of the wall. This includes two fuel trucks, another front-end loader, a few cargo trucks, a pair of PakMotors Guardian SUVs, and a military-grade field ambulance. The SUVs and the ambulance are used to bring test subjects to and from the impromptu helicopter landing pad from the laboratory. The trucks are used to haul failed experimental debris (the corpses of subjects that could not survive) to the Graveyard for disposal.

F. SECURITY 'BOT

In the center of the grounds to the rear of the compound are three 3-meter tall poles supporting a tent—more shade than tent—that flaps in the occasional breeze. In the shade stands a security robot, an expensive one, in stand-by mode. This robot is programmed to receive alerts from either of the two security stations via radio. In stand-by mode it is connected via harness to an outlet attached to one of the poles. The robot will respond in either a controlled mode or using its onboard artificial intelligence (AI). When the AI takes control, horns mounted on the outside of the Main Wing will continuously warble, blaring a warning. IESO's security personnel will take cover as the robot transitions to hunter-killer mode, because it will then attack anything that moves with its weapons. As a security precaution, should normal heartbeat communications with both of the security stations cease, the

robot enters AI mode. After the robot enters AI mode, it will only re-enter stand-by mode if it receives a properly authenticated message from one of its security channels. The robot will not pursue targets outside of the compound, but it will move to find a better firing position or to engage in melee combat, as needed.

Use the RamTech Roboguard-IV from *Conspiracy Rules*, page 289.

G. WORM'S NEST

The Chinese scientists investigating the portal failed to account for an insidious effect on the immediate surroundings (see the Nameless One). This effect has mutated a species of worms that were living in a decomposing corpse that was buried in the Southwest corner of the compound. Several bodies were placed there by the Flying Dragons before the scientists started dumping their failed experiments in the Graveyard (see *I. The Graveyard*, below); they completely forgot about them.

The ground around the nest is moist with a churned appearance. Rocks and moist earth have been tumbled around and slope higher towards the corner. The worms have spread out to a radius of 8-meters as they have searched for a better food source. A smell of corrupted earthen decay with an underlying sickly-sweet odor of death permeates the air near their lair.

The worms will attack if their nest is disturbed (see Mutated Worms). They will also be drawn to the smell of blood or other dead or dying bodies anywhere on the compound outside of the laboratory. The worms can also sense (smell?) humans approaching up to 10 meters away. They will tunnel out and attack anyone within that radius.

Security knows about the worms and their nest. They rely on it for increased deterrence in along that corner. They even go so far as to toss a fresh body or body parts out that way once in a while.

H. Eaters of the Dead

The rocky outcroppings to the North and to the Southwest are home to at least two packs of mutated

jackals. The Chinese are aware of these jackals, and have no idea how this species got onto Socotra, much less why they are only found at their facility.

The jackals eat the dead things that the Chinese bury in the grounds they call the Graveyard. They will spend a great deal of time digging the bodies up and seem to know when the Chinese will bury the next round of bodies. The day before the Chinese plan an excursion with their human and not-so-human refuse, the jackals line the rocks facing the facility, in obvious anticipation. The creatures watch patiently as the Chinese do their work, not hindering the Chinese in any way. They move around nervously, yapping, howling, and nipping at each other. It seems their anticipation grows stronger as the Chinese near completion. However, the jackals will not approach the newly-buried food source until darkness falls.

The jackals will open a hole, drag the body out and over to the rock outcroppings. Sun-bleached bones tell of previous meals.

I. THE GRAVEYARD

The flat area behind the facility is torn and scarred by earth-moving heavy equipment. A flat spot graded smooth stands as a temporary helipad; support personnel rush out to ensure the ground is smooth enough for a landing each time a helicopter is to arrive; searching jackals occasionally tear up the landing area. In various other locations, the scientists have been dumping their unsuccessful test subjects into holes opened by the back-hoe and later graded closed. Roughly excavated holes dot the landscape where the jackals have dug up their morbid meals.

Visitors to this area at times other than when the Chinese bury their mistakes will not see any jackals until they are within 20 meters of the rocks. An overpowering death stench (causing task difficulty to increase) grows stronger as the distance to the rocks gets shorter.



ALTERNATIVE COMBAT ROUND

House rules

by Eric G Lyon-Taylor

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

ALWAYS FOUND THAT the initiative and amount of actions in the GDW combat system were too weighted towards the higher ratings, meaning that most players wanted someone who had done at least 1 term in Law Enforcement or the military to get the better initiative rating at the end of their careers. This always seemed a little artificial especially since for new players most of the thrill is to find out what you can and can't do against the darkness and to fight with what you have whether that is your knowledge or your brawn.

So in order to remedy that I came up with this alternate combat resolution system. It is still based around 30 second periods but is split up by second and by initiative rating. The GM calls out the seconds and the players tell the GM what they are doing when their initiative rating determines that they can have an action. Different actions are collected together by time, so the Aiming action and the Shooting action are both in the 1 second action table while Reloading and Empathic actions are in the 5 second table.

So an example, we have Ane Gry Minion Hunter versus E. Vil Cultist. Ane Gry has 3 Initiative while the cultist has 2. The GM calls out 1, no-one has an x marking an action so the GM calls 2. Ane has an x which means she can

have an action and she chooses to Aim for the cultist. The GM calls 3 the cultist has an x and chooses to rush towards Ane, she is currently 20m away and it's the first movement action so the cultist walks 1m. The GM calls 4, Ane chooses to fire a shot with her Browning Hi-Power. The Cultist who doesn't have an action but has picked one which is backed in green, which means it is a continuous action continues to walk towards Ane.

The Shot is resolved as normal and the damage and location applied as normal.

The cultist hasn't gone down so the GM calls 5, neither person have an action but the cultist continues to keep walking and is now only 17m away. GM calls 6, Ane choose to aim, she could have gone for another shot but would have had to take recoil into account, (recovery from recoil being a 3 second action) and the cultist chooses to speed up to a Trot and is now 14m away. GM calls 7, no-one has an action but the cultist can continue his movement and covers another 3m. GM calls 8, Ane fires again and the cultist moves to 8m.

The shot hits this time and wounds the cultist, who has to miss his next action.

GM calls 9, The cultist would have had an action but due to being wounded

he misses it, and it also halts his forward movement. GM calls 10, Ane who is a little concerned fires again without aiming now having to reduce her skill by the recoil penalty. She hits and gives the cultist a slight wound, which drops his initiative to 1, so he now uses that rating for determining actions throughout the rest of the fight.

CM calls 11, nothing happens no-one has actions. GM calls 12, Ane has an action and decides to Aim. The cultist with his reduced initiative doesn't have an action now. GM calls 13, nothing happens again, GM calls 14, Ane fires again and hits giving the cultist a serious wound which now reduces his initiative to 0 and taking him out of the fight, he hasn't got the ability to act.

Now you can choose to allow a Willower roll (Easy to start with) to allow someone with 0 or less initiative to act once in a round and like Luck rolls this gets harder the more you use it in each combat.

Initiative 7, anyone with this exalted score can choose to have a double action at any time during a combat round therefore giving them a good advantage in combat when they need it.

All actions in the action time tables that are backed in green are repetitive actions that continue even if you have no actions in the following seconds if you choose.

For example someone with 1 Initiative can start walking on 5 and if they choose will continue until 9, then they can choose to do something else or continue. They could also choose to cock their bolt action rifle on 10 so that by 15 (it would be finished on 14) they could then fire it.



REVISED COMBAT ROUND

Time	1	2	3	4	5	6	Tracking
1					X	X	
2			X	X	X	X	
3		X		X	X	X	
4			X		X	X	
5	X			X	X	X	
6		X	X	X		X	
7					X	X	
8			X	X	X	X	
9		X		X	X	X	
10	X		X		X	X	
11				X	X	X	
12		X	X	X		X	
13					X	X	
14			X	X	X	X	
15	X	X		X	X	X	
16			X		X	X	
17				X	X	X	
18		X	X	X		X	
19					X	X	
20	X		X	X	X	X	
21		X		X	X	X	
22			X		X	X	
23				X	X	X	
24		X	X	X		X	
25	X				X	X	
26			X	X	X	X	
27		X		X	X	X	
28			X		X	X	
29				X	X	X	
30		X	X	X		X	

ACTION TIMES

1 Second activity	
Aim, negates un-aimed penalty	
Autofire	
Change target	
Cock a Semi-automatic or Automatic weapon (SA, 1+)	
Fire a weapon (1 trigger pull)	
Impossible: Observation	
Quick Melee Attack (20% Damage)	
Run 6m (last action must have been a Trot)	
Speak 4 syllables (stop Police, put...)	
Trot 3m (last action must have been a Walk)	
Walk 1m	
2 Seconds activities	
Cock a Pump or DAR action weapon (PA, DAR)	
Formidable: Observation	
Kneel	
Recover from recoil	
Reload an individual bullet	
Speak 8 syllables (stop Police, put your weapon down!)	
Stand, from kneeling	
3 Seconds activities	
Crawl 1m	
Difficult: Observation	
Go prone	
Retrieve something from a loaded container/pack	
4 Seconds activities	
Aim/Track/Target Missile (then a firing action)	
Average: Observation	
Cock a Bolt or Lever action weapon (BA, LA)	
5 Seconds activities	
Control a vehicle	
Clear weapon malfunction	
Climb (your skill in meters)	
Easy: Observation	
Full Melee attack (full damage)	
Mount/Dismount	
Over watch set-up	
Ready/change equipment	
Reload a clip/belt	
Stand up, from prone	
Use Empathic power	

DREAM POLICE

The dream police, they live inside of my head
The dream police, they come to me in my bed
The dream police, they're coming to arrest me, oh no

You know that talk is cheap
And those rumors ain't nice
And when I fall asleep
I don't think I'll survive the night, the night

'Cause they're waiting for me
They're looking for me
Every single night they're driving me insane
Those men inside my brain

The dream police, they live inside of my head
(Live inside of my head)
The dream police, they come to me in my bed
(Come to me in my bed)
The dream police, they're coming to arrest me, oh no

Well, I can't tell lies
'Cause they're listening to me
And when I fall asleep
Bet they're spying on me tonight, tonight

'Cause they're waiting for me
They're looking for me
Every single night they're driving me insane
Those men inside my brain

I try to sleep, they're wide awake, they won't let me alone
They don't get paid to take vacations or let me alone
They spy on me, I try to hide, they won't let me alone
They persecute me, they're the judge and jury all in one

'Cause they're waiting for me
They're looking for me
Every single night they're driving me insane
Those men inside my brain

The dream police, they live inside of my head
The dream police, they come to me in my bed
The dream police, they're coming to arrest me

The dream police
The dream police
The dream police
The dream police
The dream police

—Rick Nielsen, Cheap Trick

RANDOM ITEMS

Things to spice up your DC game

by Eric Fabiashi

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

*"Just wait until they try
out the magic items!"*

– Brian van Hoose,
Knights of the
Dinner Table.

BETWEEN THE MANY Heavens and Hells of the Proto-dimensions there are places of the lost and the damned. Places so alien that even the very alien can't exist there. There are things or objects that become lost in the cracks of these places. They become imbued with certain rather unique properties and abilities. Here are small sample of ten such random finds that just might find their way into your campaign.

Baethilau's Mirror - This black colored pocket mirror reflects the true nature of any being held up to. There is a price after each use a whispered secret must be given to its black surface. There are whispers and rumors of other powers but they are mere conjecture.

The Bangldraturir Doorway - This intricate twelve inch tall doorway connects to various proto dimensions and allows one to gaze into these places. Some of these areas may be hazardous to one's health. The doorway sometimes allows imp like demonic creatures access to the user's realm as well. As many as twenty of the things might appear.

The Needle of Gorimelargo - This black metallic needle can easily sew flesh and knit bone with easy. The needle seems to enjoy its work a bit too much and the user will seem to giggle and chortle with a bit of a crazed glee. The needle seems to have a preference for mad scientists and the like.

The Ilircazg Object - This black lump of protomatter has been fashioned into a black basalt like cube by a laser or some other implement. The object's side hurt the eyes to look at it for too long. The thing allows one to discern the whereabouts of certain minor alien beings. The object emits a low telepathic growl into the mind of the user. The object may be a communication device for there have been instances of Grays using the thing to communicate with the current owner in the past.

Kogon's Window - This lens appears to be a window belonging to a ship or some other vessel, yet when looked through shows strange alien vistas of nearby alternative universes. There are those who believe that the window allows passage between such places. There have been seven other owners of the window in the past two hundred years. They all disappeared under strange circumstances.

Laun's Tears - A small package of diamond like crystals these are said to be the tears of a goddess. Those holding them will be overwhelmed by a feeling of sadness and regret. This shall pass and the owner will have access to 1d4 random psychic powers but only for seven days. Upon the seventh day they must run the crystals under cool mountain stream water failure to do so will result in the loss of the abilities and a minor curse of bad luck.

Otugllan's Focus Machine - An odd electronic device made back in the nineteen eighties. This thing has been cobbled together from more than a dozen devices. It allows one to calculate where the next protodimensional door will open. There are rumors that a minor dark lord has corrupted the thing allowing only 1d6 jumps to happen. Upon the sixth jump the user finds himself within the realm of the dark lord.

Riri - A small doll with the spirit of a demon living within it. The doll dispenses advice and helps its owner. Riri will betray the owner after the next full moon and try to murder them.

Tulirca's Key - This key will open any door of imagination and dream allowing the traveler to access the proto dimensional dream stream after which the key will disappear. This is one use item only with a dark malevolent streak a mile wide. It will put the travel into the greatest of danger.

Wertururtha's Sorrow - A black piece of fabric that is actually a pocket dimension unto itself. The thing whispers strange secrets and tales to its owner. Once per full moon the sorrow will open a proto dimensional gate and allow access. The thing however will demand a boon after four such trips. This boon is up to the DM.



SALVAGE

Fiction

by Captain Obvious

There are tipping points in time, days you can look back on and in crystal-clear retrospect, think “I should have realized the change was right then and there”.

A couple of years ago, when I believed that things were still normal and I’d take a chance running down into the city’s core without needing to take a friend or two to ride shotgun, I let the boy come with me on a job. It was sort of a present, got him out of our nice little neighborhood so he could see how the better folks lived.

We had one of those absolutely gorgeous late Fall days, just a few clouds in a bright blue sky --- this, after an overcast week and what sounded like a bad storm north of us just the night before. I enjoyed carefree drives like that, where the biggest concern was what radio station to pick.

The boy was good, stayed quiet and polite but observant the whole time. Riding around in the canyons between the skyscrapers, between the crowds and the buildings he couldn’t take in the scenery fast enough. He was right at that tipping point where the buildings were as interesting as the women.

I did what I had to do, then took him shopping for a bit before we grabbed lunch. We took our time, with no real reason or rush to break the spell and return to our own reality.

This was back around when traffic started to get sparse along the ring highway around the city. No such thing as rush hour even then, not out this far. We were still about half an hour from home when the kid asked if we could find a place to stop – the soda from lunchtime was making his teeth float.

I pulled over in the gravel near the northeast extension’s east-bound cloverleaf and got out to stretch my legs as well. The place wasn’t overgrown then, still pretty open and you could hear approaching traffic. So it was a bit of a surprise when I saw sun glint off one of the windshields first.

We watched two overloaded flatbeds zoom around the curve, too quiet to be diesels and too fast to be Americans. Strapped down on their decks were some of the damndest cargo I’d ever seen, and I’d run escort for plenty of convoys overseas.

There were jet nacelles, shrouded hydraulic pistons the size of telephone poles, and what looked like articulated fuselages. Or appendages. None of it was tarped over, but whoever did the loadout knew their job; the retention straps looked tight enough and placed right.

Might have been some damage to the cargo, but they were past us in less than thirty seconds. Huh. Big loads, but no chase or lead vehicles. I knew the north-east extension was a straightaway, but there was only so far north you could go before the overpasses limited you to 14’.

The boy could tell something was off about what we’d just watched, as inexperienced as he was back then. We finished our business in silence and got back on the highway, heading the same way as the two mystery trucks.

I wanted to make sure I hadn’t missed any details, so I started playing twenty questions with him.

“What did you see?”

It was a trick that had come in useful during all those convoys, way back when. He blinked once, relieved to uncork his thoughts.

“Two trucks. Those new IVECO hybrid 10-wheelers, real quiet...”

“Describe them.”

“Blue. Blue cabs and trailers. Yellow stripes. Same sort of yellow stripes as whatever they were hauling. Couldn’t see the drivers, but they were up there... overloaded, too. Did you see how high whatever that was...no way they’d make most underpasses. Had to be 25’ at least.”

“What else?”

“I think they were crash parts, like an airliner maybe? Not burnt up, but some of the parts looked banged up and I think they were... leaking”

“How heavy were the loads?”

His forehead furrowed, like when he did math problems. Yellow stripes on blue were Corporate.

“Must have been heavy, they were both riding low on their suspensions.”

“So what does that mean?”

A mile or so passed under our wheels, while the same math problem expression remained glued to his face. Finally, the clouds parted and he almost smiled.

“They have to get off at the next exit! They’re too big to keep going east!”



I nodded. It was a good analysis, pretty simple actually. We were coming up to a decision point. I could keep us pointed towards home, but what fun would that be? I swung the delivery truck off at the next exit and grinned at the kid. He was downright smiling at that point.

“Is this what you do for work?”

“Sorta”.

We passed through the tolls and stopped at the blinking intersection light. One quick look around, it was obvious which way they had to have gone.

Damn.

I miss that boy.

CREATURE COMPETITION

A creature for horror your games

by Tad Kelson

VERMATREX FOR DARK CONSPIRACY

OUT THERE, OUT of sight are things to chill the heart, harden the marrow, constrict the pupil, or plain out weird someone to madness. Then there are the darklings who thrive on pain and suffering. Sometimes there are just darklings that thrive though. That live endless lives devoted to getting larger and larger, tougher and tougher. Welcome to Vermatrex.

The core consists of the mask like face, the scant skeletal structure of the rib cage area, and the two large saw like slashing claw structures. All connected by a single skeletal like structure which is more cartilage than bone in composition. The Vermatrex are native to their own protodimension and are the ruling entities there.

When they are first spawned they consist solely of the mask, claws, ribs, and connecting structure. The young survive in the hostile environment by stealth and deception. As they age they increase in size and begin to add on bulk by finding natural plant fibers and similar substances to attach and weave into their forms. These naturally take the form of snake like bodies or tentacles. Over time enough of these are added and woven into their structure to provide the framework for their adult alteration.



Once they pass into their adult stage the plant and other fibers they have been using to increase their size metamorphosis's into their permanent body structure. Once this happens the different materials all fuse and alter into a sinewy and ropy composite material. At this point the body is now strong and supple and can support the upcoming adult size and strength. From this point on the adult Veratrex (their shortened form) of their own species name) rely on strength for protection from each other or any other potential predators.

As they age the Veratrex continue to grow and add on more tentacular appendages, as well as begin to grow barbs on their lower portions. Now effectively immortal barring violence, the Veratrex can eventually reach sizes of 30 to 40 yards in total length, with their claws up to 10 to 15 feet in total distance

Entry for the
Protodimension
Magazine Issue #16
Creature Competition

from point joint. At this size they are more than capable of slashing through tree trunks, multiple concrete blocks, several inches of steel should they desire or require to do so.

Naturally telepathic on reaching maturity, until that point they are reliant on stealth and on avoiding any predators. Little more than beasts with some simple instincts, once at adulthood their telepathy manifests and they are able to be integrated into the greater society at large. Still predatory they focus on external threats and on increasing in size and prowess. They also begin to develop some empathic skills relating to dimensional travel. After which they will often travel to other protodimensions in search of prey to attack and dissect with their claws. They do not derive any sustenance that has been determined. It could be believed that they naturally leach energies from their native dimension which sustains them. Their empathic skills usually range in the 3 or 4 range at best. Highly skilled and developed elders could reach a skill level of 8 at the best.

New members of their species will spontaneously come into existence in their native lands at periodic intervals. No known specific trigger is associated with these spawning.

This is the Vermanatrex and they are coming.

VERMANATREX					
# Appear:	1	Initiative:	3	Agility:	4
Attack:	75%	Strength:	20	Skill/Dam:	8/5d6
Move:	10	Constitution:	30	Hits:	75/150

The statistics above are for a typical adult specimen, perhaps only a few hundred years of growth. Much older ones will be three to five times in size. Young are little more dangerous than a typical human being save having a much higher Initiative, Agility and Move (10/10/15 Flat) to aid them in avoiding predation.

A typical adult would have Armor 1. One with say 500 or so years could have Armor 2 or 3, while the largest and oldest of them would have Armor upwards of a 7 or 8, making them impervious to any of their kind younger than themselves.

Older ones would do damage equal to 3d6 if they were grabbed or constricted due to the plentiful hooked barbs they naturally produce as they age. The oldest of them all could be nearly covered and would inflict at least 5d6 or 6d6 worth of damage in those cases.

TANGLES — Little Fears: Nightmare Edition

This **Tangles** is a *Regular Monster*.

All those times your mother brushes your hair and pulls it, tearing out a tangle. Then she throws that hair away in the trash. Well at night Tangles comes around and sifts in your trash and pulls out the hair and slowly braids it into its own body. All those children, all their hair, all that innocence pulled out by their roots and woven into something that slithers along the floorboards making its way to the trash can, just to pick out their tangles and turn it into its own body.

Tangles is a dull dusty color, from endless slithering along the floorboards. Tangles is a smooth texture, the better to slide around a corner to sneak up on a trash can. Tangles is silent, all that hair worn smooth until it is a single unified color and texture, gliding like silk along hardwood floors and tile alike.

Tangles really just wants to pull the hair out of your head and add it to its own body, adding a part of you to it, forever. It is scary when it is pulling on your hair, trying to tear the rats nests or tangles out by the roots.

Abilities

- Fight:** ØØØØØØ
- Grab:** ØØØØØØ
- Chase:** ØØØØØØ
- Scare:** ØØØØØØ

Virtues

- Health:** 30
- Terror:** 7

Qualities

- It is made of hair tangles pulled from the trash, or a child's head*
- It has two claws and it is fast when it needs to escape*
- It is afraid of scissors and other sharp objects*

Stuff

- Two Claws** ØØ
 - Slash (Extra Damage +1)
 - Pull your hair out (Distract -1 on Tests)
- Hairy Body** ØØ
 - Fast (Disappear when out of sight)



PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE



HALLOWEEN 'S HERE.....

VACATION IN SCARLET

More Minion Hunting fiction

by Eric Fabiashi

THE DARK ELF died rather well under the slender whippet short sword. The cut and stroke were both quick and merciful. He shuddered rather unexpectedly. The green black blood marked them as something both familiar and totally alien.

Their mind set is what bothered the young thief the most. Though they looked human these things were completely and utterly alien to the young thief. They were amoral nasty, dangerous, and thought of humanity as playthings and chattel to be toyed with then destroyed as painfully as possible.

The Diabolicals were a long, long, way from Old Detroit. The proto-dimension they had found themselves in was a weird jungle someplace between a bad CGI holofest movie and the black midnight pitch of a small dark black hell. The place was riddled with poison bearing flowers, giant mutant dinosaur things, and dark elves hunting whatever and whomever they could. The 'hunting manticores' were the icing on the cake. They had come across those at the base of the pyramid the party of soldiers, thieves, and misfits found themselves at. The jungle world was part of the the 'Under The Hills' greater kingdom that branched off from the main proto-dimension. The series of worlds might be partially responsible for the legends of the fey and the faeries. The 'Dark Elves' claimed victory over their defeat of the ancient alien gods that owned this place originally. They had twisted their technology into something nightmarish and utterly dangerous. Bits of it had been leaking into Old Detroit all the way to New Boswash. They were here for full wet works option and mission on the bounce.

Between the horrors of the whole thing and the firefights they were getting into the team was worn ragged and getting low on ammo. The group as a whole was getting very sick of running across dimensions and even now were doing their sixth or seventh shell count to keep track of ammo.

They crept their way along the edge of the largest Dark Elf structure that appeared partially to stick out of the ground. The place was wreathed with the dark blushes with the poisoned flowers the 'Dark Elves' preferred. A guardian floated around the corner and one of the party brought up the WWII silenced pistol. The rough cough of the pistol shot brought the alien thing's eyes and life to a close. Rickie preyed the thing wasn't in telepathic concert with its dark master.

Silently carefully they made their way under ground and everywhere was covered in the strange sigil writing of the Dark Elves but all points terminated

under 'Sacred Object of Woe' that hung in the center of the room. Strapped to it was Rickie's teammate who was being slow driven mad by the energies of the protodimension. This was their real mission. To terminate their own team mate and recover any and all objects of twisted technology of the Dark Elves.

Thomas Rerdeen third generation retired army ranger killed four more Dark Elven technicians that worked the bio technological controls with the silenced pistol. Hand signs, quick moves, and drills that the team practiced over and over paid off as they moved as one. Three consoles from the Dark Elves went into their bags for retrieval for reverse engineering back at the cell's lab.

This place was one of the Dark Elves grottoes a hidden temple enclave partially temple and partially technological control center. Here the entire protodimensional kingdom was stabilized by the so called 'Harvest King'. A victim whose mind and soul were the focus for the energies that coursed through the dimensions. They caused eventual death, insanity, and final death in six to eight months but the person lived in a sort of pseudo orgasmic state the whole time. The Dark Elves loved to use their enemies for this duty and they had captured one of the 'Diabolicals' for the so called honor.

Rickie climbed the forty feet up the sheer side of the chains that held the 'Sacred Object of Woe' in place. Here and there were niches cut into the green black stone like material that made up the complex and for a moment Rickie could swear that the building breathed as a living thing.

Inch by inch Rickie's favorite rig moved him on the friction less monofilament line using the silent motor towards his goal as his team mates below kept watch. An assembly of garage made third world machine guns, pistols, and gear had been hand machined by the Diabolicals was being readied.

