

The New Mexico Cops Game

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Content

[Lt. Maitland's Letter](#)

[Lieutenant Sophie Maitland](#)

[Part 1](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 3](#)

[Part 4](#)

[Part 5](#)

[Part 6](#)

[Part 7](#)

[Part 8](#)

LT. MAITLAND'S LETTER

Dear Mom,

I know, I haven't written in a long time, but some things have been happening that I had to tell you about. You remember that trouble I had last spring? Well, they didn't press charges. I was suspended for a while, and I have a black mark — like a reprimand, but it goes on my permanent record. After the disciplinary action, they sent me down south of Las Cruces to man a station right next to a Biotechnicia company town. It's lonely, but at the same time it's nice to be away from all the hustle in Santa Fe. I think there are only about fifty people here in town, mostly company farmers growing super corn.

They sent me a grand total of five officers to get the place up to speed. Even with six people, though, we had more police presence per capita than Albuquerque does. Most of the first crew rotated out, and it looks like this place will be the

crappy end of the stick for all the cut-ups on the force. To be fair, though, I had some good officers down here for a long time, mostly people who screwed up once in a big way and deserved a second chance.

I understand the rest of the force calls this place “Mayberry,” which would make me Andy Griffith. So far, “maintaining order” has consisted of disabling modified pest control droids refitted to attack “bugs” up to five feet in height and spray cat piss instead of pesticide. We’ve also broken up a bar fight, refused a bribe from a Biotechnica rep, intervened in a domestic shooting at the local grocery (luckily, all she managed to hit were the pickle jars), and driven a pack of roadwarrior-esque drug traffickers out of town.

Broke my thumb trying to put together a mini-copter we seized from them. I guess I’m just not cut out for the air anymore.

We’re right next door to White Sands, which is rather creepy. There are weird lights in the sky at night over the base. They’re a bit heat lightning, and they come on every night at the same time, and go off at exactly the same time every morning. People say the military’s conducting UFO experiments, and I think it might be true. I know it sounds crazy, but I’ve seen a lot of things that I can’t explain.

The Army guys constantly ride roughshod over us. They have gunships like the one I showed you at the station in Santa Fe, and they do flybys on the station. My four-by popped a radiator hose on the way back from town one afternoon, and while I was sitting there, baking in hundred-degree heat, ten miles from everywhere, one of the bastards does a strafing run on me. Blanks, happily, but how the hell was I supposed to know that? We even had some trouble with a couple of Army boys raising hell in town. Cost me my arm, I’m afraid. My insurance plan took care of it, so don’t worry. I’m fit and fine and crushing glasses left and right with my new one.

We arrested the Army boys and had an AV sent down to take them out for arraignment. The base Colonel had a fit when I refused to release them, but he left readily enough — too readily, though I didn’t know it. When we transferred them out of the station, someone sniped both of them with a high-power rifle, and I’m fairly sure it was someone from their base.

Just a couple of scared kids, and somebody had them killed. There wasn't a damn thing special about them except for the fact that they were from White Sands. They didn't kill anybody in town. They didn't even cause much property damage, and they sure as hell didn't tell us anything. So why would anyone want to kill them?

I know the Army's conducting test flights out there because we've seen the lights in the sky. Not the ones I was talking about earlier — these look like plane running lights, but they execute maneuvers that are just not aerodynamically possible.

A couple of weeks ago one of them went down. We investigated the crash site, and the wreckage didn't look like anything I'd ever seen before. And you know I've done enough flying that I have a pretty good idea of what I'm talking about. We saw the pilot, too, a full conversion job, and even though I don't know what the hell it was flying, I know it wasn't anything normal, because they only use the FBC's when they're running with specs that exceed normal human tolerances. Crazy enough for you? There's more. One of my officers went out on patrol — we keep twenty-four hour roving patrols of the town and outlying farms — and we lost contact with him for several hours. When he reported in, he had no idea he'd been gone. He'd lost four hours and gained a nice new airhypo mark on his throat which he didn't recall receiving. I had my civvie paramedic check him out, and it turns out the officer was full of an unknown compound ... one identical to one the medic found in the bloodstreams of the Army boys when he was patching them up to send north.