Rickie reached his former team mate within fifteen minutes of climbing and shifting up the massive chains. The colours, air, and reality of the 'Object' weren't right they seemed cartoonlike and slightly out of phase with the rest of the universe. And he slowly looked at the emaciated frame of his former comrade chained in place. The eyes were not focused on this or any other world. Then suddenly without warning they snapped to attention!

"Rickie what are you doing here?! You shouldn't have come bro."

"Paulie I'm here to get you out man."

"Out? Man you should see the places I've been there's no out at all. No for you or them!"

That's when the gun fire started just as the Chimeras began to pour out of the niches. They weren't sure what they were really at all. The blur of weird mythological monsters and drug induced nightmares swarms the Diabolicals almost as one.

Rickie is crying now and begging Paulie to stop but it's far too late. The bullets, blood, and mayhem continues and from the sidelines the Dark Elves are smiling. Grinning from ear to ear as loons as they cheer the scene on as an audience. This is better than they could have hoped!

Rickie pulls out the silenced pistol and uses it as the salt and tears run down his face as the bullet slams home into his former friend. Then he quickly turns and taps twice on the rig's computer controls. That's when he sees the Chimera or thinks he does. A face wreathed in biotechnological hate and death but it's the sting he feels right in his lower back!

The scream and his descent happen in slow motion as a sickness partially in his mind and in his memory happens as one. It's a memory and feeling that will haunt him along with a million others in the nights to come but it is the ground coming up fast that envelops him! Darkness over takes every single bit of this mission including his consciousness!

With a thrust of memory there is pain, blood, and death as the FNX-45 wrist pistol falls from his hand. He sees his fathers' face. The last of the Menedez family of thieves lost to the claws of the Morlocks of Old Detroit. Then he hears his voice within his head. 'Rickie we thought we lost you naughty boy!' But it is not his father! Instead the white black hide face of a Morlock!

Then there is pain, blue liquid, and floating! Rickie floating within the blue green liquid of a medipod!! He sees his wife's face and his little girl through the glass. Mary his wife does not look happy at all and as an empath he knows as well as feels her thoughts. Anger, disappointment, relief, and more score his mind in an instant. He must heal five more days as the wounds close but it is when he leaves the makeshift hospital that he learns the price that this mission had. Half of his team is now in the hands of the Dark Elves and though the mission was deemed a success their deaths are being laid at his feet. Rickie begins the pseudo electric acupuncture treatments to rebuild his muscles and begins to think about revenge as he trains once again.

The Diabolicals have moved twice more since the mission and Rickie enjoys the sun, the country, and the farm houses of one of

the millions of homes claimed by the Greater Depression. Then the new recruits arrive and so begin the drills. Mary and Rickie argue a lot but only because Mary wanted her husband to heal.

Rickie had his own problems though the council in charge of his cell had made the doctors 'Re Am' his memories of the mission going over detail after detail of the whole thing again and again. The valuable insights they gained were worth it. But to Rickie it was sheer mental torture to relive the assassination of his friend as well as the loss of his team. He did however see how he got home with the sacrifice of his team's empath for the rest of the team. He stayed behind to make sure the rest of the team got away. Rickie could still see his face as he sprayed the Dark Elves monstrous minions with his custom made Thomas sub-machine gun. It was a memory that Rickie's mind picked up even as he lost consciousness from blood loss. Then he was made to relive it once again.

The Dark Elves didn't forget the loss of one of their more important protodimensional facilities either. The Diabolicals were staying in the fly speck ruins of a former small town in up state New York claimed by the Great Depression. And for thirty days they lived off the land as new recruits filter in. That's when the saucers show up!

At two a.m. three silver gray disks silently move across the sky on a September morning. Their lookouts see the things first. The two hundred foot diameter saucers are lit sickly from within by silvery lights but it's the liquid metal like death rays that truly burn not only the town but the memories of the victims.

The Diabolicals scatter as the cell is decimated by the horrid things that fly from the sky. Buildings, people, and cars burn as the whole place becomes a holocaust of incredible proportions

Rickie does the one thing that he swore he would not he looks into the eyes of his daughter and after that it's so easy. The crystal was not one of the things that Rickie had turned into Command after the ruins of Springfield Mass. mission. The crystal seems to unfold in his hands and begins to amplify his own latent psychokinetic abilities. Rickie can see his wife screaming but the words are tumbling out of her mouth in slow motion. Suddenly his mind is someplace else and he is starring at the death ray cannon aboard one of the craft. The town will be uninhabitable for many years to come from the radiation. Still his mind pushes onward, ever onward until he can see the alien metal molecules of the cannon. Then he sees the bits and pieces that bind them

together. He sees them and knows that he can break those bonds with his mind! He does and for an instant his consciousness is yanked in several directions at once!

One of the disks flying above the small town explodes in a rain of horror, radiation, and molten metal. The thing spins wildly out of control and heads away from the town at high speed. The other saucers break formation and scatter as living things into the sky and depart.

Rickie is burning up literally and it takes all of Mary's power to pull his soul back into the burning flesh that is her husband! The fever that rages through him may leave more than his flesh riddled with sickness. She works with sudden speed through a dozen levels of human consciousness to bring him back. But the operation is interrupted by the far off screams of some fool tugging at her. Rickie's second degree burnt body is hauled into a make shift ambulance and the town abandoned as the news will carry the story of another radioactive waste spill in upstate New York.

The fate of the Diabolicals is unknown at this time but from some other else there is the laughter of a Dark Elf whose wicked smile echoes in eternity.

The End or is it?



LAST THURSDAY

Post apoc fiction

by Tad Kelson

Last Thursday I woke up from dreams of playing soccer in ivy overgrown bleachers, up root and rock strewn trails, towards a goal that had no posts, using a flattened soda bottle cap for a game piece.

I also dreamt of bug out bags, flat matte green bullpups, and a field flooding out as I watched it.

I woke up to mundane life that was now over.

I woke to a new life and a new world beginning the day before without my awareness.

Today marks seven days since it all went away and tomorrow continues to bring the unknown once again. All alone here, no one in sight for at least two, or is it three, days now. The weeds in all the yards in the area are getting taller. I try to not walk on grass so that I won't leave a trail, just in case. I still don't know. Just don't know at all.

Sporadic bursts of static from the radio in the AM band when I chose to use it on battery.

My dreams are less coherent than in my past, part nostalgia, part warning maybe.

I have the lyrics to a song stuck in my head. At least it was a good song, not the one I might have chosen for the final one to have heard, but a good one none the less. The other one is more optimistic, but it ended on a different note.

I hear it all the time in my head, over and over, like a mantra of sorts.

So daylight wanes

Clouds, white, blue and gray

They are piling up to the East of me. Silent city streets, redolent with mold, sit all alone.

I can see the vines creeping up the sides of all the houses. All over everything, trees, bushes, forgotten city trash cans and recycle bins on all the roads and avenues.

I know this is the rainy season, but it is coming down for most of the day for five days straight now. I have no lack of potable water at this time. There has to be several inches a day coming down. I know that there is no smog or anything like that here. So after a day or two all the crud should have been gone from the air. Still I boil it before I store it. I am bottling all I can. Reminds me I need to find some more glass bottles to reuse for water. The plastic jugs are unreliable. It is like they have mostly gone porous. Like the ground, porous from rainfall and sinkholes. If this keeps up I might have to head north to denser ground. A couple of places two

streets over went underground during the dark. Goes to show just what I am talking about.

Can't tell if it will work its way this way or not, the hole that is. Why risk it. If I can find a cart I load up the essentials and seek a more secure location. I think I saw some at the chain hardware store about three miles south or so. With four grocery stores within two miles of me I have been stocking up and setting up caches where I think I might be able to make them more than secure. So it should be simple enough to make myself a bit more mobile in case the sinkhole gets larger.

But there has been no one else in sight since last Wednesday.

It is a couple of days later. More rain, more mold, more vines, more decay setting in. Paper products are becoming almost useless already. Plastic is more like a concept, and synthetic fabrics are pretty threadbare already. Cotton is holding up which means I am glad for big box stores. I lucked out and found some leather boots where the metal eyelets are fine. With some twine tripled up work as shoelaces. I know there was an Army/Navy Surplus store up north, in the down town area. So once I am up to a good eight or ten mile round trip event. I will have a look see at what is still holding up there. Plenty of camping supplies close enough and I found a couple of pull hand carts as well. Making some wood tires to replace the rubber ones that have rotted away already. Some things rot fast, others not so much. Not an entirely consistent patterns, mostly synthetics and petroleum based items, regardless of container or storage method. So not sure what is going on. Well besides my being all alone here in a city of seventy thousand population just a week ago.

Still only AM static, FM has a drone on the entire band. Nothing coming in at all on that band. I know shortwave exists, no idea how to search out gear for it, likely nothing there as well. The Web is still up, well parts of it. It is pretty obvious that people are not around. I get onto the fodder sites, social media, and there are zero updates from anyone. If there are others out there, either they are not online or I have not located them yet. Will keep looking as long as I can find access, batteries, places to recharge, and working Wi-Fi.

Night falls, I hear animals all night long. Once in a while I can hear what must be something or some things moving about outside the house. I have the windows boarded with spare tables the best I can and other furniture at the entrances. Just leaving one accessible is enough, trying enough on my nerves as it is to leave myself that vulnerable. I have no electricity at the house, or running water inside.

So I do my best to only use it to sleep at and to store provisions. I can still get it to flush, due to a septic system, so I have indoor plumbing after a fashion. Still it is pretty crude given what was working a few weeks ago on a worldwide scale.

My dreams are fragments. I fall asleep shortly after the sun sets, wake in the middle of the night for a few hours, sometimes I will prowl about, most of the time I just sit and if there is moonlight tend to a few things, then back to sleep until sunrise comes about again.

I hear cries on the night winds. I know it cannot be people, too high pitched and more like motorcycle engine whine mixed in with wolf howls along with fingernails on chalkboards. Nothing makes noises like that, as far as I know right now. I am afraid I will find out one night I am wrong in that too. I was wrong in how my life would end up, wrong in how the world might end, how civilization might collapse. Odds are I am wrong in this as well.

Now it sounds like the wind is picking up a little. I hear the rain coming down more. No dogs barking or howling. It is like they all left with their owners, same with the cats. All the domestic animals are not around. There is a lone owl out there at the edge of my hearing and after a solitary hoot it is gone.

I miss hot coffee.

It has been maybe three weeks. Not sure, just guessing based on my beard growth. The house across the street looks like it is breathing.

Every night now it rains. It comes down in sheets, wave after wave of thick rain, like torrential downpours. The ground is pretty close to saturated. During the day it is warming up. Feels like approaching the height of summer instead of heading towards fall as it should be. The rain sounds like a waterfall coming out of the sky instead of a normal rain shower.

There is lighting for the first half of every night. It tapers off at the height of the rain and disappears as soon as the rain changes to a drizzle or mist. About that time the howling tapers off as well and I can sleep. Except that I am usually waking up for the middle of the dark time. Often I will sit there. Just wondering where anyone else might be at and what is happening all around me. Originally I came down here from up north. I am thinking of heading farther north before it gets much colder. Definitely do not want to be too much farther up than say perhaps Kentucky or so when the first snowfall starts

up. Once it passes I will make sure I make it up to the old homelands to see what changes, if any, have wrought there.

The rain for the last several days has been so omnipresent that I can hardly tell day from night. My sleep patterns are all off. I did rig up a pipe, made of some canned goods cans, to run water directly into the toilet tank with a simple cut off. That way I have running water into the house, based on how much rain there is. I had a tank outside I had found that is refilled by a funnel with a simple series of filters to keep stuff out of it. I boil the water before drinking or using it, but I have running water now.

The sun has come out and the temperature has dropped at least twenty or thirty degrees. I am short on canned provisions and my in home gardening is not going as well as I had hoped it would. I am taking the bicycle today and seeing what citrus I can find. Might as well take some time in checking out the farms along county line to see if there are any crops that have taken off on their own, might be worth the effort to check into that. Mostly strawberry but I think some might have had other products. Cannot hurt to look. I have already hit up the big box and chain hardware and gotten what fresh goods were there. Got all of the potted plants as well that I could on the previous expeditions. Which was the basis of my attempt at gardening. Since I will spend most of next year traveling north, I am going to focus on getting through winter first then if I relocate I can improve my extreme lack of a green thumb.

I hear things outside. It is that time just before the sun should rise. I know it is almost wintertime. Or it is already based on how short the days are compared to just before it all went away. I hear things outside, not sure what they might be. I have my bow I had scavenged ready and strung. It is wood so it has held up well enough so far. The first couple I got were made of plastic. I am still looking for a Plexiglas one to make sure it is weather resistant. Still I am ready in case something comes through the door or one of the walls even.

The snuffling makes me think of feral hogs or wild pigs. Is there really for me a true difference between them. I hear claws on the carport concrete and the heavy breathing at the former kitchen door. Heavy breathing, heavy labored thick in the heavy wet atmosphere. Like whatever it is has a hard time breathing in the near soup we down here in the south call normal. Well what used to be a we. As far as I know, it is just a me now.

It takes a few hours, but eventually the noises move away. I never could figure out if it was just one or more than one animal out there.

No need to risk getting hurt if I can avoid it. I have not seen any animals in the daylight for the longest time. Not sure if they headed somewhere else. Or if they all disappeared like the other people? Could just be that I am just not able to find them with my suburban survival skills.

Full moon last night. It looked a little closer, or larger, than I remember. Odds are due to how clear the night sky is. I could see sparkles up there. I know I used to be able to see movement, showing satellites. None left anymore that I can tell. Or this night. One of the few totally clear ones here. It is a lot colder than the last full moon. I can recall five full moons since it all happened.

I know it has to be winter, but it has not gotten as cold as years past. Maybe that climate change thing happened and that is the cause of the weather differences. Does not answer my questions about people and animals. Still it could account for a few things. Not for it all. Just a few.

I hear a wind coming, the trees are shaking, up at the tops, and there is a train like sound. That used to mean a tornado coming. But this is the wrong time of the year. It is the wrong weather for a tornado. So I have no idea what this might mean. I hear the wind ratcheting up higher and higher, hearing the trees moving outside, the leaves and small limbs bouncing off the sides and roof of the house and I am not real comfortable. If it comes down, no one will get me out, with nowhere to go. I am trapped right now. I hear screams and howls from the wind, what I would imagine ghosts to sound like if they were being torn apart by the wind. It goes up and up and with my hands over my ears it gets louder and louder. I feel it in the pit of my stomach and I vomit, while I feel moisture running down my hands and the pain of the wind diminished, not near as loud as it was just a few moments ago.

I feel the whole house shaking and it has to be a tornado really close. I hear trees snapping and breaking and houses around us all under assault by what is going on. I crawled under the old wooden table that is a legacy of a prior life and wait to find out if I will live out this night or perish in the storm.

I wake up to daylight coming in through the boards over the windows. I think the house is intact. I see blood on my hands and reach up to feel caked, dried blood, on my cheeks and ears. My left ear feels like it is full of cotton and the right one is not much better. In the bathroom, candle light used in this case today. In it I see the blood that came out of my ears. I think my eardrums ruptured last night. I

didn't know that could happen in a close call with a tornado. I did not know that at all.

There is no pain and I can still faintly hear. All I can do is hope that my ears heal. Otherwise I will have to really always be about paranoid. Hearing is so important. Nothing to be done, I wash off the blood with the boiled water I use for my tooth brush and feel around. No pain, no tenderness, will have to head to the local dead mall. I know there is a bookstore there. If I cannot find a medical reference book there then I will make the trek to downtown where the library is located at. Not been there since this whole thing started, might as well get reacquainted with the place. I think it is about five miles there. Not really certain.

I miss hot coffee.

Pack up a couple of bags to carry stuff with. If there is no joy at the store will just head up north. Still wish the cars could run. But without the plastics and rubber they all are inoperative. Will have to make sure I make a few spare tires for the bike before I head up after winter. It sucks to carry wooden tires. Sucks even more being stranded.

It has been a handful of full moons since I lost hearing on one side, during that unearthly storm. The sensations I have in my ears, both of them, are lessened. Which is fine. With no more birds, no frogs, no insects, the days are silent. Well except for leaves rustling in the many breezes there are now. At night I can faintly hear the wind and there on the darkest nights the snufflers on occasion. They are the only interruptions to my dreamless slumbers.

Headed out now to scout for potential raw materials to use in making repairs and upgrades to the gardening section of my property. I am taking a pry bar that I had scavenged a while ago to help in demolition. I prefer to tear stuff apart outside of my immediate area. Hope to help conceal my location a little bit that way. In case something recognizes my handiwork. So instead of just dragging it across the street leading them directly to my home I take smaller loads and use my wheeled cart and pull from a wide area all around my location.

I find some easy to remove pieces of fencing that has not been totally taken over with creepers and lianas. I still find no signs of animals or others. Not since the day before it all went away. Hell I do not even dream of people or animals anymore. My dreams, which are

seldom anymore, are composed of colors, shapes, long skinny or wide and broad, usually the same shades of the plant life around my home.

There is fog right now, hanging low and dense across the entire area. This is like four or five days worth of fog all at one time. Rather inspiring to think that I am witness to how the world continues without a serious presence of people, or animals. It is just amazing to observe it all.

I can almost see to the other side of what was our street. The houses over there are mostly collapsed into what should be called ruins. The foliage has overtaken everything, except for my place and I have reinforced it and actually made it seem closer to a part of the entire landscape instead of sticking out. Still I am the sole sign of inhabitation I have found since that day. No traces of other life except for the plant kingdom since waking up that morning.

There is no reason for my continued existence except that I am alive and will stay so for as long as I am capable of it.

I enjoy the silence of the fog. I know it is just a cloud formed low to the ground. Still it is peaceful and silent. It is comforting in many ways to me.

I am getting sluggish once the sun starts to set. I was sleeping a few hours a night, waking for a couple of hours, then back to sleep for three or four more. Now once the sun starts setting I get slow and thick headed. Once it is down it takes massive effort to keep my eyes open. So I am making sure I am indoors before the sun sets. Also I can't wake until the sun is up and can barely move until I get outside and get some sun myself. I did give up shaving three full moons ago. I have noticed I really crave constant water also and that my feet ache the more I wear my boots. Once I get close to home I have stopped wearing them. That is especially when I am tending my gardens. Especially. I have scoured the city out to good fifteen or twenty miles from my home for durable goods. All of the canned goods are gone. The processed and GMO has long turned to goo and just went away. The modern age of fake foods are now acting much like the plastics and other synthetics have reacted to the changes in the world. So I had to take it up. Gardening that is. It is not getting cold at all here anymore. So I have a year round growing season. Along with the greenhouse I made on the side of the place. I did rip down and drag over more fencing to keep the snufflers and night cryers out. Just at full dark, only on the nights that there is no moon out is when I hear them outside. I still have not gotten a glimpse of them yet. But sometimes if the ground is wet enough I can find tracks the next day.

No actual encounters still yet. Also there are no small animals around either. I find it hard to believe but this is what my eyes tell me. No other living beings, besides plants, have I seen since this all happened. I planted some veggies in the soil. No signs of any rabbits or worms. Rather bizarre to me.

I no longer crave coffee, just miss the smell. I forget the taste.

Took to marking full moons using sticks and a crude calendar. Looks like there is a full moon every twenty one days. As if the Earth or the Moon has sped up in the rotation. Still it has been about a total of thirty four months, give or take, that I have been on my own.

I stopped using a mirror a long time ago. My beard has stabilized about mid chest. It does have a different texture, less coarse, softer, almost moss like. Swear the gray went brown and some of the brown a dark Kelly Green. I figure it is due to the rain, due to the change in seasons, and the lack of any other humans.

There are more noises at night. I fought to stay awake as long as I could. Pacing the rooms, doing jumping jacks, splashing cold water in the face. Any trick I could come up with. I can hear stuff outside. Things like pebbles striking the walls. Oddly paced breathing, fast then slow and deep, almost desperate in intensity. The unsteady click, clack, click, clack, click, clack, click, clack, of claws on the pockmarked remnants of the asphalt carport from just outside the house. The whole front of the house is sealed off. I only use the side entrance that leads out into the yard. External access out from there is by way of a sally port I have set up for my own egress/ingress.

I have noticed that I can no longer recall the faces of anyone from the past. They are in my mind shapeless blobs of pink and red. I really am unable to recall any distinguishing features of those I once held dear and who had stirred my heart. Now they are just dimly recalled blurs of movement. Movement punctuated with noise that no longer has any meanings attached to them. Now meaning for me lies is The Sun, The Moon, rain, slight cooling followed by the primary growing season. The remaining memories are too fleeting to make any sense now.

My world is colored in life, light, darkness, and blue. The rest is really not interesting at all.

As I look out I realize there are no more houses around me. There are the remains and remnants. Mostly there are just ruins. The wood elements subsumed into the landscape with the concrete parts worn away under the onslaught of the elements. All of the metals in the places have been leached into the soil and returned to feed the plants

that are dominant now. Come to think it has been maybe two dozen full moons since the last time I had gone more than a half mile or so from my house. My house is still in livable condition. Especially with the additions I have made to it and the tending that I make daily. Still it looks from the street more like a mound of vines and plants than a place that someone lives in. There is no trace of my presence outside of the home. Rain and food takes care of my necessities and I am content.

The vines are deep green, vibrant, almost shimmering. The sky today, besides the alabaster clouds, the sky is a cerulean blue. It is a shade that reminds me of tropical fish in some respects. I feel the rough bark, dark browns almost into black, stretching up into the sky. The branches shading the soil from the heat of the sun allowing simple and adequate filtered light down to provide perfect conditions for the continuance of the grasses and other brushes and shrubs that dominate the landscape.

Graduations of green across the open spaces pale as light to dark as night all the variations in between as well. Browns and reds, spring bright or autumn somber, flash of blood red to dark as rust, merging and melding together into a mélange of earth and life and tones. The sky merges into the clouds making a seamless whole across the entire span of vision.

I see the separate elements to the tree trunks. I can see how the ridges run top to bottom. I see the patterns of the leaves falling in the breeze. I sense how the air currents swirl them on their final voyage from limb to ground. Observing them falling on the ever present vines, lianas, and tangles of shrubs and hedges that have sprung from all the corners of the former houses present in the city.

I feel the heat coming down out of the sky. I almost feel each and every ray of light as it strikes and rebounds off of the surrounding foliage. It comes on and on, never ending while the sun dances across the deepest bluest sky.

The sky moves up and away from me, I can feel the ground, the dirt, the soil, the rocks, the limestone, the water table, the instabilities in the land all about me with each step I take.

I can sense the wind currents as they turn from one direction to another. As they move from one potential of high pressure to a potential of low pressure. These changes presaging and foretelling that there is a change in the weather that is coming. Across my skin the faint prickle tells me the electrical potential as altered alerting me to

the upcoming storms. The distance is such it will be a few days before I will experience them.

Still spent the day moving under the bright light. Warmed and almost nourished by the sun. Past the zenith the clouds are starting to pile up towards the back of the house. Large clouds, black with moisture, towering into the sky as only they or mountains are able to do. As I look the entire horizon in almost a straight row consisting of this weather front. Looks like it could be a bad storm. Make sure the delicates are as secure as possible and head inward as the sun dips there to the left side of the place.

As night arrives so does the wind. Slowly it begins. Then it picks up, removing leaves, twigs, small branches and sending them flying into the air. It seems the weather arrived sooner than expected, or perhaps it moved faster than it travelling earlier. Such things were not unknown in the previous world.

It starts with thunder. Thunder that moves as a curtain, as a carpet, from one side of the sky to another. I can see lightning in the storm. Illuminating and piling up against an invisible wall there south of my house. As the sun is setting I am energized for once. Perhaps it is the electricity in the sky that is giving me the buoyancy to stay awake and observe what is approaching. The wall of black light that is lit from within by continuous flashes shows it has stopped moving and instead is growing taller and taller. It is reaching higher and higher into the sky. It looks like a cliff wall made of solid grey. As I watch I see the black of the water offset by the brilliance of the lightning. The static current running has started to cause jitters in my fingers and toes. Making my long hair start to lift and separate from each strand in atavistic response to the world display going on so close to me. It is no more than perhaps ten to twenty miles away. Standing outside watching it I see it is stalled in some obscure fashion. Once it moves it will come crashing down on my life.

It is fully night now and the lightning increases. Far away the thunder is a low roar vibrating in my lower organs and bones in sympathy. I am wide awake and standing outside staring up at the spectacle looming there.

Lost in the sight and the beauty of the forces that are turning night almost into day. Turning the world into a twilight existence suspended between two extremes.

One drop of water on my right cheek and in a blink the wall is moving as a tsunami towards me and before a step can be taken I am drenched, deafened, battered, and stunned to my knees. In the space

from one heartbeat to another. I begin the ten foot crawl into the house when it hits with full force, flattening me to the ground with the pressure and rain, the lightning all about in the sky searing my eyes and I close them still seeing the ground and my hands through the eyelids and rain in the pure of violated night. I am pushed down in the thunder and the water is already an inch or more and I know that this is the end. Here in this final storm. I can no longer hear at all, I know the ear drums are gone for good now with the immense crash. I know I will die here in the rain, drowned or killed, in this final storm. Good Bye.

The nicer direction is against the hard way, taking longer to reach towards.

The hard way supports and pulls up strength, while the nicer direction is warm and inviting.

The nice direction changes slowly, faster than movement, still slow enough to just move towards.

Stretching towards the nice direction, in between the nice and the hard, a sudden discomfort.

Distress of sudden withdrawal from either direction.

Impressions of wrongness.

Weakness, wetness in the center portion, weakness.

Suddenly no stretching towards the nice direction.

All parts in the wrong direction and movement no longer available.