We've even had cattle mutilations. Every week or so, we get a report from one of the Biotechnicia farmers that one of his biogen cows has been killed. We go out, log it, and it's always the same thing. A two- or three- ton steer, laid out like a frog in a dissecting tray, no blood anywhere, the cuts cauterized like it'd been sliced by a laser, and the autopsy showing that the damage was done while the steer was conscious — without anaesthetic. No tracks. Nobody heard anything the night before, and I'd sure like to know how you slaughter a fully conscious steer without making noise, using restraints, spilling blood, or spooking the herd.

And here's the prize in our little box of Cracker Jacks: last month something got out of the base. The Army put the whole town under "military quarantine" while they hunted for it. I saw it, and it wasn't human. I know it was dangerous, or at least classified, because they had a whole squad of Dragoons — you know, those full conversion cyborgs that they use instead of tanks? You might remember them from that CNN story they did a couple of weeks back. It was a mess. AV-8's swarming like bees, army men exchanging fire with the farmhands, cutting off our com lines, blocking the roads. They had an entire squad of Dragoons out, loaded with non-lethal ammunition, mostly catchwebs. Those are a bit like the motion restraint canister I left in your car that one time, the one that got so hot that it exploded. Same concept, bigger mess.

It got into the station — the thing, not the canister, and it crawled all through the air ducts and opened up the radio and built something out of the parts. We were blockaded in the station — we wouldn't come out, and we wouldn't let the troops search the station, and while the base colonel was warming up to shelling us out, we heard it creeping in the vents. I had to go in after it with a flashlight. Chased it up to the roof, and that's where I got my look at it. I'll be seeing it in my sleep for the rest of my life, I think.

While we were up there, nose-to-nose, one of the Dragoons jumped on the roof. There's another thing I'll never forget — staring down the rotating barrels of the minigun mounted on its arm. I never moved so fast in my life. I hurled myself back down into the station, expecting to hear the Dragoon rip the roof off and come after me. Instead there was a flash, like a million suns rising, and a thump as the Dragoon fell over. Everything electric in the station went dead, and the thing was gone. I don't know what it did; I thought it was an EMP, but they tell me otherwise.

The thing was damn smart, whatever it was, smart enough to disable the Dragoons and get away. Of course, the Army guys searched the whole station later, but they couldn't prove I'd been face-to-face with it, since the Dragoon on the roof had been wiped by whatever the thing had done to generate the flash. I think if it weren't for that, I'd be strapped down to a table somewhere on base with an IV in my arm and a bright light in my face.

Hell, I probably shouldn't even be writing this down. I have the feeling that if they do find out that I know what was going on, I'll end up disappeared, because the base Colonel is one scary man, and I know he ordered the two Army kids shot. I don't know what's going on out here, but I think we're a very small bug under the Army's very big heel, and I keep waiting for the crunch. I guess I'm just paranoid, but I'll feel better knowing you have this letter.

Just in case.

Love,

LIEUTENANT SOPHIE MAITLAND

Lieutenant Sophie Maitland is a New Mexico State Police officer, ex-Airborne division, now commanding a run-down precinct in the ass end of nowhere. After an unfortunate incident involving a civilian plane which resulted in three deaths, she was grounded and transferred to Crossroads, NM, south of Las Cruces. She's 30, a lanky, freckled redhead not quite cut out for the sun and dry heat. Usually seen in a dusty uni-form with scuffed knee and elbow pads, worn leather boots, her NMSP jacket, the Python on her hip. She wears her hair up under a navy baseball cap with a NMSP badge on the front, and is rarely without sunglasses and a dab of zinc oxide on her nose.