Darkness.

Click Clack Click Clack Click Clack

---Finis---

THOUGHTS RUN WILD...o

A one-round module

by Geoff Skellams

FOR DARK CONSPIRACY 2ND EDITION

About this adventure:

Thoughts Run Wild was written by Geoff Skellams as a convention scenario in support of *Dynasty Presentations*' second edition of *Dark Conspiracy*. It has lain undisturbed, in the darkest dusty recesses of a hard drive, for over a decade...until now.

We originally had a rather excellent *Call of Cthulhu* adventure scheduled for this issue, until the author asked us to pull it literally three days before release. This left us with something of an unwanted and unexpected hole in the magazine. Something made me remember Geoff mentioning his adventure many moons ago, so I dashed off an email to check if there were any copyright or IP issues and he said no we were welcome to use it.

Basically then, what we have here with "Thoughts Run Wild" might just be the last as-yet-unseen part of *Dark Conspiracy's* history...an artefact if you will. Not many free gaming mags have artefacts in them you know!

We have presented the adventure as-written, complete with text to be read aloud to the players and the pre-generated characters to be used in the original convention games. You can take the plot and run it in your own campaigns, or take it as-is and jump right in if you haven't got anything ready.



Norm, Tad and I extend our personal thanks to Geoff Skellams for letting us have this - cheers mate!

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

This module is designed to be an introduction to the *Dark Conspiracy* game. The characters don't know anything about the invasion of the Dark Forces at the beginning of the game; they *will* know about it by the end.

The module has a fairly linear plot. This does mean that the players may

do something unexpected and move outside the bounds of what has been written. It is up to the Referee to try to bring it back on track, preferably by working with what the characters want to do and subtly working back to the story.

The action in this story has been designed to be reasonably “cinematic”; it is quite atmospheric and fast paced. If run correctly, this will stop the game becoming too “lead by the nose”.

The aim of the game is to push the characters to grow emotionally. All of the characters have some sort of emotional or mental hang-up that needs overcoming in order to get through this adventure successfully.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The adventure takes place in an unnamed metropolplex; the city’s location doesn’t have any bearing on the game. It could be “New Centennial City” from the new Dark Conspiracy products published by Dynasty Presentations in 1999. Otherwise, it can take place in Chiwaukee.

A Minion of a Dark Lord is creating a gigantic empathic transmitter in one of the uncontrolled zones of the metropolplex. He intends to broadcast emotional signals to make the general population even more apathetic than they already are. That makes them easier to control.

To drive the transmitter, the Minion has built a giant biocomputer in some tunnels underneath the old station in the zone. This computer is basically a giant brain being used to create the empathic signals.

The computer has had problems though. The empathic output of the computer is much smaller than desired. This has been the source of a lot of frustration for the Minion, who feels that the project is badly behind schedule. His Dark Lord has been pressuring him recently, making him decidedly uncomfortable.

To increase the power output of the transmitter, the Minion and his Dark Elf assistants have been combing the city for people with a high latent neuropathic ability. The dark elves then use their empathic skills to give the target a nervous breakdown. The emotional stress normally brings the target’s neuropathic abilities to life. This is an incredibly stressful time for the target; many lose their minds completely, some even commit suicide.

If the target survives, the Dark Elves offer sympathy and “find” them a job. This job is in fact a position as an empathic amplifier for

the Dark Minion’s empathic transmitter. Because of the extreme emotional pressure the targets are under, most accept the position without even realizing what they are doing.

There is an empathic underground organization in the city that is directly opposed to the dark invasion. They have noticed the increase in the number of awakening latent neuropaths over the past year or so. The level of empathic related murders has increased dramatically, and only now has the underground realized what is happening. The underground is desperate to track down the source of these awakenings and to stop it.

In the past month, they have sensed the increase of negative empathic energy that the Minion’s DarkTek device is putting out. It has made them even more desperate to find the source and shut it down.

Recently, the Dark Elves located and started the emotional manipulation of a young girl named Kirily Jensen. She lives in a run down part of town, not far from the uncontrolled zone.

Unlike many other Dark Elf victims, Kirily has someone looking out for her. Dr. Cornelius Kasprowitz was a psychiatrist who had been deregistered because he dared to suggest that empathic powers could be the cause for a lot of psychological disorders. Some government agents offered to employ him to explore these areas provided he kept silent. The Doctor was not prepared to submit to this sort of censorship, so he found himself on the receiving end of a subtle smear campaign to discredit him. Soon after, the Doctor quit his job in disgrace and turned to the bottle, his career in tatters.

Only recently has he dragged himself from the drunken stupor and started to put his life back together. It was around this time that he met the young girl who lived downstairs from him. He recognized that she was suffering from the same symptoms he had been researching before he was forced from his career. So he decided that he had to help her.

His work had been progressing well until the Dark Elves started their subtle manipulation of her psyche. Little by little, Dr. Kasprowitz felt his work being undone by unknown forces.

In the end, he called the psychiatric unit at the General Hospital and informed them of the girl. He was worried that her neurosis was getting worse and she was getting beyond his help. He did not want to let go of her, so calling for help was the last resort.

The Dark Elves have been turning her against the Doctor and when he told her that he had called for some help, she finally cracked.

She accused the Doctor of trying to get her locked away as a criminal, before stabbing him and running from her apartment and into the waiting hands of the Dark Elves.

It is about this point that the characters arrive on the scene, looking for the girl.

SYNOPSIS

The characters are sent to pick up a young girl who is allegedly suffering from a nervous breakdown and is a danger to herself. The characters all have different motivations for getting the girl:

- The police characters want her in connection with a homicide earlier in the week. They her for questioning, to find out if she had anything to do with the murder.
- The psychiatrist and paramedics are looking for the girl so they can evaluate her mental state. They are the ones who received the anonymous tip off about the girl. The county hospital has formed the Psychiatric Retrieval Unit because of the number of people who are going off the rails and doing harm to themselves and to others.
- The private investigator has been given the girl's name and is trying to track her down for the mysterious Mr. Weldon. Stina has a bad gambling debt, so she needs the money to pay off her bookmaker.

When the characters arrive, they will find the old man lying bleeding on the floor of the girl's apartment. He will explain a few things about the girl and her mental state.

Before he can explain everything, the Dark Elves will kill him via a psychic attack, right in front of the characters. This will be the first time that the characters will have direct, graphic experience of the powers that the dark forces can bring against them.

As the characters are recovering from the shock of the Doctor's strange death, a member of the empathic underground will arrive. He has a very high foreboding skill and felt the attack from a couple of blocks away; he came to investigate.

His main job is to fill in the characters on what it is they are facing now that they have come up against the Dark Forces. He will explain all about the Minions and what they are trying to achieve here on Earth. He will also give them a vivid demonstration of empathic abilities if they do not believe what he is saying.

He will explain that the underground needs to find this girl and learn from here what the Dark Minions' plans are. Without her, the metroplex could be in serious trouble.

As further incentive, the Dark Elves will steal away the body of the Doctor while the characters are meeting with the underground empath. This should provide them with further proof that what they have been told is the truth and not some deranged fantasy.

Before he can accompany the characters to find the missing girl, he will be called away urgently. He will give the characters a cellular phone number to call once they have rescued the girl. He will then vanish as mysteriously as he appeared.

The characters can hunt around in the apartment and find the missing jewelry box that Kirily was searching for.

After they get the box open, they will find a series of notes and letters, as well as two tubes of mercury. These notes will give the approximate location of the Dark Minions hidden base.

This information should have the characters heading to the disused television station. The Minions are using the station as a base for broadcasting empathic signals across the city. These signals affect the mental state of thousands of people and make them easier to control.

The characters enter the ruins of the station. Fire and combat have damaged the building, as it is now inside one of the uncontrolled zones in the city. All the time, they will get the sense of something evil in the air, which should make them more unsettled.

The characters head down into the tunnels below the old station. They will come to an old door that is stuck fast. Using the mercury from the jewelry box, they will be able to activate the mercury switch on the door and get it open.

As the characters continue down, the surrounding tunnels become more and more bizarre and organic looking. This is the giant biocomputer that the Dark Minions have constructed to help them broadcast the empathic signals across the city.

Before they get too far into the complex, they come across a couple of workers. Their conversation, whether overheard or extracted under interrogation, will provide the characters with some information about where they are. The workers will not know the real truth; they will be unaware of the real purpose of the station. They will have enough information to let the character begin to get some idea about what they are facing.

The characters search deeper into the complex, eventually finding the girl. She is wired into the biocomputer via an organic looking

helmet. The process of getting the girl out of the device creates some strange empathic events and she falls unconscious.

Extracting her from the computer also sets off a series of alarms that brings the dark forces to stop the characters. The characters have to disable the computer, possibly using the information gained from the two technicians. While they fight their way back to the outside world, they meet the main Dark Minion who is the brainchild of the complex. He appears to end up dying with the rest of the computer as the characters finally manage to get free.

Once outside, the characters will have a chance to catch their breaths and try to understand what it is they have just seen. It is then that the girl will wake up again.

She's not happy about being "rescued"; in fact, she is violent about it and will escape and run back into the uncontrolled zone, looking for another way to get back to the place she felt safe and secure.

The characters now have to chase her back into the zone. They will feel the presence of other people shadowing them as they move through and they may even be subjected to bursts of sporadic small arms fire as the local residents defend their turf from the intruders.

The characters will eventually be able to catch up with the girl as she scales a fire escape to the roof of an abandoned building.

The characters climb up after her. Once they get to the top, they will find her standing behind the main Dark Minion they met earlier in the tunnels of the complex. He will be standing defiantly on the roof. If the characters are still holding weapons, the Minion will use his empathic ability to make them unbearably hot, forcing the characters to drop them.

This is the final showdown with the dark forces. By using the advice of the old Doctor at the beginning of the game, they will be able to overcome the situation and get the girl back. They need to convince her that the Dark Minions have been deceiving her and that they don't really love her; they are just using her powers for evil purposes.

Once they manage to convince her, she will turn against her former master and push him into a metal aerial, just as the aerial is struck by lightning. This will weaken the Minion so the characters can finish him.

The girl will realize what she has done and repent. It is now up to the characters to hand her over to the empathic underground, so that they can use what the girl knows to help save the rest of the city.

The characters will be offered positions with the underground because of what they have seen and now know. Whether they choose to accept that position is entirely up to the players.

THOUGHTS RUN WILD... KIRILY'S APARTMENT

"Boom," goes the thunder as you pull up outside the apartment building where Kirily Jensen lives. The rain has eased up slightly, at least allowing you to find the number of the building.

The lights of the cars reveal just how badly the building needs repair. The acid rain has gouged deep pits in the old concrete facade. Unless something is done in the next couple of years, about the only thing this building has to look forward to is demolition.

It is raining heavily outside, and the thunderstorm is particularly intense. A lot of people have decided to stay inside. It's a lot darker than it normally is at this time of the night.

Allow the players some time to get a feel for their characters. Once the players decide to enter the building, read them the following:

Someone in this building obviously has a thing against light. All of the light fixtures in the foyer have been smashed or ripped from the walls. Only a couple of wires snaking from the holes in the plaster show where they once were.

The foyer reeks of stale urine. Some homeless bum must have stayed the night here and not bothered to get up when nature called. There are plenty of old newspapers and cardboard boxes scattered about. It's surprising that no one's in here now, taking shelter from the storm.

As your flashlights play around the foyer, you get the impression that the building might have been nice, but people ceased to care long ago. Graffiti covers the walls and anything that may have been even remotely valuable has been ripped out and carted away.

Only a lone fluorescent tube flickers dimly in the far corner, the zapping of its ballast about the only sound.

It's important to build up the atmosphere in these opening scenes. The players need to feel on edge right from the start. It is through this feeling that something has to be done that the game will really work.

Kirily's apartment is on the sixth floor. The characters will already know this information; it's on their sheets.

To get to the sixth floor, they will need to take the stairs. The elevator has been destroyed sometime back in the past. If the players decide to try to take the elevator, read them the following:

As you approach the elevator doors, you realize that calling the elevator is pointless. The metal doors to the shaft are twisted and torn as though someone couldn't wait and decided to blow their way in.

The light from your torches cut thick beams through the dust in the shaft. Sticking your head into the shaft, you can vaguely see the bottom of the elevator two floors up. The floor of the car is twisted and burnt, as though a bomb has hit it. It definitely looks like you'll need to have to take the stairs.

The stairs to the sixth floor are about as clean as the foyer. They smell even worse, as though something has died in the stairwell and no one has bothered to clean it up.

The air in the stairwell is really rank. It smells as though everyone uses it as a communal toilet. There's also the fragrant aroma of dead cat. Or it might be dog. It's hard to say.

Like the foyer, someone has taken a severe dislike to the lighting fixtures. There is a dim twilight in the stairwell that seems to be coming from a couple of floors up.

Most of the landings are filled with piles of rubbish. There is the occasional crunch of broken glass under your feet as you fight your way through.

From somewhere in the building comes the sound of people shouting at one another. It's too muffled to be able to make out what they're saying, but from the tone of the voices, they're obviously not pleased with one another.

As a note for the referee, the fighting is for atmospheric only. It has no bearing on the game at all.

The characters will now arrive at the sixth floor.

You step out of the stairwell and onto the sixth floor. Unsurprisingly, the corridor lights are out here as well. At least it doesn't reek of urine.

The only light is coming from a slightly ajar door at the end of the passage on the left. There's not much, but it is enough to let you see that there's nothing on the floor to trip over.

The corridor is lit up eerily as a bright flash of lightning bursts outside. Seconds later, the window at the end of the corridor shakes as the accompanying thunderclap announces its displeasure with the world.

The light is coming from a small kerosene lamp on the table just inside the door to Kirily's apartment and no noise can be heard from inside.

When the characters enter the apartment, read them the following:

Whoever was last in this apartment was not in a good mood. Your torches play over a scene of destruction. It almost looks like a brawl recently finished in here. Books from the bookcase have been hurled around the room and the picture tube on the television is cracked and is showing only static.

The lightning flashes again, this time illuminating an older man, who is sitting in a dining chair facing away from the door...

THE GOOD DOCTOR

The old man is Dr. Cornelius Kasprowitz, the anonymous caller who tipped off the hospital that the girl was to be picked up.

The old man is sitting slumped in a chair in the dining room. He has blood running down his face and it is dripping from his ear onto his collar.

DR. CORNELIUS KASPROWITZ

Experience: Novice

Attributes: 4; INT 9, EDU 9, CHR 8, EMP 2

Skills: Medical 5, Psychology 11, Human Empathy 2, Instruction 6, Computer Operation 6, *Language* (Polish) 10.

Initiative: 1

For more details see Appendix 1.

Dr. Kasprowitz had tripped and caught his head on the corner of the table. He has lost a lot of blood and will only just be able to explain what happened to him. Should the group look, they will find blood on the table to back up his story. If the paramedics weren't in the group, they would be able to do very little for him.

Allow the characters to tend to the Doctor's wounds. They should be able to make him comfortable. After they have given him pain-killers and the like, he will regain his senses and be able to talk to the characters properly.

"Oh thank God you're finally here," gasps the old man. "When I called the hospital, it was my last hope to help this poor girl."

If the characters continue to fuss over him, he will get irritable and make them stop. He's more interested in explaining what has happened.

His name is Dr. Cornelius Kasprowitz, the same Dr. Kasprowitz who wrote the academic papers the psychiatrist had been reading before they group was called out. He has been living upstairs in this building since he was forced to resign from his position at the university.

A couple of months ago, he had met the new girl who had moved in downstairs. She had said that her name was Kirily Jensen, but the Doctor doesn't know if that was her real name. She has been in a terrible emotional state, being paranoid and depressed. The Doctor had reached out to her and found that she really just needed someone to talk to.

"It did not take me long to realize that this poor girl was suffering from an imminent empathic breakthrough. She had all the classic signs of an awakening empath and she even admitted that sometimes things just flew about the rooms by themselves. I knew then that I had to try and help her make it through the change with her psyche intact.

"We had been making some real progress in those early weeks. Her bouts of depression were less severe and she was at least able to go to sleep by herself"

Lightning flashes outside the window. The bright glare makes the Doctor look even paler, as though he was already dead.

"We started to meet a couple of times a week so that I could help her. I tried to check on her neatly every day though, just to see she

was OK. But there were times that she seemed to just vanish for days on end. I searched around the building for her, but never found her.

"Sometimes, after she did appear again, she would not talk to me for days. It took a lot of persuading to get her to open up again. Most of the times we talked during these phases, she would either shout and throw things, or she would sit on her haunches, rubbing her locket and rocking back and forth, crooning softly to herself."

If Gregory Neale asks about the locket, the Doctor will describe it "as a gold oval, about an inch long. I think it had pattern on the outside, like knots, but I could be mistaken". He will say that Kirily told him someone very special had given it to her, but they were dead now. He doesn't know any more about it.

"Things just went downhill from there. As the weeks bore on, she would have less and less to do with me. She kept accusing me of 'corrupting her mind'.

"She had not been around all this week. I had come down a couple of times every day to see if I could find her, but she was never here.

"Then, this afternoon, I heard her down here in her apartment again. She sounded as though she was tearing the place apart. I was afraid that she had gone over the edge, so I called the hospital anonymously to get them to send someone out to come and collect her."

If the characters ask why he made the call anonymously, he will say that he was afraid that he would not be taken seriously if he gave his name. His reputation as a "crackpot" had made sure that the medical profession didn't take him seriously any more.

"I came downstairs to see if there was something I could do to help. She just about killed me on sight. She was screaming that I had stolen her jewelry box.

"I tried to explain to her that I hadn't stolen it, but there was no reasoning with her. She just kept going on about how they had told her that I was corrupting her mind.

"I tried to explain that she had it all round the wrong way, that I was trying to help her, but she came at me with a piece of broken glass. I backed away and tripped on something. That's when I fell and caught my head on the table.

“She just grabbed her stuffed tiger toy and what looked like an old thermometer and ran out the door. I haven’t seen her since. That was probably an hour ago, two at the most.”

The Doctor doesn’t know who the “they” is.

If asked about the box, he will explain that it was a small black-lacquered timber box, about six inches long, three wide and two deep. It had a gold picture on the top of a Hawaiian scene and it had a gold lock on the front. Dr. Kasprowitz had never been allowed to see inside the box, but Kirily had told him that she kept all her personal letters and things in there.

One thing to remember when portraying the Doctor is that he has been very seriously wounded. His speech will be slow, slurred and constantly interrupted by bouts of painful coughing.

The Doctor pulls himself up slightly so that he can look at you all. “I know this is a lot to ask, but I need to you all to find Kirily for me. She is at a critical time as far as her mental stability is concerned, and unless she gets help soon, she could end up in serious trouble.

“Her mind is very clouded right now and she has lost control of her faculties. She needs a lot of gentle love and support, something I didn’t realize until it was too late. Normal clinical therapy techniques didn’t work. She needs the emotional connection of someone that really cares for her and is able to make her understand that.

“I don’t know who else she had been seeing, but they obviously provided the emotional links that she needed far more than I did.

“But I only ever wanted good for her. You have to believe that! I did not want to hurt her in any way. Whoever else she has been seeing, they were manipulating her fragile mind. They wanted her out of my grasp for some reason. I don’t know why, but it is imperative that you find her and get her someplace safe.”

The Doctor will pause and close his eyes, obviously in pain.

ZAPPED!

An incredibly bright flash of lightning lights the room and the simultaneous crash of thunder is deafening.

The Doctor sits bolt upright against the wall. His eyes go wide and his mouth opens as though he is screaming in agony, but the noise is drowned out by the rage of nature outside.

As the light fades, the Doctor slumps to the floor. Blood is running from his ears and nose and his face is still twisted in agony.

You check his pulse, but he’s already gone.

Any attempts at performing CPR will fail – the Doctor is definitely dead. There is absolutely nothing they could have done to prevent it¹.

Should the characters bother to look around, let them see the following, possibly after having them roll for an Average: Observation test. If they look outside for things like snipers, then make the test an Easy: Observation.

Another lightning strike lights up the sky and you can see a figure on the roof of the building opposite this one, silhouetted against the city skyline. As you watch, you see a swirling mist appear behind it.

The figure turns and steps into the mist. A second later, the air on the roof opposite is empty, as though nothing was ever there.

The characters have witnessed their first dimension walk. The figure was a Dark Elf. He was responsible for a brutal empathic attack on the Doctor.

The Dark Elf was an assassin sent to kill the Doctor, to make sure he didn’t try to find some way of tracking Kirily down. The attack was an empathic one, so that there would be no physical evidence at the scene of the crime to link the assassin to the crime.

This whole scene is designed to show the characters that there are things happening that defy anything that any of them have ever experienced. They have all now had direct experience with the forces of Darkness and hopefully, they will want to do something about it.

ENTER THE EMPATH

The characters are not the only ones who witnessed the dark elf’s assassination of the Doctor.

Dylan Cadell is a member of the empathic underground in the city. For quite a while they have been noticing the increase in the number of latent neuropaths becoming active, as well as the increasingly negative feeling in the city.

¹ A later autopsy will show that he died from a massive cerebral hemorrhage that erupted at several different sites in his brain simultaneously. Death was instantaneous.

DYLAN CADELL

Experience: Elite

Attributes: 7; STR 8, CON 9, EMP 6

Skills: Foreboding 8, Human Empathy 9, Project Thought 5, Project Emotion 7, Aura Reading 5, Enter the Astral Dimension 7, Psychic Tracking 9, Psychic Invisibility 6, Psyche Surgery 4, *Small Arms* (Pistol) 4, *Melee Combat* (Unarmed) 6, Stealth 5, Stalking 7

Initiative: 4

For more details see Appendix 1.

Several empaths with the foreboding ability have sensed the rise of a power in the city, so the underground movement has been searching for some time to locate and eradicate the source of the growing darkness.

Dylan himself is a strong mystic who was given Kirily's address by Mr. Weldon, Stina's contact. He was on his way there and would have arrived not long after the characters anyway.

When the Doctor was murdered, Dylan sensed the shock waves from the attack and raced to the location. He was able to get a visual on the dark elf before it dimension walked and escaped. He then did a quick scout on the astral plane and located the characters and the doctor in Kirily's apartment.

He will come straight up the apartment and get the characters to explain what the hell is going on.

"There's no point. He's already dead."

You spin around and there is a man standing in the doorway to the apartment. Water is dripping from his dreadlocks onto the shoulders of his tattered leather jacket. The dark skin of his face only helps to accentuate his dark eyes, which are burning with intensity.

When he enters the apartment, he will take the Colt Krait pistol from the shoulder holster under his jacket and lie it on the table next to the door. If the police characters are feeling paranoid, he will

submit to a frisking. He is not carrying any other weapons, although there is a cellular phone attached to his belt.

If the characters barrage him for information, he will ignore them until he has had time to have a close look at the Doctor.

He will crouch down next to the Doctor's body and lay his hand on the corpse's forehead. He will close his eyes momentarily, before sighing and standing. If the characters have not already covered the body, then he will take a cover from one of the seats in the room and lay it respectfully over the Doctor's body. He will then turn to face the characters.

"Weldon sent me," he says to Stina. "Do you know why this happened? It's essential that I found out."

There's a pretty fair bet at this stage that the characters will want to know who this guy is and what the hell he is doing at the scene of a killing. Dylan will get the characters to calm down (he will use project emotion skill if he has to) and will invite them to take a seat.

The following block of player text is not intended to be read directly to the characters, but is instead intended to be cut up as the conversation with the characters progresses. They will undoubtedly want to interrupt with questions, so let them, but try to keep the conversation basically on track. Remember that Dylan is trying to recruit the characters to his cause, not convince them that he is a raving loony. One thing to remember is that what Dylan has to say is *vital* to the rest of the plot. If the players don't get some of this information, the rest of the game doesn't work.

"Whether or not you believe it, what I am about to tell you is the absolute truth. It is going to seem like a complete load of crap, but if you want to find the girl, then you will have to listen to what I have to say and find a way to accept it."

"Behind the scenes in this city, something evil is lurking. The rise in the crime rates, the increase in mental illness and the general lack of apathy and discontent in society are the direct effects of it."

"We don't know where it came from, but some from the stories we have heard, it all started back in the early eighties. The government had been in contact with some extraterrestrials since just after World War 2, despite the fact that they have denied it for years. These aliens had helped the government with high technology as well"

as teaching them how to understand and exploit some of the higher powers of the mind.

"In the eighties, the aliens went exploring somewhere and they opened something they shouldn't have. Something incredibly evil from another dimension got loose and took control of their minds. Then it came to Earth.

"After that, the place went to hell in a handbasket. The world started sliding deeper and deeper into trouble as the evil forces took control of the minds of the government and the major corporations and started using them as tools for their own ends.

"Humanity, in its own peculiar way, fought back against the dark invasion. Empathic powers, which had lain dormant in us for thousands of years, started becoming active once again. The dark forces recognized this and took control over most of the awakened, but some resisted the influence and even started to actively resist the spread of evil through out the world.

"I'm a part of an organization called Ike² that aims to help rid the world of these influences. We normally operate behind the scenes, working without drawing attention to ourselves. It seems to be the best way to succeed. So far it has been.

"But recently, something else has been happening. Those of us who are sensitive to empathic powers have been noticing an increase in the pressure – it's as though someone or something is broadcasting something out across the city to affect the way people feel and act. And it is not making people feel love for fellow man either.

"The other thing we have noticed is the number of people who are awakening empathically has been dramatically increasing over the past year or so. Not all of them survive either. Some can't handle the power and commit suicide. Most of them are disappearing. We have no idea where they're going. A tiny handful ends up coming to us. We hire people like Stina to help find them for us. They're the really lucky ones. We can help them understand the powers they find themselves with and can teach them how to master them and use them responsibly.

"I had a feeling that something was going down in this part of town for a few days now. Every now and again, I can feel someone else awaken to his or her powers. If I can get to them in time, I can help. But I think I have come to late for this girl.

² That's pronounced "EE-kay", not as it is written. It's a Hawaiian word that translates as "The World Is What You Think It Is".

"It might actually be worse than we thought. I saw the killer on the roof across the road. He was not human, despite what he appeared to be. We call them Dark Elves, but I am sure that they have another name for themselves. They're nasty pieces of work, who delight in human pain and suffering for some sick reason. They're all-powerful empathas as well. That's how this poor bastard was killed. They attacked him empathically and basically caused his mind to explode. That power manifests itself on the physical level by massive brain hemorrhages. I've seen it before; it's not pretty.

If the characters interrupt him with arguments about the existence of empathic powers, he will demonstrate them. He will use his psychic invisibility to vanish from the seat he was sitting in and he will reappear standing over by the window a few seconds later. He did not teleport – he walked across the room. He just used his empathic powers to convince the minds of the characters that he wasn't there.

"So, will you help us find this girl? She's the first solid lead we have had that links an awakened empath with the Dark Forces. There are those in my organization who believe that the awakening of all of the latents has something to do with the increasing negativity in the air. I'm not convinced myself, but it's possible."

Give the characters some time to interact with themselves and with Dylan. He will be able to answer quite a lot of questions about empathic powers (he will come up with another demonstration of his powers if he needs to). He will also be able to answer questions about the mysterious disappearance of the figure on the roof opposite (*"The Dark Elf dimension walked off the roof. It's kind of like teleporting, but you don't necessarily end up on Earth."*).

If the characters argue that they have to bring the girl in for their own reasons (i.e. either to the hospital or to the police station), then Dylan will argue that the Dark Elves will just be able to dimension walk in get her out. Only the underground movement will be able to shield her from their searching.

If the characters ask what to do about the girl if they should find her, or they mention what Dr. Kasprowitz told them about her needing unconditional love and understanding (*"The old man told you that? Damn, it's a pity we didn't know about him before he died. We could use more like him."*), Dylan will reply with much the same story.

“Empaths at the stage this girl is at are VERY fragile. Their emotions are running wild; they can pick up on emotions from other people. They’ll know when you’re bullshitting to them. If you say that you’re going to help, them, then by God you had better mean it.

“She’s going to be alone, afraid and somewhat delusional. You’re going to need to tread very carefully if you want her to do anything you are suggesting. If the Dark Elves have got her, then they will have convinced her that they understand what she is feeling and that they can help her out of the problems she is. Chances are, they ARE the source of her problems, so of course they are going to be able to make them go away.”

"GOOD LUCK, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN..."

As the talk with Dylan starts to wind down, Dylan’s cellular phone will start to ring. He will excuse himself and head out into the bedroom and take the call. This should give the characters a couple of minutes to talk amongst themselves.

Dylan will come back in a few moments later with a concerned look on his face.

“That was Mr. Weldon, one of my, er, associates. They just managed to find another awakening empath, so they need me to come in. And no, it’s not the girl. This one is a guy named Jackson.

“I desperately need you to find Kirily and bring her in so that we can talk to her and hopefully undo whatever these bastards have done to her.

“At this time, I can’t offer you any sort of reward or even payment. Call it a favor to me if you have to. I’m betting that if you end up encountering the dark forces directly, you’ll want to bring her to me anyway.”

He walks over to the door and picks up his pistol from where he placed it. He slides the clip out, glances at it and then slams it home again. After he putting the weapon back in his shoulder holster, he grabs a pad and scribbles a quick note.

“This is my name and cellular number. I’m not going to be available for a while, but I have voicemail facilities on it, so you can leave a message if I’m not there. I’ll get back to you as soon as I am able.

“I’m really sorry about having to leave you to do this, but there is a very sick man who is in desperate need of my help.”

He turns and walks to the door.

“Find the girl. We’ll talk again once you have. I’ve just got this feeling.”

Then he is gone.

If the characters even look out into the corridor for him, he will be invisible. He was mentally preparing for it as he was talking to the characters.

NOW WHAT?

The characters should be feeling a little overwhelmed right about now. The players going to be at a bit of a loss for something to do.

Chances are that they will want to search the apartment looking for clues. There is not a lot to be found here that will help them in their quest.

An Average: Observation test will reveal the space on one of the bookshelves where the jewelry box that Dr. Kasprowitz mentioned sat. The space is about six inches by three inches. The dust around the space is quite noticeable, but the space is free from dust, showing that the box has only recently been moved.

A little bit more searching will find the box behind the bookcase. It must have fallen down there at some point. They should not have any trouble opening the box. Inside are a few pages (Player Handout #3) and two small glass vials of mercury.

The characters might also find Kirily’s old diary. Most of it is filled with doodles, rather than words. None of the artwork is particularly good and a great deal of it is completely abstract.

Should a character with human empathy or psychology skill look at it, they will get the impression that this girl is very mentally ill. The pictures represent her thought processes at the time she drew them and very few of them make sense.

One of the last notes in the diary will be a longer one, showing that her mental processes were starting to improve. It talks about she has just met a really nice young guy called Damon. It doesn’t go into much more detail than that. After that, about all of the pages that may have been written on have been torn out.

The last page of the diary remains. It has a rough sketch of the old television station on the edge of the War Zone. It is towards the back and is not particularly good, although the bent old transmission tower is recognizable.

THE VANISHING CORPSE

While the characters are searching the apartment, something very peculiar will happen. The characters will need to succeed in a Difficult: Observation test or a Formidable: Foreboding test to notice what is going to happen.

If the characters have called in the body and arranged for the city morgue to send someone up to collect it, this action will take place *before* the crew has arrived to collect the body.

Should one of the characters in the living room notice what is going on, then read them the following description:

You catch a faint whiff of the smell of burning wax in the room, despite the fact there are no lit candles anywhere.

You glance around and you see a faint mist appearing from under the cloth covering the Doctor's body.

As you watch, you see a slight glow appear underneath the cloth, just before the corpse seems to vanish, leaving the now empty cloth lying on the floor.

If none of the characters witnessed this happening, then you can read them the following when one of them happens to walk past where the body has been lying:

You get a very faint whiff of the smell of burning wax as you walk through the living room. You're positive that you had not smelt it before and then you notice that there are no candles in the living room.

Then you notice the cloth the Doctor's body had been lying under is flat against the floor.

The corpse is gone.

None of the players will have seen anyone or anything enter the room and carry the Doctor's body away. They can be completely certain of this.

Referee's Note: *This minor scene is included just to throw the players further off balance³.*

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

From the information in the notes from the jewelry box, the characters should now be heading to the old television station in the War Zone.

If one or more of them decide to go and check out the doctor's apartment then let them. Like a lot of academics, he is not a particularly tidy person and the apartment is a disgusting mess. The characters will have a hard time finding anything of useful. Most of the Doctor's notes will be in Polish, but they might be able to find (Average: Observation) an old microcassette of the type used by Doctors and Therapists to record interviews. If they play the tape they will hear the following:

Doctor Kasprowitz: *I haven't seen you around for the past few days. I was worried about you.*

Kirily: *What? I don't know why. I'm big enough to look after myself.*

DrK: *Don't you care that I worry about you?*

K (screaming): *Why do you care? You just want to get inside my head! You don't really care about me!*

DrK: *How can you say that? We had something important going a while ago.*

³ *The body has been whisked away by the dark elves via a dimensional gate. They opened a very small gate directly under the body and then pulled the corpse through, immediately closing the gate again.*

They were in the Wax proto-dimension at the time, hence the faint smell of wax in the living room.

This bit of information has no real bearing on the module. It is just included here for completeness.

K: Damon told me about people like you! He told me that you want to mess with our minds and make us sick in the head!

DrK: No! That's not true! You've got it all wrong! I want to help you!

K: Get out! Just get out of here!

There is not much more on the tape, apart from Kirily screaming and throwing things around her apartment.

The characters may also find copies of some of the old papers the Doctor wrote. Most of them are full of complex psychological theories and case studies, including the ones where the doctor started expounding on his theories about the existence of empathic powers.

WELCOME TO THE ANT HILL

The characters should now realize that to track down Kirily, they are going to have to head into one of the city's uncontrolled zones. The region is in a shocking state of disrepair and only those with no income would even consider entering, let alone trying to survive in there.

The region is not all that far from Kirily's apartment, only a couple of kilometers. As they approach, you can read them the following description:

You stop the vehicles at the top of the hill and look down on the area the beat cops call "the War Zone". It doesn't take a lot of imagination to figure out why: The place looks like it has seen the brunt of a major offensive in a war. More than a few buildings lie in crumpled ruins. Those left standing all bear the scars of intense gang warfare.

There doesn't seem to be any lights on in the area, which only helps to accentuate the muzzle from small arms fire and the bright flash as an explosion rips the side from another building.

A flash of lightning over the zone only helps to highlight the destruction of the buildings. How people manage to survive in there is anyone's guess.

The edge of the zone is littered with scores of burnt out cars, trucks and vans. From the way some of them are positioned, it looks as though they have tried to get into the zone and have been destroyed before they could get very far.

Once the characters look for the television station read them the following:

The old television station lies about 2 blocks inside the zone. It seems to be reasonably intact, all things considered. Most of the broadcast antenna still stands. Several of the girders are bent and broken, and the top of the mast leans at a precarious angle, but it has somehow managed to survive.

The players now have to choose as to how to approach the station building. They can go on foot, or they can drive their vehicles down.

GOING IN ON FOOT

This is by far and away the most sensible option the players have. Because of the extreme lawlessness of the area, no one owns a vehicle; they have all been destroyed in clashes long ago.

Going in on foot means that the characters can use a more stealthy approach to the station and probably even get to the station fence unmolested.

As the characters enter the zone, read them the following:

Now that you're closer to the burnt out vehicles, you can make out that some of them once belonged to the police force. Charred corpses of the inhabitants are still in some of the seats.

You reach the giant yellow sign the police erected a couple of years ago - "You are now leaving a controlled zone. The police will not respond to any calls for assistance from within the boundary."

The sign has been riddled with bullet holes from both sides and someone has spray painted "Your ass is grass" across the middle of it.

The rattle of small arms fire from a couple of streets away only helps to punctuate the heavy atmosphere.

If the characters stroll down the middle of the streets, they are going to attract the attention of some of the local inhabitants. Snipers hiding in the high points in the ruins will attempt to pick off anyone wandering about, especially if they look like they are carrying anything.

Should the characters attempt an approach like this, then one will draw fire. Roll 1D6, then count around the table and then take a shot that that player.

The sniper will be using an AKM assault rifle (page 282 of the *Dark Conspiracy 2nd Edition Player's Handbook*). The range will be 200 meters and the sniper has a combined STR/Small Arms (Rifle) skill of 9. This means that you will need to roll 4 or under on a D20 in order to hit the character.

The aim of this encounter is not to actually wound one of the characters; its aim is to scare them and make them realize that this is a combat zone and it should be treated accordingly. If one of them does manage to get hit, rig the damage/hit location roll so that they only take a slight wound to either an arm or a leg.

If the characters take a more stealthy approach to the television station, they should be able to reach it without too much difficulty. It might not be a bad idea to have them get caught in the middle of some crossfire between a couple of snipers, if only to accentuate the complete lawless nature of the zone.

DRIVING IN

If the players are stupid enough to try this stunt, then they will get everything they deserve. The local resident's fear any vehicles as they usually signify a police sweep through the zone. This normally ends up in a bloodbath.

As a result, any vehicle crossing the line of burnt out wrecks will get the same sort of attention. The local inhabitants will attack any vehicles that enter the zone using whatever weaponry they have available. Most of the time, this will consist primarily of small arms fire and Molotov cocktails, but can also sometimes include some primitive homemade hand grenades.

I'm not going to go into a whole lot of details about this scenario, as I do not expect anyone will be foolish enough to try it. The descriptions of the rows of burnt out vehicles should be enough to convince them to try something else.

If they are stupid enough to try, try not to kill them. It would be a shame to see them have to end the game very early because of this.

GETTING TO THE STATION

The station is only a couple of blocks from the edge of the zone. It is unusual in that it has some grounds surrounding the main building and the accompanying transmitter tower. The rest of the area used to be apartment buildings and office blocks.

You pause briefly at the end of the station compound and take stock of the situation. From where you are sitting, you can't make out any people, but the constant sounds of them are echoing all through the ruined streets.

The main building looks as though it has taken a direct hit from a cruise missile. It's even hard to determine how many stories the building had. The top left side of the building is in total ruins, the reinforcing rods poking through the shattered concrete like ribs. Rubble and debris from years of attack lie all over the ground round the base of the building.

It's hard to say what the building used to look like. It has been years since any work was done on it and the remaining vertical surfaces are covered with all sorts of graffiti.

At the other end of the compound, the twisted transmission tower still stands. Coils of barbed wire lay strewn around its base and up to the first or second sets of horizontal cross beams. There doesn't seem to be a sentry up the tower; it would seem like the perfectly logical place to keep a lookout from.

The remains of a power relay building lay at the base of the tower. It looks as though it was stripped of anything useful years ago and the rest eventually collapsed under its own weight.

THE TRANSMISSION TOWER

Have the players make an Impossible: Observation roll. If one of them succeeds, read them the following description:

As you look closely at the structure of the transmission tower, you notice what appears to be vines attached to the metal beams. It's hard to make out because of the bad light, but you would swear that they had long, sharp thorns sticking out of them.

If the characters go up to the tower for a closer look, they will indeed be able to make out the vines with the 8-inch long thorns. Each vine seems to be about as thick as a person's wrist. They are completely entwined around the beams of the tower, from the ground right up to the top.

The other thing that the characters will notice if they get close to the tower is the feeling of something being very wrong. This is because the vines on the tower are actually being used to broadcast an empathic signal across the city.

THE MAIN BUILDING

Let the characters make their way across the compound and into the ruins of the building. They can enter however they like, which may be an old door or it might be through a hole ripped in the wall.

You enter the main building of the station. The building is littered with rubbish that the wind has blown in. From the way the place looks, it looks as though no one has even bothered to come in here in years.

There's something not quite right about this place either. It's not anything you can put your finger on, but something is making you feel decidedly uncomfortable.

The feeling that the characters has stems from the fact that they are very close to the source of the negative energy. It is this energy that stops the residents of the War Zone from trying to take over the building.

Let the characters hunt around in here for a while. Try and make it as spooked as possible, with rats and other vermin being the only inhabitants. You can also make use of the fact that the building is completely empty and yet there are all sorts of strange shadows that play tricks on their minds.

After they have explored for a while, they should be able to find Kirily's footprints. She came through here less than two hours ago, so her footprints in the dust on the floor are really obvious.

Kirily's footprints will wander about the building a bit, before they eventually find the steps to the lower level of the station.

THE TUNNELS

Kirily's footsteps lead from the bottom of the steps into the darkness beyond. Because of the thick layer of dust on the floor, it is easy to follow her.

It will not be difficult for the players to figure out where she has gone. She will check out a couple of rooms off the main corridor, which are filled with old props and the like from the old station. It's surprising that they're still down here.

Impress on the players that the uncomfortable feeling they picked up (especially the empathic players) seems to be getting stronger. The air is also getting cooler, the deeper they head into the tunnel system.

THE DOOR TO THE UNKNOWN

Kirily's tracks will end at an old steel door on a wall of the tunnel.

Kirily's tracks end at an old rusty steel door. You can clearly see that she has shuffled about in front of the door. Beyond here, there is nothing on the floor but dust.

Lying on the ground at the base of the door is the shattered remains of an old thermometer. The metal brackets are twisted from the backboard and there is broken glass lying all over the floor. A couple of very small drops of mercury lie puddled in the dust.

If the characters make a successful Difficult: Intelligence check, they will realize that the amount of mercury that is puddled on the floor is not the full amount that the thermometer contains.

If the players take a close look at the door, you can read them the following:

The door looks as though it has been here for a long time, although it doesn't look as though it was on the original designs of the buildings. It was originally painted green but looks rustier than anything else now.

On the left hand edge of the door is a strange shaped lock. It is shaped like a triangle in a circle, but the cracks are not wide enough to slide a key into. It also looks as though there is no rotating barrel on the lock either.

The lock is actually a mercury switch. It needs to have mercury poured into it for the lock to be opened. This is why Kirily brought the old thermometer with her. It was the only other source of mercury in the house at the time.

If the players are having trouble figuring out what they are supposed to be doing, or they have a close look at the lock, then you can read them the following:

You take a close look at the lock and notice the glistening of very small droplets of mercury in the cracks of the lock itself.

That should be enough of a clue for the players to break one of the vials from the jewelry box into the lock.

When they do, read the following:

As you crack the vial over the lock, the mercury almost gets sucked into the cracks. There is no response for a couple of seconds and then there is a hiss of escaping air as the door slides in slightly and then swings open slightly.

WELCOME TO WEIRDSVILLE

As you push the door open, blue light spills out, momentarily blinding you. As your eyes become accustomed to the glare, you realize that there is electricity on the other side. A whole series of naked blue globes run down the center of the corridor until it turns a corner about 20 meters down.

The air is noticeably cooler as well. It's almost as though you have stepped into a giant refrigerator.

About ten meters inside the door, a stuffed tiger lies belly up on the floor of the tunnel.

Take the players of Juan Martinez and Stina Quilan aside and read them the following:

As the door opens, you are almost knocked over by the sense of hatred that pours out of the tunnel beyond. It is almost as if the feeling is solid. For a moment, you feel weak at the knees and your head throbs.

The players have now entered the complex of the Dark Minions, although they do not know it yet. What Juan has just felt is the emanations of the biocomputer in the complex. This is the feeling that they Dark Minions are trying to amplify and broadcast across the city.

From here on, things will seem to get much weirder for them.

The characters move down the corridor and around the corner, there being no where else for them to go.

When you round the corner, you see something that makes you feel rather nauseous. The walls and ceiling of the corridor are covered in something that looks for all the world like blue flesh. Veins run through it and they seem to be pumping some sort of dark blue liquid.

The temperature in this corridor is even lower than the one you were in. It's so cold in here that you find your skin starting to raise up in goose pimples.

Every now and again, flashes of iridescent light seem to flash down the corridor, just under the surface of the blue flesh. At certain points, there is a momentary point where the light gets slightly brighter and then it carries on its way away from you.

The characters have just encountered the outskirts of the Dark Minion's huge biocomputer. It fills the whole series of tunnels underneath a large section of the war zone, locked away in a place that people would find it, protected by a hostile environment that tends to prevent people from even looking for it.

Let the characters explore down the corridors of the biocomputer for a while. You could impress on the players of Juan and Stina that that sensation of hatred and maliciousness is very intense around the biocomputer and especially so when the sparks fire off.

The one thing to impress on the players is that the characters are getting very cold. The lack of warmth is very consistent, and they find that their body temperatures are starting to fall.

For the time being, all tasks are one level of difficulty harder than normal (unless the test is specifically given in the text).

TWO WORKERS

Every now and again, there are small alcoves in the corridors that are slightly warmer than the rest of the surrounding air. There are also a number of tunnels that seem join up with the one the characters are in.

This is not to say that the tunnel the characters are in is completely straight. It twists and turns with no logical sense of design and other passages join at strange places. Some are higher up and others lower down; some run straight off, some head up at a steep angle, others head down at shallow ones.

The tunnels all seem to look alike. They are all lit by the same eerie blue light, which intensifies slightly when the sparks head off.

They twist and turn in seemingly random patterns and some of them seem to go on forever, while others suddenly end in a blank wall. Along some of the longer passages, small alcoves hang off the main corridors. Most of these are dark, and are slightly warmer than the corridors they are connected to.

The flickering light produces patches of shadow that seem to dance by themselves, as though they are alive.

While the characters are exploring the tunnels, which seem to just go on and on for miles, they will hear voices coming their way. Give them a chance to find a place to hide, either in one of the darker alcoves, or in a cross tunnel.

Start the chances to hear the voices as a Formidable: Observation test, getting one level easier for every two minutes of elapsed time. As soon as the test gets to Automatic, then the group has run into the two workers.

If the group succeeds in one of the Observation tests, then they have a few minutes in which to find a place to hide. If they get a chance to hide, then the workers will go past their hiding place sooner than they would have normally.

The players have three choices at this point:

1. They have failed all of their observation rolls and just manage to walk straight into the two workers; or
2. They can hide and wait until the workers just head past, over-hearing what conversation they can in the minute or two that the characters can actually make out the speech; or
3. They can ambush the workers and interrogate them for what they know.

There is a good chance that most players will take the third option. Doing this has a number of distinct advantages, not the least of which is that they can find out specific information from the workers, rather than just overhearing some selected conversation.

To start with, the text below is the conversation that the characters will overhear if they do nothing and just hide until the workers have passed them.

The two men come around the corner into view. One is quite tall and stocky, the other of medium height and build. Both are wearing gloves and heavy blue parkas to protect them from the cold. They each are carrying a heavy looking backpack, which seems to bulge in a couple of places.

As they walk past, you can overhear some of their conversation:

"... Barry was telling me about it the other day," says the tall one. "He was saying that the cooling system on one branch of the computer up north went u/s and the damn thing just about melted down. From what he was saying, it was a real mess."

"What runs up there?" asks the shorter one. "I thought most of the outer regions were just basic storage units."

"Nah, apparently, they're installing a new operator center up there. They were trying to get it operational before the new recruits came on board."

"I saw a couple of them the other day," says the shorter one. "Not much to look at in that crew. Loonies by the look of them. I wonder why the management keeps hiring the fruit cakes."

The taller one shakes his head. "I know what you mean. But did you see the one Damon brought in a couple of hours ago? Real nice piece of ass. I wouldn't mind getting a piece of..."

They then round a corner and are out of sight and earshot.

If the characters ambush the two workers, then they will hear most of the above conversation, but they will also be able to question the two workers.

BIOCOMPUTER TECHNICIANS

Strength:	6	Education:	4	Move:	2/8/15/30
Constitution:	6	Charisma:	4	Skill/Dam:	5 / 1
Agility:	5	Empathy:	0	Hits:	10 / 20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	2

What are your names?

The shorter one is Danny Ela and he is of Portuguese decent.

The taller one is Mike Barclay.

What do you do here?

We're maintenance personnel for the Nayoda Corporation. This is their experimental biocomputer facility and our job is to make sure that it keeps working.

Where were you heading?

The computer reported that the door had been triggered on the southwestern extremity. It has done this in the past after someone has come in. We were heading down to make sure that nothing is wrong.

Why is it so cold in here?

The computer can't function if the temperature is too high. The biological structures that make up the nerve circuitry tends to break down. The dark blue fluid is cooling fluid that pumps

through to make sure that the heat doesn't build up in one part of the computer, causing it to melt down.

What happens if the computer melts down?

That will depend on where the meltdown occurs. If it happens out on the extremities, then the computer just loses some of the storage, or so they tell us. It gets uglier if the meltdown happens near one of the operator stations. If a whole section loses its coolant, then it could end up destroying the nerve cells into that operator station, which means that the computer could be down for months, if not permanently.

How do you know if a meltdown occurs?

A big alarm rings in the closest maintenance crew room. The computer will tell us where the leak is and we can head down there as fast as we can to try and patch the leak and try to prevent too much damage from happening to the computer.

What do the operators do?

Don't ask us. We don't have a clue. All we know is that they sit in these little booths, with these funny little helmets on. Must be some sort of virtual reality thing or something.

Where is the girl that was brought in earlier?

I heard that Damon was taking her to the operator-training center.

Where is that?

It's about half a mile from here. You'll need to follow this tunnel for another 150 yards, then take the left-hand fork. Take the first right then the second left. It's about 100 yards down on the right.

How big is the complex?

Well, last time I saw a map with a scale it was about a mile and a half by a mile. Something like that anyway.

How many people work in the complex?

Well, we know of about 50 maintenance personnel and there are about that many operators, spread all over the complex. There's also about 60 security personnel that tend to hang around the operator stations mostly. About 5 to each station and five or so at the training center.

Where can we get some warm clothing?

Well, there's a stores center about 600 yards from here. There are about a dozen sets in there that I know of. I thought that they were going to move them out, but they haven't gotten around to it yet.

How do you get into and out of the complex?

The company has a small shuttle bus that drives us in and out along a tunnel that leads to the Nayoda headquarters downtown⁴. It's how they bring supplies in as well. The tunnel only seems to be about a mile long, judging from the amount of time that it takes us to get down and back.

Why is there this feeling of hatred in this complex?

What feeling? Oh, the one where you're feeling slightly depressed? That's just a side effect of some of the chemicals in the coolant liquid. It goes away once you get outside again. They give us a little bit of extra pay to compensate for that.

If the players ask any questions other than the ones here, then feel free to make something up that fits in with the rest of the information.

The characters now know where Kirily is being kept, and they also know how to destroy the computer facility. They should probably make their way there. What they decide to do with the two workers is entirely up to the players.

Chances are they will first make their way to the storage room to get enough warm clothes for the group.

THE STORE ROOM

The characters can follow the directions of the workers (if they managed to get them) to find the storeroom.

The door to the storeroom is definitely not a normal door. There seems to be something that looks like the heart valve blocking the opening. It's only a slightly different color from the wall it is set in, which makes it that little bit harder to spot.

Beside the "door" is a small raised platform with a couple of buttons on it.

⁴ Referee's Note: The downtown district where the Nayoda headquarters is located is about 30 kilometers from the war zone where the complex is located. The distance discrepancy is due to the fact that the dark Minions use a dimensional gate between the two ends of the tunnel. There is no direct physical connection between the two locations.

The characters should not have any trouble in figuring out that the buttons are used to open the door.

The "door" slides open with a slight squelching sound. The room inside is dark, and the air is quite stale, as though this room has not been opened in quite a while.

The characters should be able to find enough warm clothing in here to make sure that the characters do not suffer from hypothermia any more. These are all stacked neatly on some metal shelves around the room. There are plenty of coats, gloves and hats, all in the same dark blue material that the maintenance guys were wearing.

As you look around the room, you also notice that there are a number of cleaning chemicals and clothes and the like.

Anyone succeeding in an Average: Chemistry test will realize that the combination of a couple of the different cleaning fluids will make a highly inflammable cocktail if they are mixed together. If the two chemicals were in contact, then one spark would send the whole lot up in a giant fireball.

Give the characters a chance to get all the things that they want to collect and then they can go and find Kirily.

THE TRAINING CENTER

What remains for the characters to do in the complex is to get Kirily and then get out again.

The following section assumes that the characters interrogated the two workers and have been to the storeroom and have discovered the forgotten cache of chemicals. If they haven't done either of these things, then you will have to come up with a way to get the characters to this point in such a way as the players don't realize they are being steered in a certain direction.

Following the directions given to you by the two workers, you make your way fairly easily to the training center.

The corridor here seems a bit brighter, most likely because of the increased number of flashes through the data channels in this area.

The air seems colder as well, probably because the extra circuits need more cooling.

The door to the training center is similar to the one to the storeroom. One of the raised panels is fixed into the wall alongside. A sign above the panel reads "Training Center. Authorized Personnel Only".

The characters will most likely enter the room in a fairly standard two-by-two cover formation, with the Doctor bringing up the rear.

It really doesn't matter how the characters enter the room if they are using some sort of tactics. If they do this, they will surprise the inhabitants. If the group blunders in blindly, then the inhabitants of the room will not be surprised by the group and normal initiative rules will apply. You will also need to modify the text below to read to the players.

You burst into the room, surprising the five inhabitants. They're shocked when they turn around to see who was coming through the door only to find themselves staring down the barrels of a collection of weapons.

The room's inhabitants are listed below. Because the characters have the advantage in terms of weapons, they will not put up much of a fight.

TRAINING CENTER HUMAN IGORS

Strength:	5	Education:	7	Move:	2/8/15/30
Constitution:	5	Charisma:	5	Skill/Dam:	5 / 1
Agility:	5	Empathy:	2	Hits:	10 / 20
Intelligence:	8	Initiative:	1	# Appear:	2

DARK ELF SECURITY PERSONNEL

Strength:	6	Education:	4	Move:	3/10/20/35
Constitution:	4	Charisma:	9	Skill/Dam:	7 / 4
Agility:	8	Empathy:	10	Hits:	10 / 20
Intelligence:	5	Initiative:	4	# Appear:	2

One the characters have the situation under control, then read them the following section:

Now you have the situation under control, you have a chance to look around the control room. The room is darker than the corridor outside, although there is enough light to see by.

A long desk runs along one side of the room. It has a range of computer screens and keyboards sitting on it. The cables for these screens run into a box on the floor underneath the table. You can just make out a few of the biological cables running into the back of the machine. It must be acting as some sort of interface between the two disparate computer systems.

Behind the desk is a large glass window. On the other side of the window is a small room, which is bare apart from a barber-style chair that is currently occupied by a young woman.

It is not possible to see her face at the moment; her head is covered by what looks like some sort of fleshy helmet. It is a dark purple color, as though it was made of bruised human flesh. A thick cable about the thickness of a man's arm runs from the top of the helmet to the ceiling, where it merges with the biocomputer's circuitry.

The girl appears to be in some sort of virtual reality system as her body is thrashing around, despite the restraints on her wrists and ankles.

This is Kirily. For the first time, the characters have managed to catch up with her. She is currently undergoing an empathic assessment and indoctrination session, to determine where she will best be utilized in the system.

If the characters decide to look at the computer screens, they will see a lot of graphs with basically incomprehensible titles. If the characters want to understand what is going on, then they are going to have to make a successful Impossible: Computer Operation or Formidable: Computer Empathy roll. Alternatively, they could ask one of the technicians to explain what is going on.

The displays basically link the types of empathic signals Kirily is being subjected to and the strength and types of the empathic emanations that she is creating as a result.

The user can also call up a list of results of past tests. A successful Difficult: Intelligence or Easy: Human Empathy check will notice that all of the thought patterns in the test set are negative ones. They all subject the testee to a range of negative emotions and measure the

intensity of the response. Kirily seems to respond most passionately to thought patterns of accusation. These bring out a very strong sense of guilt and despair in her.

Now that the characters have found Kirily, they have to find a way to get her out of the complex and back to the real world.

While the characters are trying to find a way to get Kirily out of the computer, the three Dark Elf guards (or those that are still alive after the characters stormed into the room) will each use their empathic powers to Dimension Walk out of the room. When they do, read the following to the characters:

As you are watching the guards, a swirling mist begins to form in the air behind each of them. Before you can react, they smile maliciously at you, step backwards into the mist and are gone. Within a second the mist has vanished, leaving only a faint smell of sulfur in the room.

To get Kirily out of the computer, they are going to have to find a way to shut the program down. This will cause the computer to bombard her mind with empathic power that will cause her to pass out. It does not matter if the characters do this themselves or they get the technicians to do it for them. The program was not designed to be aborted and when it is forced to do so, it will overload the empathic circuits in the helmet.

If they just rip the helmet from her head without shutting the program down and getting the computer to release her, then she will pass out from the empathic shock and will also take 1D6 points of damage to the head.

Give the characters a chance to get the now unconscious Kirily out of the chair in the next room and then come up with a course of action. But they had better make it quick, because the enemy cavalry will be showing up shortly, thanks to our dimension walking friends.

GETTING OUT OF THERE

The characters have now basically achieved the first part of their mission: they have recovered Kirily. They now have to get her out of the complex and into the hands of the empathic underground.

If the characters are feeling altruistic, they will probably also want to use their exit as a chance to destroy as much of the biocomputer as time will allow. By now, they should have enough information to

know how to do that (especially if they interrogated the two workers) and the means to do so, if they have been to the old storeroom.

It is presumed that the characters will now do their utmost to destroy the biocomputer, using all the means in their possession. For the most part, the description of this will be left to the referee to come up with the narration for the escape from the complex.

However, here are a few points that might help you to come up with some interesting little things to throw at the players.

- ☠ When the flesh of the biocomputer catches fire, it burns quite readily. It also churns out copious quantities of noxious black smoke that not only obscures vision in the tunnels; it also burns the lining of the nose of the characters and irritates their lungs.
- ☠ Because the computer is flammable, the fire will spread rapidly through the complex. The characters should be able to keep ahead of it if they move at a trot. They won't be able to go much faster than this anyway because of the unconscious Kirily.
- ☠ The Dark Elf guards that dimension walked out of the training center went to fetch some help. Because of what has happened, they will come looking for the characters and they will be armed. So you can role-play some combat in the tunnels.
- ☠ The characters will not be able to get to the exit with the dimensional gates that the workers mentioned for a couple of reasons. They don't know where that exit is, there are a lot of Dark Elves between the characters and the exit and most importantly, it would spoil the rest of the plot a bit if they were to head out that way.

There is some other nasty stuff going on in the tunnels. For the most part, the security force is quite efficient in their patrolling that they catch the very rare intruder to the complex (the characters caught them on a bad day – the guards will pay later for that). These intruders and the odd random victim from the war zone are used as food for the biocomputer. The characters can enter a room that they haven't seen before where people are bound up in semi-transparent sacs with feeding tubes penetrating their bodies and sucking the life force from them.

As you run through the tunnels, you find yourself in a large chamber. There is a distinct smell of rotting flesh in this room, something that has not been evident in the rest of the complex.

As you look around, you realize that there are a lot of semi-transparent membrane sacs attached to the walls in this chamber. Each sac contains a human being, their faces bound in a look of pure agony.

As you look carefully, you can make out a series of biological tubes penetrating the bodies of these poor people, as though the tubes were sucking the life from them.

These people are still barely alive and they are in a great deal of pain. It would be a nice thing for the characters to do to put an end to their misery.

Once the fire has been started, the general alarm will ring throughout the complex. This has never happened before and it has gained the attention (and the ire) of the owner of this complex.

Manco is one direct Minions of a Dark Lord who came through the original dimensional gateway on Io back in 1983. He used to be a psychic test subject, but with the help of the Dark Lord, he escaped from the test center and has since built himself into quite a position of power.

It was his idea to build the underground complex to broadcast empathic signals across the city to make the people easier to manipulate. Now that the emergency signals are sounding, he has been notified by one of his Dark Elf security force and has come personally to track down the offenders.

Let the characters get most of the way out. The fire has been spreading through the tunnels as they have fought their way out of the complex. They are now within a few hundred meters of the door they used to enter the complex. Hopefully, they will still have a couple of rounds left in their weapons.

You begin to recognize the tunnels that you used on the way in. The thick smoke from the fires is making it hard to breathe, not to mention find your way through.

You turn and look behind you briefly and see a dim figure striding through the smoke.

As it gets close, you can see that it is a human man, with flowing long dark hair and very pale skin. He is dressed in a long black coat that billows out behind him as he strides along.

He raises his pistol and fires at you...

MANCO, HM, CHIEF DARK MINION

Experience: Elite

Attributes: 7; INT 9, CHR 9, EMP 11

Skills: Human Empathy 12, Darkling Empathy 11, Project Thought 10, Project Emotion 11, Dimension Walk 8, Clairvoyance 8, Pyrokinesis 10, Mental Attack 11, Mind Shield 8, Psionic Scan 6, Telekinesis 5, Willpower Drain 7, Willpower 9, Persuasion 8, Psychology 5

Initiative: 4

Equipment: Desert Eagle .44 Magnum

For more details see Appendix 1.

Let the characters trade a few shots with him as he strides towards them. He is *very* empathic, but a heavy pistol is much easier under combat conditions and less taxing for him.

It would be good for the characters to actually hit him and knock him down. If need be, fake a couple of rolls so that the characters have gotten a lucky shot and managed to take him out.

One of your shots finds its mark and the dark figure goes down. He looks up at you with a sneer as the walls around him catch fire and he is hidden from sight by the smoke.

From here on, the characters will be able to make their way to the door they came in through and get out to some fresh air.

A BRIEF RESPITE

Let the characters get away from the underground tunnels of the TV station and back to the outside world. The characters will think that they have succeeded in their little quest, so for a while, let them think that. Give them a chance to get back to their vehicles without being molested by the inhabitants of the war zone. Remind them, however, that the region is still not friendly. There could be a pitched firefight taking place a couple of blocks further into the zone that has attracted the attention of the locals.

If the players parked their vehicles within a couple of blocks of the zone, then they are going to be in for a rude shock when they get back to them.

All they will find is the burnt out wrecks of the two vehicles. They have been stripped of anything even remotely useful, especially the ambulance and then the remains have been torched. When the characters get back to them, the remains will still be very hot and smoking.

As the characters are standing there looking at the remains of their smoldering vehicles, they will hear the rumble of thunder again and a light rain will start to fall as well. The storm is starting up again.

SHE'S COMING ROUND

As the characters are relaxing, Kirily starts to come round. She will be coughing because of all of the acrid smoke she has inhaled. She is also going to have a terrible headache from the empathic backlash of being dumped from the biocomputer.

The problem for the characters is that the psychic shock of the dumping has finally pushed Kirily to fully awakened empathic status. This has caused her a lot of pain and she is not going to be happy.

Kirily starts to stir. Her eyes start flutter and she starts to cough violently as her lungs finally register the volume of toxic smoke that she inhaled in the flight from the complex.

Let the characters try to help her climb back to full consciousness. She will be very groggy and will not be able to answer any questions other than very simple yes or no ones.

After a couple of minutes of this, her consciousness will snap to full attention as she realizes that she is not in the complex any more.

Kirily's eyes suddenly snap wide open and she jumps to her feet staring at you.

*"Who are you people?" she shouts. "How the hell did I get out here? Where the f**k is Damon?"*

She looks at you with the eyes of a cornered animal and starts backing away from you down the street.

*“You don’t realize what the f**k you’ve done! You bastards have taken away the only thing in my life that was worth having! You hear me?”*

Let the characters try to console her. But she will not let any of them get near her. If they try to grab her, she will fight like a wounded cat, kicking and scratching. If seriously cornered, or she is restrained, she will use her now formidable empathic powers on one or more of the characters to convince them that they should help her to escape.

KIRILY JENSEN, HF, AWAKENED NEUROPATH

Experience: Novice

Attributes: 5; INT 7, EMP 5

Skills: Human Empathy 4, Project Emotion 3, Melee Combat (Unarmed) 1, Streetwise 4

Initiative: 1

For more details see Appendix 1.

Shortly after this, she will make her break and go sprinting off back towards the zone, leaving the characters no option but to take up the chase again.

BACK TO THE ZONE

Kirily is not acting entirely on her own here. Manco, who dimension walked out of the complex, has established an empathic link with her and is feeding her mind instructions. He is guiding her to him, as he wants to get back at the characters.

The characters will have to chase Kirily down all sorts of back alleys, streets, ruined buildings and the like. Because she is getting help from the Dark Minion, she has a distinct advantage and will continually be finding ways to evade the characters.

During the chase, have the characters run into a new location and then make either a Difficult: Observation or an Average: Stalking roll to avoid losing contact with her. This should be easy enough for the characters to do.

One thing to keep in mind is that this is the war zone; the inhabitants are extremely territorial. Because the characters are running though the zone, they will be fired upon by random snipers. To simulate this, for each minute of game time, roll 1D20 for each character. If you get a 1 or a 2, then the character will take 1D6 damage to a random location (use the Hit Location table on P195 of the Player’s Handbook to determine location).

Eventually, Kirily will take a flight of stairs in an old office building up to the roof and the final showdown with Manco.

ON THE ROOF

The characters will follow Kirily up to the roof of the building. There are no doors blocking their way; the inhabitants of the zone stole them long ago for other purposes.

By the time the characters finally make it up to the roof of the building, the storm will have started again.

As you move out onto the roof of the old tower, you are pelted with heavy drops of rain. The storm has started again in earnest and lightning flashes light up the zone. You can hear the rattle of small arms fire over the rumble of the thunder as they people down below fight on regardless.

The rooftop appears to be deserted. Cooling towers for the building’s old air-conditioning units cover the roof and there is the remains of a communications mast on the northeast corner of the building.

The view from up here is quite impressive. You can easily see the neon towers of the downtown dreamland area off in the distance and the rest of the view is filled with the glow of the ’burbs, for almost as far as the eye can see.

Let the characters explore the rooftop looking for Kirily. As they come around the back of the building, read them the following:

As you come around the corner, you see a man in a full-length black coat, the strong wind billowing his coat and his long dark hair out behind him. He is standing defiantly in the open, his hands behind his back. Blood trickles from a cut on his left temple.

Kirily is standing one step behind him, looking over his shoulder. "That's them!" she cries. "They're the bastards who dragged me away from the complex!"

The guy smiles evilly at you. His eyes narrow and your weapons suddenly get incredibly hot, so hot you are forced to drop them.

"Kick them over here," he says menacingly. "You won't be needing them any more."

Manco is a very powerful psionic empath and he has just used his pyrokinesis ability to heat up the metal of the weapons the characters are carrying. He has had the characters in sight for at least two rounds, so he has had plenty of time to bring his empathic forces to bear on the weapons (for the rules lawyers in the audience).

The characters are now in a bit of a bind. They have no weapons to attack Manco and retrieve the girl and they are faced with an extremely powerful empath who can kill them using thought alone.

Refereeing this final showdown could be hard, depending on the players. It is their actions that will really determine the final outcome of this encounter.

The optimal solution to the problem lies not with a show of force at this point, but a show of love and tenderness. Early in the session, Dr. Kasprowitz told the characters that what Kirily needed most at the moment was love and affection, not force. This point was reiterated by the empath, Dylan Cadell.

The characters need to explain to Kirily that they are the ones that really care for her, not the man she is currently standing behind. Of course, this will not be easy and it will entail all of the characters working in unison to convince her. Having the locket and the tiger will also help their cause, as these are the things that she holds dear to the world.

If Gregory Neale makes himself know to her, then it will also help to convince her that what they are saying is the truth. Should Greg plead with her, the break in her resolve should be obvious to the characters.

Manco will be trying to convince her that she is perfect right where she is and will even use his empathic powers to full strength if he has to.

The main aim of the climax to the game is to get the players to do some serious emotional role-playing, instead of the usual combat mentality.

When you think that the players have done a good enough job of pleading with Kirily and making her see that there are people who really do care about her, then you can read them the following:

Kirily looks longingly at you, the tears welling in her eyes. She then looks at Manco and her eyes narrow and her face contorts into a mask of pure rage.

"You BASTARD!" she screams at him and pushes him with everything she has towards the edge of the building.

Manco grabs a hold of the remains of the communications tower and grins evilly at Kirily. "You stupid little wench! Don't you realize that I made you what you are? Without me you'd be just another homeless junkie, slowly going out of her puny little mind!"

He begins to haul himself upright and prepares himself for an attack.

The heavens seem to answer him. As if by magic, there is an immense clap of thunder and a huge bolt of lightning strikes the top of the communications tower.

Manco goes rigid with the sheer amount of energy pouring through him. He screams, the sound being drowned out by the remains of the thunderclap.

He finally lets go of the tower and staggers away from the tower towards you.

It is up to the players to finish Manco off however they please. They can either push him over the edge of the building, they can pick up their now cooling weapons and shoot him, or they can think of something else to kill him. This time, however, he will stay dead.

Kirily collapses to her knees, sobbing hysterically. "I'm so sorry!" she says. "I've been a complete idiot! Can you really help me?"

Should the players insist on using force to overcome Manco without convincing Kirily that she is loved and cared for, then feel free to kill one, some or all of them. Manco will not go without a fight; he will use his mental attack ability to try and kill Kirily. Even if she doesn't die, then she will be rendered mentally dead from the sheer force of the attack. Taking this option means that the players have effectively failed in their real mission.

THE AFTERMATH

What happens now is basically up to the players. They have defeated the Dark Minion, rescued the girl and saved the city, although they might not realize the last one.

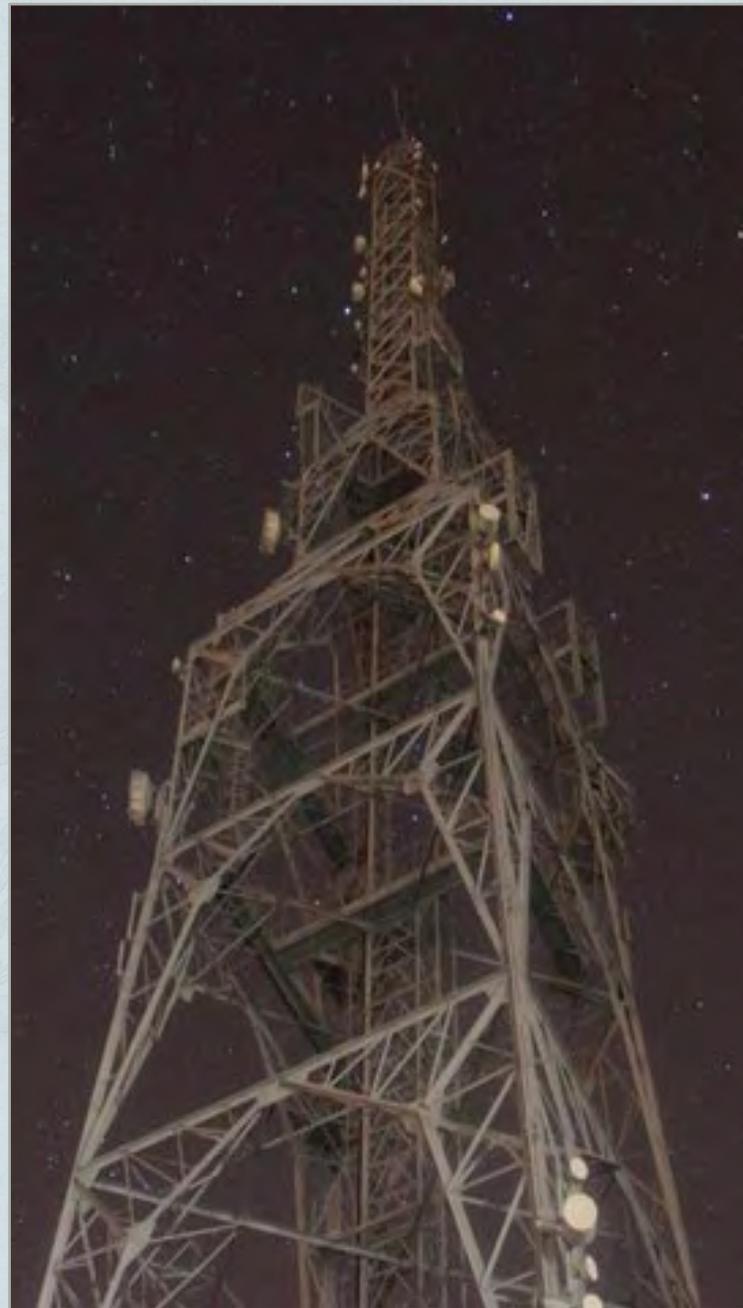
The first thing they have to do is get out of the war zone again. Fortunately for them, it is by now the very small hours of the morning and there is not much action happening in the zone. They should be able to get out easily.

Once out, they can answer their original calling, which was to bring her in for psychiatric evaluation and questioning about a murder case. If the players decide to go with this option, then that's about all that happens. She is taken in for evaluation and found to be criminally insane and is put away.

The other option is to contact Dylan Cadell on the number he gave them. Someone will pick them up and take them to a safehouse for a debriefing. Kirily will be interviewed separately, because the underground needs to know what the biocomputer was doing to her mind and what the Dark Minions were planning to do with her.

The characters will be questioned at length about what they have seen and learnt. Because they have proven themselves to be worthy, they will be offered membership of a new underground cell. They can continue in their current occupations, but they will need to feed any information about empathic occurrences or Dark Minion activity to the rest of the underground.

THE END.



APPENDIX 1

NON PLAYER CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

DR. CORNELIUS KASPROWITZ



Experience: Novice

Attributes: 4; INT 9, EDU 9, CHR 8, EMP 2

Skills: Medical 5, Psychology 11,
Human Empathy 2, Instruction 6,
Computer Operation 6,
Language (Polish) 10.

Initiative: 1

Motivation: *Queen of Hearts:* Dr. Kasprowitz has a very caring, altruistic nature and finds it necessary to help people through any emotional problems they are having. That was how he became involved with Kirily. *Six of Spades:* Dr. Kasprowitz wants to clear his name and win back his research tenure at the University.

Dr. Kasprowitz is a small man, with a very slight build. He is mostly bald, with the rest of his gray hair cropped short. He dressed in old clothes and wears a pair of round lensed glasses.

Until three years ago, Dr. Kasprowitz had been an eminent psychiatrist, famous for his research papers into the human mind and its workings. That was until he discovered some esoteric papers on empathic powers and started looking into it seriously.

He published a couple of papers dealing with the subject. He was quickly approached by government agents who gave him an ultimatum – “either join us or we will destroy you”.

He turned them down, only to become the target of a personal and professional smear campaign. He had a nervous breakdown after the University terminated his tenure and the last remnants of his career vanished.

For a year, he lived in a slum, drinking heavily. It has only been in the past twelve months that he has regained some self-confidence and has started his research again. He spent a considerable amount of time and money to reassemble some of his old professional library and started writing academic papers on the working of the minds again.

Within a few months, he met Kirily and realized that she was suffering from an imminent empathic awakening. Sensing that she had no one else to turn to, he took her under his wing and tried to help.

Things were going well until the Dark Elves started corrupting her mind and turning her against him. He finally sensed that she was beyond his help and called the hospital to arrange someone to pick her up.

DYLAN CADELL



Experience: Elite

Attributes: 7; STR 8, CON 9, EMP 6

Skills: Foreboding 8, Human Empathy 9, Project Thought 5, Project Emotion 7, Aura Reading 5, Enter the Astral Dimension 7, Psychic Tracking 9, Psychic Invisibility 6, Psyche Surgery 4, *Small Arms* (Pistol) 4, *Melee Combat* (Unarmed) 6, Stealth 5, Stalking 7.

Initiative: 4

Motivation: *Ace of Hearts:* Dylan has borne the brunt of a Dark Minion attack in the past and has managed to survive it. He is determined to free humanity from their grip and teach them to use their empathic powers wisely and safely. *Four of Clubs:* Dylan has seen his fair share of action against the Dark Minions and is not afraid to use force if need be.

Dylan Cadell stands about 175cm (5'9") tall, with broad shoulders and strong arms. It is quite easy to tell that this is a guy who works out a lot. His dark skin and dreadlocks make him look more like a gang member than the leader of an underground empathic cell. He dresses in black military style fatigues and wears an old tattered leather jacket.

As a child, Dylan had a way with both people and animals, which some found very unsettling. His parents were wage slaves for a large multinational corporation and they had him tested for mental disorders, fearing something was wrong with him. The corporation knew about empathic powers and immediately took Dylan away for psychic testing.

For nearly eight years, Dylan was subjected to whole battery of tests and teachings, which finally led to his empathic awakening. He began to suffer from paranoid delusions and managed to escape one night by starting a fire.

For three years he lived on the streets, only his empathic powers keeping him alive. It was in this time that he was nearly killed by the Dark Minions, who led him into a trap in order to murder him.

He was saved at the last minute by a raiding empathic underground cell, which took him away and taught him to use his powers properly.

Since that time, he has become an extremely powerful mystic and has risen through the ranks to become a powerful and respected leader in the underground. Because of his training, he quite often goes out alone looking for Dark Minion activity because he can focus more readily.

KIRILY JENSEN



Experience: Novice

Attributes: 5; INT 7, EMP 5

Skills: Human Empathy 2, Project Emotion 3,
Melee Combat (Unarmed) 1, Streetwise 4.

Initiative: 1

Motivation: *King of Diamonds:* Kirily has spent so long being paranoid that she thinks only of herself. She is trying to regain her sanity and will latch onto anything that she thinks will help her get her life back into order. Anything else is just getting in the way and will need to be disposed of. *Two of Clubs:* Kirily has used violence in the past to get away from situations that had frightened or upset her. This is why she is wanted in connection with a murder. She also stabbed Dr. Kasprowitz.

Kirily Jensen is about 160cm (5'3") tall, with long, blonde hair. Because she has been living on the streets recently, it is all dirty and matted. Her skin is very dry and has a few sores because of her poor diet. She has blue eyes that quite often look vacant these days, although she can have moments when her eyes are quite piercing.

Kirily used to be the girlfriend of Gregory Neale, although she called herself Jennifer Norbert in those days. She ran away from home after thinking that she didn't deserve him and was afraid she would disappoint him and he would leave her. She ran away to get herself straightened out so that she wouldn't fail him.

She has always been slightly mentally unstable and leaving someone who cared for her pushed her over the edge. She roamed the country for many years, working in a lot of unsavory places and spending a lot of time on drugs, trying to escape her life. She's gotten herself in such a mess that she doesn't even think of herself as Jennifer any more.

In the past twelve months, she has settled down although she is still very unstable emotionally. It was during this time that she met Dr. Kasprowitz who tried to help her. The problem was that she was also found by the Dark Elves who used empathic brainwashing to convert her to their cause and undo all of the hard work the Doctor has done.

When she finally gets to interact with the characters, she will have suffered her empathic awakening and will be extremely paranoid. It is only through kindness and love will she be able to break through the cycle of negativity that she has placed herself in and get herself truly on the road to recovery.

MANCO



Experience: Elite

Attributes: 7; INT 9, CHR 9, EMP 11

Skills: Human Empathy 12, Darkling Empathy 11, Project Thought 10, Project Emotion 11, Dimension Walk 8, Clairvoyance 8, Pyrokinesis 10, Mental Attack 11, Mind Shield 8, Psionic Scan 6, Telekinesis 5, Willpower Drain 7, Willpower 9, Persuasion 8, Psychology 8.

Initiative: 4

Motivation: *Queen of Spades:* Manco is completely ruthless in his desire to get control of the city. He has been working with his Dark Lord and the Dark Elves to make the biocomputer more powerful and it was his idea to gather the neuropaths to amplify the output of the transmitter. He does not care about the number of lives he ruins in the process. *King of Clubs:* Manco's aim is to bring the people of the city under his control by manipulating them empathically. In the process, he is prepared to kill, maim or torture to make sure that he achieves his goal.

Manco stands an imposing 196cm (6'5" tall). He has very long dark hair, with a slight curl in it that he tends to wear loose like a hood. He also has a penchant for long dark coats and designer suits. Perhaps the most noticeable feature of him is his very pale skin and dark piercing eyes, which looks as though they can see right through you.

Manco was once a human being, although his direct allegiance with the Dark Lord has altered him somewhat, making him far more powerful than he should be.

Once upon a time, he was a psychic test subject in a government laboratory. The Dark Lord who had only just been freed from his dimensional prison at that stage got in touch with Manco and a group of other inmates and helped them escape. In the years that followed, the escapees learnt much about the empathic powers from the Dark Lord and just about all of them swore their allegiance. Those that didn't perished.

His direct contact with the Dark Lord has made him more a Dark Elf than a human now and his mental attitudes have changed to match. He delights in mental anguish and pain, as it makes the subject far easier to manipulate. It was for this reason that he conceived and began construction of the biocomputer. The computer's main function is to create and broadcast an empathic signal to the city that will make people more depressed, more confrontational and much easier to manipulate emotionally.

Manco is determined to get control of the city. In the end, he plans to enter politics and finally get the city (and possibly more) in a cast iron grip that he alone will control.

PLAYER HANDOUT 1: CHARACTER VEHICLES



Damage Record
 Crewmembers: Driver
 Passengers: 1 2 3 4
 Sight/Vision: Night Vision Equipment
 Engine:
 Fuel (% Consumed or Destroyed):
 Suspension: Minor Damage Immobilized

Psychiatric Retrieval Team Ambulance

Ambulance (Unarmored Cargo Vehicle): Adapted from a standard city ambulance for use by the Psychiatric Retrieval Team, the PRT vehicle has enough room to hold the three crew members and two patients, as well as storage for test equipment and medical supplies.

Cruise Speed: 100/20
Combat Move: 45/8
Fuel Cap: 120
Fuel Cons: 8

Price: \$120,000
Duel Type: D, A
Load: 0.75 tons
Vehicle Weight: 2 tons
Crew: 1+2
Night Vision: Headlights

Combat Statistics
Config: Std HF: 1
Susp: W(2) HS: 1
HR: 1



Damage Record
 Crewmembers: Driver
 Passengers: 1 2 3
 Sight/Vision: Night Vision Equipment
 Engine:
 Fuel (% Consumed or Destroyed):
 Suspension: Minor Damage Immobilized

Unmarked Police Car

Police Car (Unarmored Cargo Vehicle): Like most cars assigned to plain clothes cops, this one is functional without being amazing well performing.

Cruise Speed: 90/15
Combat Move: 50/10
Fuel Cap: 120
Fuel Cons: 5

Price: \$20,000
Duel Type: G, A
Load: 0.5 tons
Vehicle Weight: 1.6 tons
Crew: 1+3
Night Vision: Headlights

Combat Statistics
Config: Std HF: 1
Susp: W(3) HS: 1
HR: 1



Damage Record
 Crewmembers: Driver
 Passengers: 1 2 3
 Sight/Vision: Night Vision Equipment
 Engine:
 Fuel (% Consumed or Destroyed):
 Suspension: Minor Damage Immobilized

Stina's Car

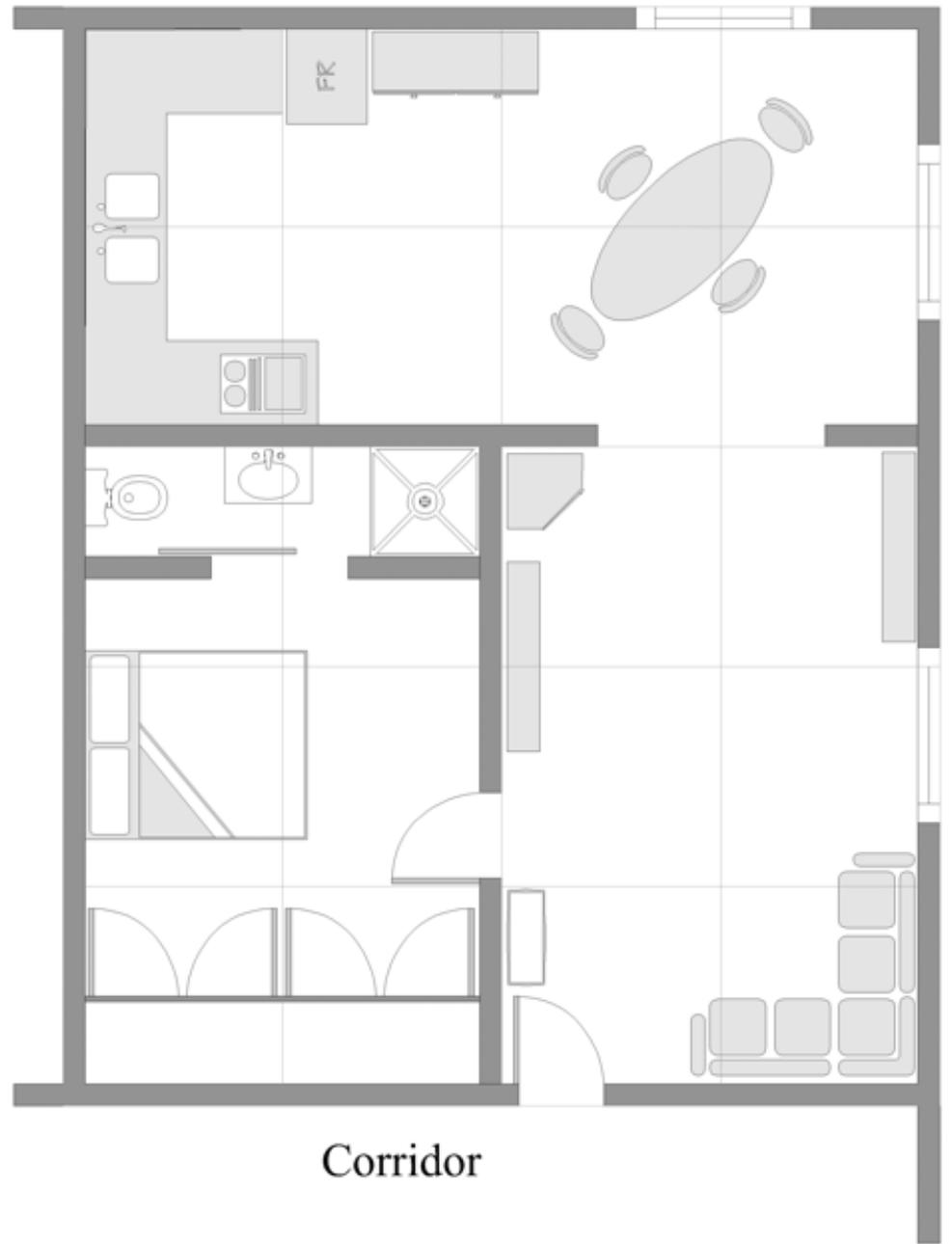
Civilian Car (Unarmored Cargo Vehicle): It has been a long time since this car was sitting in a showroom. It has definitely seen better days and is desperately in need of a service.

Cruise Speed: 90/15
Combat Move: 50/10
Fuel Cap: 120
Fuel Cons: 5

Price: \$15,000
Duel Type: G, A
Load: 0.5 tons
Vehicle Weight: 1.6 tons
Crew: 1+3
Night Vision: Headlights

Combat Statistics
Config: Std HF: 1
Susp: W(3) HS: 1
HR: 1

PLAYER HANDOUT 2: KIRILY'S APARTMENT



Corridor

LETTERS FROM KIRILY'S JEWELRY BOX:

PLAYER HANDOUT 3A

My Darling Jennifer,
This is just a little note to tell you just how much I love you. You mean the world to me. Life has been so much better since I met you and I never want to lose you. I don't know what I would do if I did.

All my love
Greg
♥

PLAYER HANDOUT 3B

I met Damon today. He's a bit wierd, but he's very cute. We got to talking and he really seemed to know what I was feeling. I've never met anyone like him before.

I ended up telling him all about how Derek had left one night. I couldn't help it, I just broke down into tears. He was so caring. He's even better than the old man upstairs.

I've never met anyone like Damon before. It's almost as if he knows what I am thinking. Even though I've only just met him, he seems to really care about me.

Damon thinks that he might be able to get me a job with the company he works for. He didn't tell me too much, other than "they're always looking for people like you".

I hope I get to meet him again.

LETTERS FROM KIRILY'S JEWELRY BOX:

PLAYER HANDOUT 3C

I finally got to see Damon again today. It's been over a week since I saw him last. I missed seeing him. He makes me feel like there is someone in the world who does care.

Damon said that his company is interested in having me come take their test. He still hasn't said exactly what the job is, or even where it is, but he has said that it has to do with broadcasting.

Damon has said that if I want the job, I have to get there by myself. When I told him I didn't know where to go, he just told me to "listen to my feelings and they would guide me there."

He also said to bring the "liquid metal." Then he left. He can be so very confusing. I think he enjoys speaking in riddles.

I've lain awake at night wondering if this job is worth it, but something in me won't let me settle. I feel as though I am being drawn to a place not far from here, somewhere I belong.

PLAYER HANDOUT 3D

I think I have figured out where I have to go. I woke up last night and all I could think about was some old TV station. I drew a picture of it so that I wouldn't forget. I think that it's not far from here.

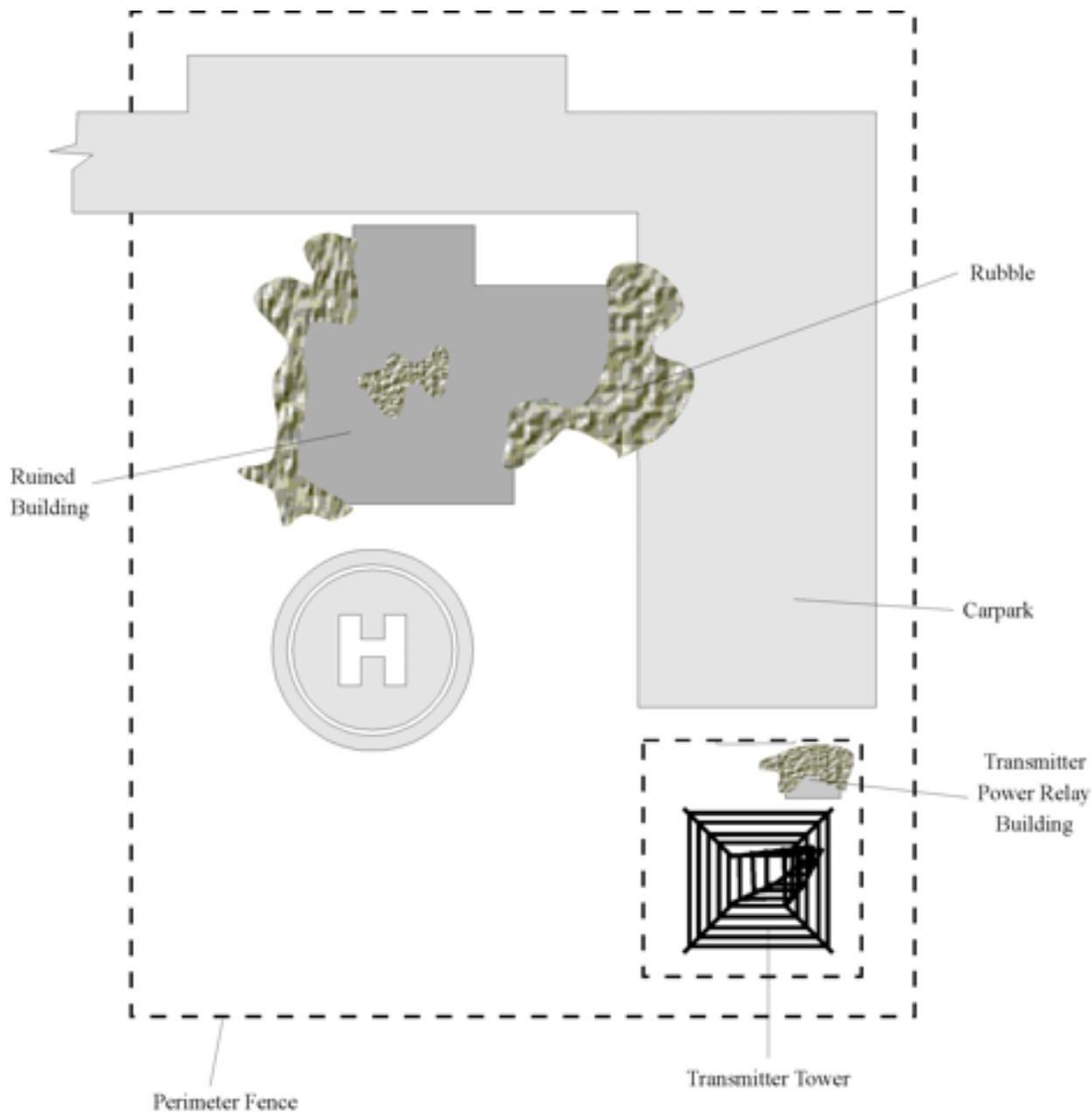
I saw Damon again today. I told him what I had seen and he just smiled and said "well, I always knew you were good. You just have to get in now." I think I've figured out what the "liquid metal" is as well. I just have to find some. I guess I'll see if I'm right in a day or so.

Damon told me that I'll be working with him if I get in. I can't think of anyone I'd rather work with. I'm so glad I met him. He's changed my life so much. I can't wait until I can get away from the old man as well. It will be good to finally get to be with someone who really cares.

PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

PLAYER HANDOUT 4:

MAP OF THE TELEVISION
STATION COMPLEX



FOR DARK CONSPIRACY 2ND EDITION

THOUGHTS RUN WILD....

PROTODIMENSION MAGAZINE

MARTIN LAMBERT
MALE HOMICIDE DETECTIVE

STRENGTH	6
Small Arms (Pistol)	4/10
CONSTITUTION	7
AGILITY	8
Electronics	1/9
Stealth	2/10
INTELLIGENCE	6
Observation	5/11
Stalking	4/10
Streetwise	2/8
Vehicle Use (Wheeled)	2/8
Willpower	3/9
EDUCATION	6
Business	1/7
Computer Operation	4/10
CHARISMA	5
Interrogation	5/10
Language (English)	10/15
Language (French)	1/6
Leadership	2/7
Luck	2/7
Persuasion	2/7
EMPATHY	0
Age:	41
Hair Color:	Brown
Eye Color:	Brown
Height:	172 cm
Weight:	72 kg
Load:	39 kg
Initiative:	3
Throw Range:	24 m
Unarmed Cmbt Damage:	1

Base Hit Numbers

Skill	Short	Med	Long	Extr
Small Arms (Pistol)	20	10	5	2

Hit Capacity

Current	Scratch	Slight	Serious	Critical
<i>Head</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="14"/>	<input type="text" value=">14"/>
<i>Chest</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="10"/>	<input type="text" value="20"/>	<input type="text" value="40"/>	<input type="text" value=">40"/>
<i>Abdomen</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="13"/>	<input type="text" value="26"/>	<input type="text" value=">26"/>
<i>Right Arm</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="13"/>	<input type="text" value="26"/>	<input type="text" value=">26"/>
<i>Left Arm</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="13"/>	<input type="text" value="26"/>	<input type="text" value=">26"/>
<i>Right Leg</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="13"/>	<input type="text" value="26"/>	<input type="text" value=">26"/>
<i>Left Leg</i>				
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="6"/>	<input type="text" value="13"/>	<input type="text" value="26"/>	<input type="text" value=">26"/>

Equipment

Beretta M9 Automatic Pistol
2 15 round magazines
Shoulder Holster
RamTech Bodyguard Kevlar Vest
Police Identification
Metal Handcuffs
Maglight Torch
CompuPad
Portaphone

HISTORY:

Ever since you were a little kid, you wanted to be a cop. That's all there was to life. All your subjects at school were all geared towards you becoming a policeman. You went to Technical School after you graduated from High School, but that was only to please your father, who wanted you to make something of yourself.

But your dream would not go away. So after you finished school, you enlisted in the police force to make your dream come true.

You enjoyed life as a uniformed cop and it was during this time that you met and married Shauna. She loved being a policeman's wife, despite the strange hours that you were forced to work.

After four years in uniform, you felt the pangs of ambition again and transferred to the detective branch. You worked on a range of break and enters, armed holdups and other minor crimes and achieved quite a success rate. It was probably that success rate that saw you transferred to Homicide.

Hunting down murderers was really what you had been craving for years. You felt that finally you had a chance to be a real cop, chasing the people who made life hell for the families of the victims. Each time you helped put someone away, you felt a little better.

But your time in Homicide took its toll on your marriage. Instead of the warm caring man that Shauna had married, you hardened as your mind tried to find a way to deal with some of the horrific murders that you had to solve. Over time, you found that you were less and less able to talk about you feelings and subconsciously drove Shauna away.

Shauna couldn't handle the changes. In the end, she walked out on you just less than five years after you had started with Homicide. Your partner tried to convince you to give it up, but you were passionate about the work and couldn't bear to be away from it.

Your divorce was never settled either. Two days before the papers were due to be signed, Shauna's body was found in a car park of a shopping mall.

You came very close to a nervous breakdown then. Despite your protestations, your superiors wouldn't let you handle the case because it was too close. You did everything you could to find out what was going on in the case, but you were constantly shut off from it.

They caught the killer, but she was placed in an insane asylum instead of prison. Her lawyer managed to convince the jury that she was not in conscious control of her mind at the time of the killing and should be treated accordingly.

Your superiors forced you to take a sabbatical after that. You did twelve months doing fingerprint analysis in the labs and would probably still be there if they hadn't needed your skill and expertise back in Homicide.

You've been back there for a while now. But it's not the same. Your enthusiasm for the job has pretty much gone and your approach to solving the crimes has lost the intuitive spark that had made you so successful before. Whether you'll ever get that back remains to be seen.

Sometimes, even now, Shauna appears in your dreams with the same message: that the person who killed her was just a puppet. A force that is far more sinister and evil was controlling them. But you've just dismissed the dream as just a product of your mind.

Recently, you have started seeing Yvette, a French Canadian woman who is working for one of the megacorporations. Things are starting to go well between the two of you, but the guilt over Shauna is holding you back. You have not allowed yourself to get to close to her, but you want to. You just have to get rid of the ghosts that haunt you first.

PERSONALITY:

You've been depressed a lot since Shauna's death. You've had counseling for it, but it hasn't helped as much as it should. You still blame yourself for her death.

The depression tends to make you snappy and irritable. Most of the time, you just tend to get really frustrated when things don't go the way you expected them to. You've managed to avoid flying into a violent rage so far. It's not in your nature to hurt someone and you'd be horrified if you lost control and lashed out at someone.

One thing you have managed to keep is your tenacity when it comes to work. If you start something, you like to see it all the way through to the end. It's probably why you're still with Homicide; you're not as quick as you used to be, but you still get the job done in the end.

Deep down, you really do care about people's well being. It's what led you to being a cop in the first place. People need to feel safe and happy, and it's really what makes you tick. It's the thing that Shauna fell in love with and what Yvette has started bringing out in you again.

OPINIONS OF THE OTHERS:

Gregory Neale: Neale's been your partner since Jock retired last year. Someone in Internal Affairs felt that you should be put with someone a little more considerate to the victims. He's too soft at the moment, but a couple of more years in Homicide will harden him up, just like it did to you.

Apparently, he wanted to be a hotshot FBI agent. Even went to law school and all that sort of crap. Didn't make the cut that year though. So now he's here. Sometimes you wish he would quite with the pseudo lawyer crap though.

You've sensed he's looking for something. He loves to prowl through the old files as though he's after something. He says that he can find clues about whatever case you happen to be working on, but there's something else going on as well. Whatever it is, he's not talking.

Dr. Sarah Lawton: Dr. Lawton is probably a pretty good shrink; you had to go and see her after Shauna was killed. But she insists on running round with the Psychiatric Retrieval Team. She has no idea how to look after herself in the real world. It's lucky she hasn't gotten herself killed. She needs to go back to her rich daddy and leave the mess in the streets to the people who can actually do something about it.

Juan Martinez: Juan is a guy you actually have a lot of respect for. You've had some time to talk to him a bit in the past. He used to be a Marine and saw some heavy action in the Middle East a while back. Now he's one of the paramedics on the Psychiatric Retrieval Team. He's a caring guy who has managed to keep his faith in God despite all the crap he has faced.

Jarell Delaney: Delaney is another paramedic with the Psychiatric Retrieval Team. He's a lot different from Martinez; he's a lot harsher. You've heard that he's on probation about his attitude. One more strike and he's out. You've also heard that he used to be a big shot martial artist once upon a time. Given the way he moves, it is possible.

Stina Quilan: Quilan is a mixed up girl who you arrested a couple of years back for armed holdup. She used to be a street kid and got in with the wrong crowd. Since she got out of prison, she's become a

semi-decent private eye. She passed some information to you a couple of times. She's even seems to have stopped hating you for putting her away. She seems to have had a few really weird cases over the past few months though. Not quite sure where she's getting them from.

CURRENT SITUATION:

"Hell of a storm out there tonight," said Poole as he walked into the office.

Greg Neale turned around to face Poole. "From what I heard on the radio, it's supposed to be one of the biggest in years."

Poole shrugged. "I'm just glad I don't work in traffic control any more. I'd hate to be out in that mess. But I didn't come here to talk about the weather. I've got something for you guys."

Martin looked up from his paperwork. "You've got that five bucks you owe me?"

"Better," said Poole, as he pulled up a chair. "You know that stiff you guys pulled from the dumpster?"

"Yep," said Greg. "All we've got to go on is the description of the girl who told the black and white about the body. She shot through before they could stop her."

"Yeah, we might have found her. We've just had word come in from the hospital. An anonymous tip off has just come in. Sounds like we've found her."

Martin raised an eyebrow. "So what are we talking? This woman's in emergency with stab wounds and all that sort of crap? Can't talk to her for days?"

Poole smirked. "Nope. Nothing like that. It was the Psychs who called in. The tip came from someone who suggested they should come and pick this chick up. She's lost it, apparently. The description matched the one we sent across last week, so they called us in. The psych team is going to meet you there."

Martin rolled his eyes. "Another baby sitting job, eh?"

Greg looked at the exasperation in his partner's eyes. "Could be worse Marty, she could be a homicidal maniac."

Martin sighed. "Oh well, let's get this one over with. This case has been bugging me since we got it. All we've got is some old homeless guy with his head bashed in and a missing girl. I hate cases like this. The public thinks we can pull results out of thin air."

"Well, this should make things a bit easier for you guys," said Poole, as he fished a piece of paper from his top pocket. He handed it to Greg.

"Kirily Jensen. 15234 Birch Street. Apartment 27, sixth floor apparently. Rough part of town. Make sure you're loaded for bear."

Greg glanced at the address and stuffed the paper into the pocket of his jacket. "Right. Guess we'll talk to you later on. You ready Martin, you don't look so good tonight."

Martin got to his feet slowly and pulled the coat from the back of his chair. "I'm just not keen on going out in this storm. Oh well, better get going. The quicker we get this over with the quicker we can knock off for the evening."

GREGORY NEALE
MALE HOMICIDE DETECTIVE

STRENGTH 6
Small Arms (Pistol) 3/9

CONSTITUTION 6
Swimming 2/8

AGILITY 5
INTELLIGENCE 7

Observation 4/11
Psychology 3/10
Stalking 2/9
Vehicle Use (Wheeled) 2/9

EDUCATION 7
Computer Operation 4/11

CHARISMA 6
Act/Bluff 2/8
Bargain 1/7
Interrogation 4/10
Language (English) 10/16
Luck 1/7
Persuasion 6/12

EMPATHY 0

Age: 33
Hair Color: Blonde
Eye Color: Blue
Height: 170 cm
Weight: 80 kg
Load: 36 kg
Initiative: 2
Throw Range: 24 m
Unarmed Cmbt Damage: 1

Base Hit Numbers

Skill	Short	Med	Long	Extr
Small Arms (Pistol)	18	9	4	2

Hit Capacity

	Current	Scratch	Slight	Serious	Critical
Head	3	6	12	>12	
Chest	9	18	36	>36	
Abdomen	6	12	24	>24	
Right Arm	6	12	24	>24	
Left Arm	6	12	24	>24	
Right Leg	6	12	24	>24	
Left Leg	6	12	24	>24	

Equipment

- Beretta M9 Automatic Pistol
- 2 15 round magazines
- Shoulder Holster
- RamTech Bodyguard Kevlar Vest
- Police Identification
- Maglight Torch
- Metal Handcuffs
- CompuPad
- Portaphone

HISTORY:

It's funny the way things work out sometimes. Where you are now can be basically traced back to one event when you were at high school.

You had been going out with a girl named Jennifer Norbert. You were convinced that she was the one you for you. You had been planning on asking her to marry you right after you had graduated from High School. You'd even given her the Celtic knot-work locket that used to belong to your late grandmother. You'd do anything for her.

But then one day she just left. Months later, you got a letter from her, saying that she didn't deserve you and that she was sorry. She had to go and find a way to get herself together.

You never heard from her again. You tried contacting the police, but they didn't have the time or the resources to chase it up.

It was about then that you decided to join the FBI. You may never be able to track down Jennifer, but it was possible that you might be able to help other parents and relatives who had lost loved ones, either to kidnappers or worse, murderers.

After finishing high school, you enrolled in what was to become the first of many years at university. The FBI needed people with Law degrees, which meant that you had to make it through an undergraduate degree first. You picked psychology as a major, as you thought it would make it easier to understand the criminal mind later on.

Going through University and then Law School made it that little bit easier to avoid relationships. You were always "too busy", either with study, or the amateur theater you did to give yourself a break from the books. You were afraid to love someone again in case they left as well. You didn't think you could lose someone like that again. You dated a couple of times, but you always broke it off before it got too serious.

You loved your time at law school. There was even a period where you thought that you would enjoy being a lawyer more. But deep down, you were still searching for the truth and to you the FBI was the only way.

You graduated from Law School with second class honors, and then put in your application with the Bureau. You made it through the entry tests, the interviews and the medicals, only to have your application passed over for another candidate during the final selection process.

You were nearly suicidal, your dream slipping through your fingers at the final moment. Had it not been for a young mother on television

one night pleading with the kidnapers of her six-year-old daughter, you might have done something very stupid.

Instead, that appeal touched something in you and the next day, you applied for the local police force instead. It might not be the FBI, but it would still give you the chance to search.

Your first four years were in uniform and they passed without much incident. Your high levels of education gained you some scorn from some of your fellow police officers, but your thorough research abilities, gained from long hours in a university library, proved to be invaluable and you were promoted and moved to Homicide.

That was twelve months ago now. Your knowledge of the law and your research skills have proven invaluable since then, as you are quite prepared to pore over the mountains of information in the computer looking for the subtle little pieces of information that could crack a case wide open.

You've also been searching for information about Jennifer, hoping that you might find anything that would give you a sense of closure, so that you could get on with the rest of your life.

PERSONALITY:

If there is one thing that people describe you as, it's patient. You were never really in a rush to do anything and years at law school have taught you being unprepared can be disastrous. You love to pore over the old information looking for the new angle that would provide the answers.

Deep down, you're searching as well – searching for the answer as to why Jennifer left you and her family the way she did. You still think of her every day. But you feel so frustrated that you cannot find anything. In this, you're running out of patience.

People have always described you as compassionate. It helps when you are talking to the families of murder victims. They open up more to you, which makes your job easier in the end.

OPINIONS OF THE OTHERS:

Martin Lambert: Lambert has been your partner since you were promoted to homicide. You've heard some stories about how good a homicide detective he used to be, coming up with these flashes of inspiration that could crack a case wide open. The Captain has even said that you remind him of how Martin used to be. But since a

mentally ill woman murdered his wife, those flashes have gone and he is much more orthodox in his approach now.

Martin seems to be down a lot of the time now. He still is determined in his work, but it really seems to be hollow for him. You hope that one day soon he will be able to get past the pain inside and get back to being a really good cop, one that really cares about the people, not just the cases.

Dr. Sarah Lawton: Dr. Lawton is a psychiatrist with the Psychiatric Retrieval Team. She seems a bit out of place there. From what you've heard, she got pretty well off. You get the impression that she got bored with the high-class clients and decided to try and make a difference in the world. You get on pretty well with her and although you've thought of asking her to dinner a couple of times, your unresolved feelings for Jennifer keep getting in the way.

Juan Martinez: Martinez is one of the best paramedics on the Psychiatric Retrieval Team. He really seems to care about the patients and will go out of his way to make sure that they bring in the people they are sent out to help. You're not quite sure why he cares so much, but you suspect that it has something to do with his time in the Marine Corps.

Jarell Delaney: Delaney is a complete contrast to Martinez. Where Martinez is compassionate about the people they are helping, Delaney tends to treat them more like lumps of meat. Apparently, his attitude has landed him in hot water with the Hospital authorities a well. One more slip up and he's going to be fired.

Stina Quilan: Quilan is an ex-con who's now making a living as a private investigator. Apparently Martin busted her a few years back for armed robbery. From the half dozen times or so you've met her, you get the impression that she's got the makings of a decent investigator. She does seem to get few really weird cases though.

CURRENT SITUATION:

"Hell of a storm out there tonight," said Poole as he walked into the office.

Greg Neale turned around to face Poole. "From what I heard on the radio, it's supposed to be one of the biggest in years."

Poole shrugged. "I'm just glad I don't work in traffic control any more. I'd hate to be out in that mess. But I didn't come here to talk about the weather. I've got something for you guys."

Martin looked up from his paperwork. "You've got that five bucks you owe me?"

"Better," said Poole, as he pulled up a chair. "You know that stiff you guys pulled from the dumpster?"

"Yep," said Greg. "All we've got to go on is the description of the girl who told the black and white about the body. She shot through before they could stop her."

"Yeah, we might have found her. We've just had word come in from the hospital. An anonymous tip off has just come in. Sounds like we've found her."

Martin raised an eyebrow. "So what are we talking? This woman's in emergency with stab wounds and all that sort of crap? Can't talk to her for days?"

Poole smirked. "Nope. Nothing like that. It was the Psychs who called in. The tip came from someone who suggested they should come and pick this chick up. She's lost it, apparently. The description matched the one we sent across last week, so they called us in. The psych team is going to meet you there."

Martin rolled his eyes. "Another baby sitting job, eh?"

Greg looked at the exasperation in his partner's eyes. "Could be worse Marty, she could be a homicidal maniac."

Martin sighed. "Oh well, let's get this one over with. This case has been bugging me since we got it. All we've got is some old homeless guy with his head bashed in and a missing girl. I hate cases like this. The public thinks we can pull results out of thin air."

"Well, this should make things a bit easier for you guys," said Poole, as he fished a piece of paper from his top pocket. He handed it to Greg. "Kirily Jensen. 15234 Birch Street. Apartment 27, sixth floor apparently. Rough part of town. Make sure you're loaded for bear."

Greg glanced at the address and stuffed the paper into the pocket of his jacket. "Right. Guess we'll talk to you later on. You ready Martin, you don't look so good tonight."

Martin got to his feet slowly and pulled the coat from the back of his chair. "I'm just not keen on going out in this storm. Oh well, better get going. The quicker we get this over with the quicker we can knock off for the evening."

DR. SARAH LAWTON
FEMALE PSYCHIATRIST

STRENGTH 3

Small Arms (Pistol) 1/4

CONSTITUTION 6

Swimming 2/8

AGILITY 5

INTELLIGENCE 8

Observation 4/12

Psychology 8/16

Vehicle Use (Wheeled) 2/9

Willpower 3/11

EDUCATION 9

Biology 3/12

Chemistry 2/11

Computer Operation 4/13

Medical 6/15

CHARISMA 6

Language (English) 10/16

Luck 4/10

Persuasion 3/9

EMPATHY 0

Age: 37

Hair Color: Blonde

Eye Color: Blue

Height: 163 cm

Weight: 57 kg

Load: 27 kg

Initiative: 1

Throw Range: 12 m

Unarmed Cmbt Damage: 1

Hit Capacity

Current Scratch Slight Serious Critical

Head

3	6	12	>12
---	---	----	-----

Chest

8	16	32	>32
---	----	----	-----

Abdomen

5	10	20	>20
---	----	----	-----

Right Arm

5	10	20	>20
---	----	----	-----

Left Arm

5	10	20	>20
---	----	----	-----

Right Leg

5	10	20	>20
---	----	----	-----

Left Leg

5	10	20	>20
---	----	----	-----

Equipment

High Standard .22 Automatic Pistol
1 10 round magazines

Hip Holster
RamTech Bodyguard Kevlar Vest

Psychiatric Retrieval Unit Identification
Doctor's Medical Kit

CompuPad
Portaphone

Base Hit Numbers

Skill	Short	Med	Long	Extr
Small Arms (Pistol)	8	4	2	1

History:

Life nowadays is more exciting than it used to be. You volunteered for the pickup team that ventures out into the parts of the city and bring back sick people before they can do harm to themselves or someone else. Your father doesn't approve, but he is too polite to say anything.

Getting a decent education had always been a priority in your family. Your parents had both worked as executives for a large multi-national corporation, and they had ensured you had the best schooling money could buy.

You haven't always been interested in the workings of the human mind. It wasn't until your first year at university when you picked up Carl Jung's works on dream analysis in your father's library. It changed the whole course of the study you were doing. You ended up with a double major in Biology and Psychology and started yourself on the road to becoming a psychiatrist.

By now, you had become fascinated with the workings of the human mind and were determined to end up working in the field. You surveyed your options and decided that being a psychiatrist would be best. But that meant more study – medical school and a Master's degree in Science.

After graduating with your Bachelor of Science, you continued straight into medical school. It was incredibly hard work, but you persevered and managed to graduate with honors. Some of your professors were dismayed to learn that you planned to study more psychology instead of working in medicine.

You took a brief holiday after finishing Medical School and toured all over Europe, before returning to the US and graduate school. Again you studied hard, producing a thesis on the self-image problems of suicide attemptees. Your paper was very well received and you finally left university to work as a psychiatrist.

You began with a fairly normal therapy practice, helping corporate employees with all manners of mental problems. Stock Brokers and Senior Executives suffering from stress problems were your normal clients over the first few years and you built up quite a reputation as the person to see.

But it really wasn't fulfilling. You found after a couple of years that you had been happier talking to ordinary people with more serious mental problems while you were researching your Master's thesis. That was the kind of work that you longed for.

So you started working part time for the city, helping to interview and counsel criminals for the police as well as other mentally ill patients in the General Hospitals. The variety of patients that you were seeing proved to be much more fulfilling for you as a professional.

The only problem was some of the misguided individuals you sometimes had to work with. There were a couple of young Doctors who believed that the human mind possessed higher powers that science knew nothing about. They worked the hospitals trying to find cases to support their theories. You had quite a lot of heated arguments with them, trying to convince them of the errors of their ways. Most of them didn't stay long in the hospitals. They all seemed to get attracted by the bright lights and glamour of the corporations.

About a year ago, the government formed a task group to try and curb the number of people committing crimes while suffering from mental disorders. To that end, you volunteered on help on the Psychiatric Retrieval Team, whose task is to go out onto the streets and pick up patients suffering from mental problems and bring them in before they harm themselves or someone else. So far, it's been quite exciting, although it has been frightening at times. You've even had to learn to use a pistol as some of the areas you go into are bordering on the uncontrolled zones.

PERSONALITY:

Your years of exposure to scientific principles have made you very clinical in your thinking. You tend to analyze things to a great extent when faced with a tough problem, drawing on your vast amounts of reading and experience. This also extends to your own thinking, which you tend to analyze at great lengths when you have the time.

It does tend to make you very cynical about the world though. You have seen all sorts of mental problems in people that have been caused by quite simple things. Unfortunately, there are factions in the population who insist on coming up with some mystical mumbo-jumbo to explain.

Having grown up in a very luxurious setting, you sometimes have difficulty in coming to grips that not everyone lives like that. While it is becoming less obvious, you still tend to think and act like a rich person. Unfortunately, most people seem to treat you like a little rich girl. For some reason, this really annoys you and you would like to prove to them that you really can handle it out in the field.

OPINIONS OF THE OTHERS:

Martin Lambert: You met Detective Lambert a few years back when a mentally ill woman murdered his wife. Despite his protestations that he didn't need counseling, he was sent to see you and only came a couple of times. He hides his pain and pretends that he is all right. As a result, he tends to suffer from bouts of depression. He needs to find a way to express the pain he has been carrying for a lot of years.

Gregory Neale: Detective Neale is a very pleasant young man, but you sense he is hiding something. You've met him a few times when you have assessed mentally ill people that the police have wanted for questioning and found his manner quite charming. You've even contemplated inviting him for dinner sometime.

Juan Martinez: Juan is a model paramedic. He is one of the best on the Psychiatric Retrieval Team because he really does seem to care about the patients you are sent out to collect. His faith in God may have something to do with that, but from the little things that he has said, you think there is some sort of deeper psychological drive forcing him to do good.

Jarell Delaney: Delaney is black to Martinez's white. Delaney has been cautioned on more than once about the way he deals with the patients. He really just does not seem to care about their well being. You've been asked to keep an eye on him and report any foul-ups. He's only got one more chance. If he blows that, he's out. You've tried a couple of times to offer a helping hand to sort through his emotional problems, but he does not seem the slightest bit interested.

Stina Quilan: Stina is a private investigator who you've run into a couple of times. Her work tends to end up calling in the psychiatric retrieval unit to pick up some patients. For some reason, she tends to get cases picking up some seriously disturbed people. You've often wondered about why she spends so much time and effort tracking down sick people.

CURRENT SITUATION:

Sarah picked up the phone while she continued reading the article in front of her. "Yes, Patricia?" she mumbled.

"I have Dr. Williams on line 1," said Patricia. "He says it is quite urgent."

"Thanks, Patricia, put him through."

There was a clicking as the phone line switched through.

"Sarah, how are things with you this evening?"

Sarah sighed. "Not too bad, Phillip, thank you. I'd be much happier if I could find five minutes to finish this article though."

"Oh, which one is that?" asked Phillip.

"Kasprowitz from a few years back now. 'Possible Causes for Paranoid Delusions.'"

"Any good? I don't think I have seen that one."

"It's a complete load of crap. Kasprowitz had done some excellent work early on, but he went the same way as Jung and started with the mumbo-jumbo. It ended up with him being disgraced and thrown out of his tenure. Last time I heard, he was on the bottle. Why the hell do damn fine psychiatrists insist that there must be some sort of metaphysical answer for these sorts of problems?"

"I have no idea," said Phillip. "When you've finished with it, can you send it over? I'm interested in having a look at it. Oh well, enough small talk. I'm afraid I have something far more urgent. The hospital's just had a call. Something about a young woman suffering from delusions of persecution about a mile from the War Zone. You're on call, tonight, so I thought I had better give you a call and give you the heads up."

Damn, thought Sarah. I was hoping for an early night tonight.

"Damn, oh well, I guess this is what I get paid for. Any details on the patient?"

Phillip snorted. "Nope, other than a name. Kirily Jensen. The paramedics have the rest of the details. Come on, what did you expect? A patient file or something?"

"Well I thought I might get something a bit better of 'delusions of persecution' though."

"Not much to tell," said Phillip. "Some old foreign guy rings through and says 'there is a girl downstairs suffering from delusions of persecution. I have tried to help her, but there is nothing more I can do. I'm afraid that she'll get hurt unless she gets some professional help soon.'"

"That's it?" said Sarah. "We're going out on that?"

"Pretty much. We've gone out on less before. You know that. Oh, one more thing, the cops are in on this one as well. They think this is the one

who found the dead guy in the dumpster last week and then vanished as soon as she had told the police."

Sarah sighed. "Oh, great! This is going to be a really fun evening. OK, I'll get my things together. I'll meet the ambulance downstairs in five minutes."

"Excellent. I'll let them know. Good hunting, Sarah. Talk to you when you bring her in."

"Night Phillip. See you later."

Sarah hung up then pressed the button for the intercom. "Patricia, I've been called out. I may be out all night. Can you reschedule the appointments for the morning, I don't think I'll be up to seeing anyone first thing."

JUAN MARTINEZ

MALE PARAMEDIC

STRENGTH	5
Mechanic	1/6
Melee Combat (Armed)	1/6
Melee Combat (Unarmed)	3/8
Small Arms (Rifle)	3/8
CONSTITUTION	7
Swimming	1/8
AGILITY	5
INTELLIGENCE	6
Psychology	2/6
Streetwise	2/6
Vehicle Use (Wheeled)	6/12
EDUCATION	4
Biology	1/5
Computer Operation	1/5
Medical	5/9
CHARISMA	7
Bargain	1/8
Language (English)	10/17
Language (Spanish)	10/17
Luck	2/9
EMPATHY	1
Foreboding	1/2
Human Empathy	3/4
Project Emotion	1/2
Age:	33
Hair Color:	Black
Eye Color:	Brown
Height:	165
Weight:	80kg
Load:	36kg
Initiative:	3
Throw Range:	20 m
Unarmed Cmbt Damage:	1

Hit Capacity

<i>Current</i>	<i>Scratch</i>	<i>Slight</i>	<i>Serious</i>	<i>Critical</i>
<i>Head</i>				
<input type="text"/>	3	7	14	>14
<i>Chest</i>				
<input type="text"/>	9	19	36	>36
<i>Abdomen</i>				
<input type="text"/>	6	12	24	>24
<i>Right Arm</i>				
<input type="text"/>	6	12	24	>24
<i>Left Arm</i>				
<input type="text"/>	6	12	24	>24
<i>Right Leg</i>				
<input type="text"/>	6	12	24	>24
<i>Left Leg</i>				
<input type="text"/>	6	12	24	>24

Equipment

H&K MP-7 Submachinegun
 3 30 round magazines
 Stun Stick
 RamTech Bodyguard Kevlar Vest
 Psychiatric Retrieval Unit Identification
 Maglight Torch
 Doctor's Medical Kit
 Disposal Handcuffs x 2
 CompuPad
 Portaphone

Base Hit Numbers

<i>Skill</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>Med</i>	<i>Long</i>	<i>Extr</i>
Small Arms (Rifle)	16	8	4	2

HISTORY:

As a child, you only ever aspired to getting out of the 'burbs where your parents lived and worked. Neither of them had particularly good jobs, so you never got a particularly good education. This was probably what led you to join the Marines as soon as you were able.

You relished life in the Marines. The discipline of the Corps was good for you and you really felt at home there. Until you saw combat.

The action in Syria was where you saw combat for the first time. You had grown up thinking it was glorious and glamorous; you found out the hard way that the reality is a long way from the legends.

You saw friends blown apart by mortar shells and comrades run over by tanks that they were trying to stop. Somehow, you knew when to get down and when to move – it was if you had a guardian angel that kept you safe. You managed to survive all the action without a scratch.

But the worst thing was that you had to leave some of the boys behind, alive, because you could not carry them all out when you were evacuated. Their screams haunted you in your sleep for months after that. So to try and fend them off, you transferred to the medical corps as a paramedic.

You were awarded for bravery under fire twice during your remaining time in action. But you never told them that you didn't do it for the glory – you did it because you could not cope with leaving someone behind. If you left any of the boys behind because of attack, you took it personally and tortured yourself for months.

Combat took its toll on you psyche and you had to get out of the Corps when you back to the US. You decided to try your hand at technical school to try and get a better job, thinking that in time the screams of dying marines would fade and leave you in peace.

But they never did. The same guilt that led you to join the medical corps was still with you when you finished school. So you signed up as a paramedic. It was hard work, but you felt that your talents were not wasted there.

Your guardian angel stayed with you all the time, letting you know when a patient was slipping away. Sometimes, you felt that you could get some sort of connection with the patients and help bring them back, or to make their ending as peaceful as possible. You couldn't save them all, and you cried every time you lost a patient. But your compassion for a suffering person would not let you quit.

Trying to save people who had been shot, stabbed or badly injured in a car smash eventually got too much for you; it was too close to

combat. So you transferred to the psychology ward at the hospital. It was possibly the best decision you ever made.

For the past couple of years, you have been working on the field team for the psych ward, the Psychiatric Retrieval Team. It's your job to go out into the city and pick up people whose minds are going, before they can hurt themselves or someone else. Business has been good as well. The city has been very supportive of the program, as it has helped get the serious crime rates down a bit.

Some situations you find yourself in are a little close to home though. Most of the people you pick up are homeless or very poor; they live in some of the worst neighborhoods in the city. Sometimes, going to pick them up is like heading into combat again. It's been hard, but you don't have to leave them behind anymore. It's helped the screams die down at least.

PERSONALITY:

You grew up in a very religious family and that faith remains with you to this day. You feel that God has a guardian angel looking out for you. He warns you when you when you're about to meet trouble. God also helps you to make life easier for some of your patients. It's only a feeling, but it helps knowing that you did something.

You have always been a sensitive person and your compassion for your fellow man has only grown with time. A lot of doctors have always congratulated you for your work with patients or the relatives of the people you couldn't save. Sometimes you know how to say what is needed to hit home.

But the screams of the dying Marines still haunt you, over ten years on. You carry a lot of guilt about leaving them to die in the desert, so now you feel obliged to do everything you can to help someone in need. You hate to leave anyone behind if you can avoid it.

OPINIONS OF THE OTHERS:

Martin Lambert: Detective Lambert is a good man, who you have a deal of respect for. You've never really had that much to do with him, but you've just met him when he has come to the hospital to interview patients and had a few chats with him then. He seemed to be suffering depression. You've heard that his wife was murdered a couple of years ago, so that might have something to do with it.

Gregory Neale: Detective Neale is a lot more like you. He has a compassionate nature; something you wish would rub off on his partner. You like Neale, and wish you could meet him for more than a few minutes at a time.

Dr. Sarah Lawton: Dr. Lawton is one of the psychiatrists assigned to the field unit. She is a very competent psychiatrist, but she suffers from the same lack of faith that most scientists suffer from. You just wish that she would realize that, as it would make her so much more effective a doctor.

Part of her problem is that she grew up in a very rich environment. She never had to understand what it was like to live with next to no income. So sometimes she lacks the compassion needed with the poorer elements of society.

Jarell Delaney: Delaney is your partner on the Psychiatric Retrieval Team, worst luck. He is an uncompassionate man who really doesn't care about the people you are trying to help. He has the annoying habit of calling you "Padre", which vaguely offends you sometimes. He's currently in trouble with the hospital administration. If one more negative report comes back, he's going to lose his job. As much as he annoys you, you don't want that to happen to him. At least he seems to be trying to get his act together.

Stina Quilan: Stina is a private investigator you've run into a few times. You suspect that she's done some time in prison in the past, judging from a couple of things that she's said. She's helped you find a couple of patients in the past and she has some deep-seated need to take unnecessary risks. You wonder sometimes why she keeps taking these sorts of cases, knowing the danger she gets herself in sometimes.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The P.A. system burred its usual warning signal. "Martinez and Delaney. Martinez and Delaney. Report immediately to dispatch."

Juan looked up from his bible and glanced at Jarell. "Looks like we have a pickup to make."

"Shit!" Jarell swore quietly. "Trust a loony to call in sick now. I only had ten pages to read."

Juan climbed to his feet. "Come on, you'll have plenty of time to finish the novel later on. And will you stop calling them 'loonies'. They're people too and they deserve more respect than that." He tucked his bible inside his backpack and slung it over his shoulder.

"Why the hell do you care so much?" retorted Jarell, tossing his book on the table. He stood with a sigh and grabbed his bag. "I guess we had better get this show on the road then."

They walked down the hall and into the operations room. A map of the city was projected against the far wall, with bright circles showing where the ambulances were located.

"What have you got for us, Glenice?" said Juan to the receptionist.

"Hi guys," replied the girl behind the desk. "Had a call about ten ago. Boss thinks it's genuine, so he wants a crew out for a pick up." She extended a clipboard with some printed paper on it.

Jarell took the board and peered at it. "Delusions of persecution? Jesus, don't we all have those? If we picked up everyone who thought they were getting picked on, we'd have the whole damn city in here."

Juan shot him a filthy look before taking the clipboard. "She'll get hurt unless she gets some professional help soon. Doesn't sound good. Where's the pickup from?"

Glenice tapped on her computer screen. "15234 Birch Street. Sixth floor apartment, number 27. About a mile from the War Zone. Her name's Kirily Jensen for what it's worth. Boss thinks you guys had better go to the armory and draw vests and weapons, just in case."

Jarell grinned. "I love it when he says that! It's been a bit quiet for the past week. About time we saw a bit of action!"

Juan ignored him. "Who's the Doctor on tonight?"

Glenice looked at her computer again. "Dr. Lawton has been notified that you will pick her up on the way."

Jarell rolled his eyes. "Did it have to be her? I would have preferred Doc McAlister. Anything else we need to know before we head out?"

"Only that the cops will be there as well," replied Juan, reading from the sheet. "Note here that they think this is the one that showed the

uniformed cops the body in the dumpster last week and then vanished before they could get a full story."

"Brilliant!" said Jarell. "Pigs and the princess! This is going to be one hell of a fun evening. Oh well, Padre, let's get this show on the road."

Juan winced. "You'd better not let the Boss hear you talking like that. You know you're already in enough trouble."

"Sorry, man," Jarell said. "Old Habits. Oh well, let's go pick up this poor girl and make sure that we bring her back in one piece."

JARELL DELANEY

MALE PARAMEDIC

STRENGTH	9
Melee Combat (Unarmed)	6/15
Small Arms (Rifle)	1/10

CONSTITUTION	7
---------------------	----------

AGILITY	7
Electronics	2/9
Stealth	1/8

INTELLIGENCE	5
---------------------	----------

Streetwise	2/7
Vehicle Use (Wheeled)	4/9
Willpower	1/6

EDUCATION	4
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Biology	1/5
Computer Operation	1/5
Medical	5/9

CHARISMA	5
-----------------	----------

Language (English)	10/15
Persuasion	2/7

EMPATHY	0
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Age:	29
Hair Color:	Brown
Eye Color:	Brown
Height:	170 cm
Weight:	88 kg
Load:	48 kg
Initiative:	2
Throw Range:	36 m
Unarmed Cmbt Damage:	5

Base Hit Numbers

Skill	Short	Med	Long	Extr
Small Arms (Rifle)	20	10	5	2

Hit Capacity

	Current	Scratch	Slight	Serious	Critical
Head	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="7"/>	<input type="text" value="14"/>	<input type="text" value=">14"/>
Chest	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="11"/>	<input type="text" value="23"/>	<input type="text" value="46"/>	<input type="text" value=">46"/>
Abdomen	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	<input type="text" value="16"/>	<input type="text" value="32"/>	<input type="text" value=">32"/>
Right Arm	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	<input type="text" value="16"/>	<input type="text" value="32"/>	<input type="text" value=">32"/>
Left Arm	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	<input type="text" value="16"/>	<input type="text" value="32"/>	<input type="text" value=">32"/>
Right Leg	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	<input type="text" value="16"/>	<input type="text" value="32"/>	<input type="text" value=">32"/>
Left Leg	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	<input type="text" value="16"/>	<input type="text" value="32"/>	<input type="text" value=">32"/>

Equipment

H&K MP-7 Submachinegun
 3 30 round magazines
 Stun Stick
 RamTech Bodyguard Kevlar Vest
 Psychiatric Retrieval Unit Identification
 Maglight Torch
 Disposal Handcuffs x 2
 CompuPad
 Portaphone

HISTORY:

Life has always been a bit of a struggle for you. Your mother ran off with a truck driver when you were about six. Your father worked a series of meaningless jobs and beat you constantly. He blamed you for your mother's leaving. There were a couple of times when he beat you to within an inch of your life. That was basically why you took up martial arts.

All through your years at school you spent most of your time down at the dojo. It gave you an excuse to stay out of the house for as long as possible. The discipline and the physical training gave you an outlet for your anger. By the time you left school, you decided to work as an instructor.

Those were good years. You loved the sport and won more competitions than you could count. It helped you to meet a lot of good people. Some people came and went, but there were regulars with who you were really good friends. Florian Tymon was one of these. You two were like brothers. He was a street kid who came to practice, but you were always close, until he took a hit to the head in a street fight and died in your arms.

It broke your heart when he died. He was basically about the only family that you had and his death left you shattered. That was what basically prompted you to become a paramedic.

Your grief tortured you constantly. *If you had known first aid, you would have been able to help him, your mind used to say to you.* To get the voices to die down, you spent a few years at school learning the things you needed to know. You kept up your martial arts in your spare time, but it had ceased to be the center of your life. Going back to school was a really hard thing for you to do. You had hated it the last time, and needing to go back and do more was a real pain. There was more than once you seriously considered chucking it in and going back to being a martial arts instructor. But for some stupid reason, probably because you felt you owed it to Florian, you stuck it out.

But when you finally made it as a paramedic, you realized that it had been a really stupid decision. It really hasn't been worth it. The first year or two were OK, but things went downhill after that. Picking half-dead people up off the street really left you feeling cold. Sometimes there was a bit of action, with people shooting at you and all that, but nine times out of ten, it was just something to fill the time with.

About a year ago, you transferred to Psychiatric Retrieval Team. They were looking for paramedics to join a special unit to go out into

the city and pick up mental cases and bring them in before they could hurt themselves or someone else. At the time, it seemed like a good idea. It offered more pay, because you had to go into poor neighborhoods a lot more often to pick up the nutcases and the locals sometimes resent that and start shooting.

But it's been almost as lame as the normal stuff. The danger sometimes makes it more fun, but that doesn't always happen though. More often than not, you sit on your butt waiting for a call and when you get it, you get to go pick up some old duck who's lost her marbles.

You haven't even really had enough time to practice your martial arts. Because of the risk in your current job, you've needed to put in some time at the firing range, practicing with the SMGs. It's been fun, but it's just not as fulfilling as kicking the hell out of someone.

You've been saving some of your pay for a couple of years now, hoping to get enough together to open your own dojo. It's been a dream of yours for a long, long time. You think that once you have achieved that, you'll be much happier.

You really wish you could piss off the work as a paramedic, but you can't. Doing that would make the dream of the dojo impossible. You still need this job for another couple of years yet.

But you have to be really careful about it too. Your "cavalier attitude" has landed you in some serious hot water with the hospital administration. A couple of complaints have been filed against you and you have been put on probation. If you make one more failed mission, or there is one bad word spoken against you, your job and your dream will be gone forever.

PERSONALITY:

You have a lot of bitterness in you because of your history. Every person who ever meant anything to you has left you. You put on a show of bravado to try and prove you don't need anyone, but deep down you want to impress people with your bravery so that they will accept you.

Because of your family life and your training, you also tend to have a very quick temper. If something doesn't go your way, you tend to explode. Sometimes that is just a verbal explosion, but other times you have actually reacted with physical violence.

Your temper has come extremely close to costing you your dream. The hospital administration has put you on probation and one more mistake will see you losing everything. Your own dojo means more to

you than anything else, so you have become paranoid about making mistakes. You still sometimes slip up, but you are trying your hardest to keep things under control.

OPINIONS OF THE OTHERS:

Martin Lambert: This guy is a real pain in the ass. He's a homicide cop who you've met a couple of times in the past. He likes to play hardball sometimes. He seems depressed most of the time and isn't really interested in having a conversation. You have no idea why.

Gregory Neale: Neale is Lambert's partner. He acts like he is some sort of hotshot lawyer or something. He's always going on about procedure and all that sort of shit. There have been a couple of times when you've felt like smacking him round the head for his troubles. Not that you can though.

Dr. Sarah Lawton: Lawton's one of the shrinks that are on call to the teams. She has to be there when you go out to pick up a case. She gets to make sure that they get the right drugs or something. But she's just a rich little girl playing at Doctor. She tries to be understanding, but because she's been given everything she ever wanted, she has no idea what living close to the edge is actually like. It annoys you that you have to pretend to like her for the sake of your job, but you need the money.

Juan Martinez: "The Padre" is your Paramedic partner. You've been working with him since you joined the Loony squad. He used to be a marine or some shit, but he's gone soft. He reads the bible all the time and is all lovey-dovey about the people you have to go and pick up. It bugs you sometime. You used to enjoy baiting him to see if you could get a rise out of him, but you've even had to stop doing that. It's a real pain in the butt sometimes.

Stina Quilan: Stina is a private eye that has called you guys in from time to time. She's kinda cute, but she's got a bit of an attitude that's a bit hard to deal with sometimes. She also doesn't like people telling her what to do, which can be a real pain if she gets in the way.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The P.A. system burred its usual warning signal. "Martinez and Delaney. Martinez and Delaney. Report immediately to dispatch."

Juan looked up from his bible and glanced at Jarell. "Looks like we have a pickup to make."

"Dammit!" Jarell swore quietly. "Why now?. I only had ten pages to read."

Juan climbed to his feet. "Come on, you'll have plenty of time to finish the novel later on. And will you stop calling them 'loonies'. They're people too and they deserve more respect than that." He tucked his bible inside his backpack and slung it over his shoulder.

"Why the hell do you care so much?" retorted Jarell, tossing his book on the table. He stood with a sigh and grabbed his bag. "I guess we had better get going then."

They walked down the hall and into the operations room. A map of the city was projected against the far wall, with bright circles showing where the ambulances were located.

"What have you got for us, Glenice?" said Juan to the receptionist.

"Hi guys," replied the girl behind the desk. "Had a call about ten ago. Boss thinks it's genuine, so he wants a crew out for a pick up." She extended a clipboard with some printed paper on it.

Jarell took the board and peered at it. "Delusions of persecution? Jesus, don't we all have those? If we picked up everyone who thought they were getting picked on, we'd have the whole damn city in here."

Juan shot him a filthy look before taking the clipboard. "She'll get hurt unless she gets some professional help soon. Doesn't sound good. Where's the pickup from?"

Glenice tapped on her computer screen. "15234 Birch Street. Sixth floor apartment, number 27. About a mile from the War Zone. Her name's Kirily Jensen for what it's worth. Boss thinks you guys had better go to the armory and draw vests and weapons, just in case."

Jarell grinned. "I love it when he says that! It's been a bit quiet for the past week. About time we saw a bit of action!"

Juan ignored him. "Who's the Doctor on tonight?"

Glenice looked at her computer again. "Dr. Lawton has been notified that you will pick her up on the way."

Jarell rolled his eyes. "Did it have to be her? I would have preferred Doc McAlister. Anything else we need to know before we head out?"

"Only that the cops will be there as well," replied Juan, reading from the sheet. "Note here that they think this is the one that showed the

uniformed cops the body in the dumpster last week and then vanished before they could get a full story."

"Brilliant!" said Jarell. "Pigs and the princess! This is going to be one hell of a fun evening. Oh well, Padre, let's get this show on the road."

Juan winced. "You'd better not let the Boss hear you talking like that. You know you're already in enough trouble."

"Sorry, man," Jarell said. "Old Habits. Oh well, let's go pick up this poor girl and make sure that we bring her back in one piece."

STINA QUILAN
FEMALE PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

STRENGTH	6
Melee Combat (Armed)	3/9
Small Arms (Pistol)	3/9
CONSTITUTION	5
AGILITY	8
Pickpocket	1/9
Stealth	4/12
INTELLIGENCE	5
Observation	5/10
Stalking	3/8
Streetwise	5/10
Vehicle Use (Wheeled)	1/6
EDUCATION	3
CHARISMA	5
Act/Bluff	3/8
Disguise	2/7
Language (English)	10/15
Luck	3/8
Persuasion	2/7
EMPATHY	2
Human Empathy	2/4
Project Emotion	1/3

Age:	29
Hair Color:	Blonde
Eye Color:	Hazel
Height:	160 cm
Weight:	57 kg
Load:	33 kg
Initiative:	2
Throw Range:	24 m
Unarmed Cmbt Damage:	1

Base Hit Numbers

Skill	Short	Med	Long	Extr
Small Arms (Pistol)	18	9	4	2

Hit Capacity

	Current	Scratch	Slight	Serious	Critical
Head	2	5	10	>10	
Chest	8	16	32	>32	
Abdomen	5	11	22	>22	
Right Arm	5	11	22	>22	
Left Arm	5	11	22	>22	
Right Leg	5	11	22	>22	
Left Leg	5	11	22	>22	

Equipment

Beretta M9 Automatic Pistol
2 15 round magazines
RamTech Bodyguard Kevlar Vest
Private Investigator License
Maglight Torch
Metal Handcuffs
CompuPad

HISTORY:

You don't have very many memories of childhood. Most of the ones you do have are not very pleasant. Your mother was high most of the time and really didn't care what you did. Your father served in the Navy and was just about always away at sea. When he did come home, all he could be bothered doing was sleeping.

Not long after your ninth birthday, you ran away from home, never to return. Looking back now, it was a pretty stupid move, but it seemed like the only one you could make at the time and you were always one to take a risk. Wishing that it hadn't happened serves no useful purpose now.

Life was really tough in those days. There were all sorts of human predators looking to take advantage of a young girl on the streets. By some miracle, you managed to avoid just about all of it. Some of your street friends got involved; many of them ended up dead. Perhaps it is an indication that you made the right decisions at the right time.

This is not to say that you were a perfect little angel. You were involved in all sorts of minor crimes to survive. Most of these involved some theft, be it property or information. It never ceased to amaze you what people were prepared to pay money to learn.

Because life was so hard, you found that taking bigger and bigger risks was one of the few things you could do to make life fun. You and your friends used to come up with a whole series of dangerous dares for one another. You never once failed to go through with them.

As you got older, you found yourself addicted to gambling. It provided a rush like just about nothing else that you had known and it also gave yourself a chance to actually make a bit of money as well. It didn't matter what you bet on. As long as someone was willing to give odds, you were willing to have a punt on it.

That was probably how you ended up doing armed robberies. Your gambling had left you in debt and some people were getting upset that you hadn't paid up. That was when Davo offered you a cut if you would help him hold up shops and stuff. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

The problem was, you did a few successful ones over a period of time, but the more you did, the more money you gambled away needing you to do more heists. You took bigger and bigger risks, thinking you were invincible. That was to be your downfall.

Eventually, your luck ran out and you were arrested and charged with several counts of armed robbery. Your world was basically

turned on its head when you were sent inside. You had never really known any sort of discipline, so life in prison came as a real shock.

These days, you're actually grateful for your time inside. It was a tough time and you have your collection of scars – both physical and emotional – to prove it. But you learnt the one thing that would help you later on. You had the knack of finding out information that people wanted to know. If someone wanted to find something out, they came to you.

So it was pretty natural that you would use the skills you had picked up while inside once you were released from prison. They let you out after four years for being a good girl and within a month or two, you became a private eye.

Your gambling habit is still as strong as ever, but you vowed never to commit crimes to fund it. So you turned to tracking down people for money. It's sometimes hard to make ends meet, with your gambling debts and everything, so you end up taking the contracts that are too dangerous or too risky for anyone else.

Things have been better in the past twelve months or so. You were introduced to this guy named Weldon, who seems to have a whole string of people he needs tracking down. Funnily enough, just about all of them are loonies, so you have found yourself in contact with the police and the Psychiatric Retrieval Team a lot. You're even on first name terms with some of them. Although the job has an unusually high-risk rate sometimes, Weldon pays better than average, so you don't mind the extra money.

At the moment, you owe a bookie named Jacko about \$10,000 and he tends to get upset if he isn't paid on time. So, you a little desperate for the money right now.

PERSONALITY:

Life has dealt you a pretty tough hand, and you have had to deal with that. You tend not to be too emotional, because you can't afford the luxury. Being a street kid taught you that you have to hide your feelings as deep down as you can to prevent yourself from going to pieces.

You have been an adrenaline junkie since you were a kid. You don't mind taking a big risk with your life. It's not as though you have a whole lot to lose really anyway. It's even better if you can find someone willing to take some money on the outcome.

Your gambling habit needs a lot of money to support. So you have to work pretty hard at tracking down the loonies to bring in the money you need to pay off your debt. This has meant that you are like a dog on the scent of a wounded animal; you never give up the chase until you have it in the bag.

OPINIONS OF THE OTHERS:

Martin Lambert: You've known Lambert for a long time. You hated him for a lot of years – he was your arresting officer when you were put away for armed robbery. Since you've become a private investigator, you've had to rub shoulders with him a few times. It's helped you get over your animosity towards him – he was only doing his job. You can think of other people you'd rather hang out with, but there are a lot worse than Lambert.

Gregory Neale: Neale is Lambert's partner. He's a nice guy, but he's a bit straight. He's very analytical in his thinking. You reckon he should have been a lawyer or something. He's just got that air about him.

Dr. Sarah Lawton: Lawton is a stuck up bitch. You've dealt with the psych ward when looking for some missing persons. They have a unit who round up all of the nutcases and they have a doctor on each team. She's about the worst of the lot of them. She's just incapable of thinking like anything but a doctor. When you get down on the streets, university thinking doesn't help you at all.

Juan Martinez: Juan is a nice enough sort of guy, although he can be a bit intense sometimes. He's a paramedic on the "loony catcher" teams. He moves like he used to be in the Army and whenever you're near him, you get a feeling of guilt. You just can't explain it. It does tend to bug you though.

Jarell Delaney: Delaney is a real change from the usual "loony catcher" paramedics – he really doesn't give a shit. He's got an angry steak about a mile wide, but it makes a refreshing change from some of the sanitized personalities of some of the others. Doesn't mind a good fight either, from what you have heard. But his anger has gotten him into trouble and he might lose his job if he stuffs up again.

CURRENT SITUATION:

"Look Jacko, I already told you. I don't have the money I need to pay you just yet." Stina huddled into the phone booth to try and get out of the rain. "I know I was supposed to get it to you tomorrow and if things go well tonight, you'll get your money, OK? I can't offer you any more than that." She fished a damp piece of paper from the pocket of her jacket and flattened it against the top of the phone. "OK, all right already. Listen, I have to go now. I've got a call I need to make. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

She hung up the phone and fished around in her pocket. She slotted a couple of coins into the phone and dialed the number scribbled on the paper.

An elderly male voice answered the call. "Hello?"

"Mr. Weldon?" Stina asked.

"Yes. Who's this?"

"It's Stina Quilan, sir. I have a progress report to make."

"Oh excellent. Have you found that girl already?"

"No, sir, I haven't. But I have found out who she is and where she lives. I was just going to go and see her, but there's a slight problem, so I thought I ought to give you a call."

"What's the matter?"

Do I really want to do this? Stina asked herself. No, but unless I can find another \$2,500 by tomorrow, I'm history.

"Well sir, the girl lives very close to the War Zone and I've heard there is some heavy fighting down there. I'm afraid I need about an extra \$2,500 for danger money."

There was a slight pause at the other end of the line. "Very well, Stina, if you can find Kirily this evening, you'll get the extra money. But you had better give me her details."

"OK, her name is Kirily Jensen. She's about 5'3", long blonde hair and blue eyes. She's also a bit underweight because she doesn't eat right. Her address is 15234 Birch Street. Apartment number 27"

"Thorough work as always," said Weldon. "Very well, I'll leave you to it. When you have found her, give me a call and I will send someone to come and pick her up."

Stina sighed. Yes, sir. I'll call you as soon as I can. Good night. Oh and thank you, Mr. Weldon" Stina returned the handset to the receiver. More money than sense, she thought. She grabbed the piece of paper from the top of the phone and shoved it back into the pocket of her coat. "Oh well, time to get this show on the road," she said as she pulled the collar up around her neck.

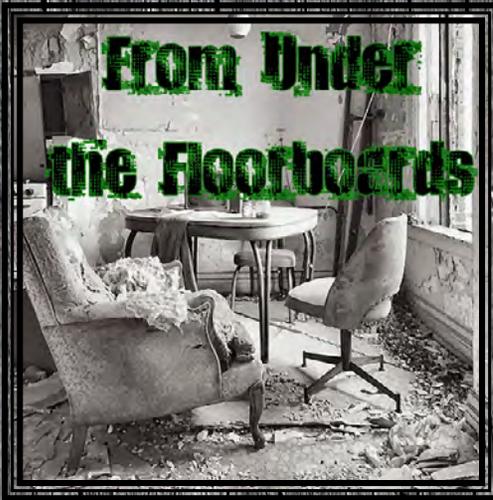
She ran out into the rain and across the road to her car. She fumbled with the keys before managing to get the door open. "Man, I have got to get a new car."

Stina reached across and opened the glove compartment. She pulled out an old battered street index and started thumbing through it.

"Birch Street, Birch Street. Map 27, E-22", she mumbled as she flipped through the pages. Finding map 27, she hunted around until she found the street she was looking for. "Oh terrific! It's closer to the damn War Zone than I thought. This is going to make it really great evening!"

She sat up and started the car.

"Oh well, better get on with it I guess. The old bastard ain't paying me to sit on my ass and do nothing."



RetroTek concepts
by Lee Williams

Greetings everybody!

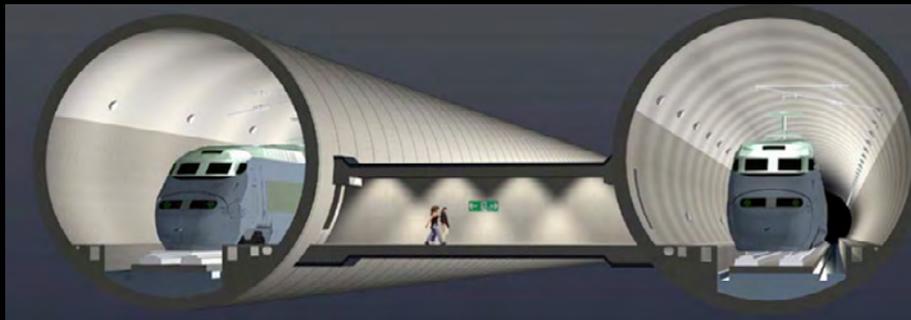
This time around I am presenting a short round-up of alternative types of transportation. Sometimes, merely hailing a taxi or even re-enacting the Paris car chase scene from “Ronin” doesn’t necessarily fit into the gameworld you may be playing in. Here are some genuine real-life methods of travel and a theoretical advance too. I hope this inspires at least a little background detail for your gaming. Catch you again soon folks!



The Mono-Wheel: these come in various sizes but are usually based around motorcycle powertrains. The rider and the mechanical parts are enclosed within a single outer wheel rim, driven by the engine and transmission. If you have seen “Men In Black 3” the vehicles used by J and young K are of this type.



The Gyro Car: this is a vehicle at least the size of a large automobile, but has only one wheel at each end aligned on a central axis like a regular motorcycle. The name stems from the thing being stabilized by a gyroscope concealed within the centre and driven by the motor. A famous example was built by the British manufacturer Wolseley for the Russian Count Peter Schilovsky in 1912. Great for “steampunk” style games IMHO.



Advanced MAGLEV: trains using the magnetic levitation principle have been around for some time. Advanced MAGLEV involves using the principle on trains which travel through sealed low-pressure (or ideally a vacuum) underground rail tunnel, a sort of super-charged Tube train arrangement, capable of approaching the speed of passenger airliners. First, you need to build the tunnels and the rest is easy, right?

The Ekranoplan: also known as “WiG ships” as they use the wing-in-ground-effect principle. These are best described as hybrids of aircraft, boats and hovercraft. A true ekranoplan lifts off like an aircraft but only to a height of a couple of metres, and travels at that height by capturing an air cushion under its belly but without the use of a skirt as seen in hovercraft. Much of the development of these craft was done under the auspices of the old Soviet Union’s military, and the most famous example of an ekranoplan is the huge Antonov-sized craft nicknamed the “Caspian Sea Monster”. They do come in all sizes however.

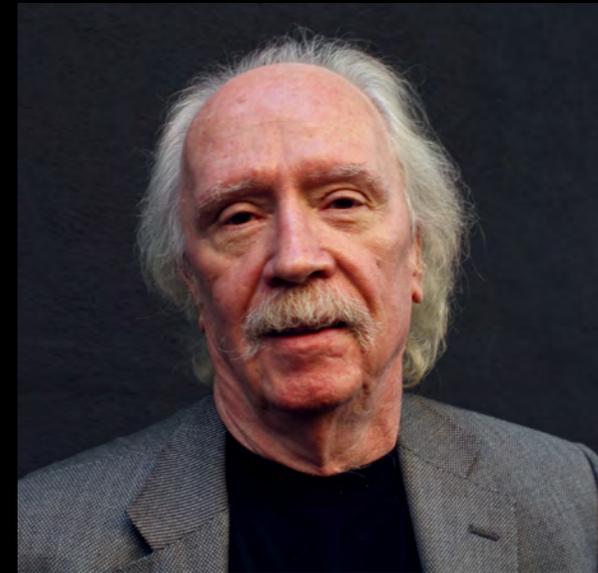


Flying Cars: these have been tried many times in many different ways, most often as small cars with wings and tails that have to be assembled and removed manually. The Moeller Skycar utilized ducted propellers for movement, and the Terrafugia company makes vehicles that transform from one mode to the other within seconds. The idea strikes a chord with many people but realistically they are hard to build, plus would you want all the idiots you see on your daily commute to be zooming over your house?



protodimension magazine

JOHN CARPENTER



<i>Born</i>	John Howard Carpenter January 16, 1948 Carthage, New York, United States
<i>Residence</i>	Los Angeles, California, U.S.
<i>Occupation</i>	Director, screenwriter, producer, composer
<i>Genres</i>	Science fiction, horror
<i>Education</i>	Western Kentucky University
<i>Spouse(s)</i>	Adrienne Barbeau (1979–1984) Sandy King (1990–present)
<i>Notable Directed Works</i>	The Ward, Masters of Horror (TV Series), Ghosts of Mars, Vampires, Escape from L.A., Village of the Damned, In the Mouth of Madness, Body Bags (TV Movie), Memoirs of an Invisible Man, They Live, Prince of Darkness, Big Trouble in Little China, Starman, Christine, The Thing, Escape from New York, The Fog, Elvis (TV Movie), Someone's Watching Me! (TV Movie), Assault on Precinct 13, Dark Star and of course: Halloween (1978)

“I know I’m human. And if you were all these things, then you’d just attack me right now, so some of you are still human. This thing doesn’t want to show itself, it wants to hide inside an imitation. It’ll fight if it has to, but it’s vulnerable out in the open. If it takes us over, then it has no more enemies, nobody left to kill it. And then it’s won.”

—MacReady, *The Thing* (1982)