Ever since the Dragoon incident, she's been heavily into the UFO scene. She doesn't talk about it, but a visit to her office will reveal a desk cluttered with trashy abduction novels and old newspaper clippings, and the walls are plastered with grainy photographs of alleged UFO sightings.

STATS - INT 6 REF 6/8 TECH 6 COOL 8 ATTR 6 LUCK 8 MA 4 BOD 9/7 EMP
7/4

Interrogation 3; Handgun 4; Streetwise 4; Heavy Weapons 3; Human Perception 6; Melee 3; Leadership 4; Pilot (Gyro) 5; Awareness/Notice 6; Pilot (Vect. Thrust Vehicle) 3; Education & General Know 5 ; Rifle 5; Expert: Law Enforcement 4; AV Tech 1; Spanish 2; Basic Tech 3; Library Search 4; Electronics 2; Athletics 5; First Aid 1; Brawling 5; Gyro Tech 2; Driving 2
Acute Vision -2, Nightmares +2, Glass Jaw +2

CYBERNETICS - Neuralware Processor; Vehicle Link; Smartgun Link;
Kereznikov Boosterware +2; Muscle + Bone Lace; Interface Plugs (formerly meat
left wrist, now in left cyberarm)

Standard Cyberarm (Left, 25 SDP) w/Quick Change Mount and Reinforced Joints
(+5 SDP). She lost her arm in the course of the game and will be making
payments on her new one in the amount of 623eb/mo for the next two years.

WHEN HARSH WORDS JUST WON'T CUT IT -

Colt Python P|0|J|C|2D6+3|6|1|VR

Nightstick MEL|0|N|C|2D6+3|-|VR

Militech MK IV RIF|+1|N|C|6D6-1|35|30|VR (smartgunned, with fraying inter-face
cables wrapped around the stock)

BEING OF SOUND MIND AND BODY, I DO LEAVE MY WORLDLY
POSSESSIONS . . .

- Jeans, boots, button-up shirts, and tank tops, all worn and weathered but in
good repair.
- New Mexico State Police issue uniform, inc. knee and elbow pads of SP 8
- NMSP issue jacket, navy, with chest and back plate inserts adding SP 14
protection
- 3 speedloaders for Colt Python, plus 200 .357 rounds (in two boxes in the side
drawer of her desk, 100 ball and 100 HP).
- In a battered steel toolcase under her bunk, 200 rounds 6.65 ball (6 clips and
20 loose), along with a 5.56 barrel for the Militech MK IV with 100 rounds 5.56
ball (3 clips and 10 loose).
- Beaded leather holster for Colt, sling for MK IV.
- 1 roll striptape and a pair of plasticuffs.
- A shoulder bag, with a giant industrial-strength maglite (which can double as a
nightstick in a pinch), a pair of binoculars, a compass, a tool kit, a small welding
torch, and a dog-eared copy of "Roswell: Are They Among Us?"
- A pair of beat-up, duct-taped smartgoggles with thermo, lowlite, and anti-dazzle.
- A three-quarters used tube of zinc oxide, and an empty tube of sunburn lotion.

Part 1

You may be about to read this, wondering what it is. It's a compilation of all the notes I typed up in relation to a Cyberpunk 2020 game I ran about a year and a half ago. It's probably gone down in my books as one of the best games I ever ran. The notes that follow are in their raw format. I prefer to run my games in a fluid environment; that is, I'll detail some things I'd like to see happen, and then run the game, introducing things as they pop up. Some of the notes may seem scattered. The New Mexico Cops game was run using the alternate character gen system I devised, which does not utilize Special Abilities or Roles.

[Mockery's Note: Because of the way Gary's notes are written, this is probably the easiest campaign to "genericize" and run for any group of players, since the only requirements are that the PC's be cops, in some sort of disgrace, and that the station be placed next to a military installation (not necessarily White Sands). Following Gary's "raw" session notes are my comments, in brackets, detailing what actually happened in each game.]

Part 2

CROSSROADS POLICE STATION This file details the jailhouse and its myriad rooms. The place was abandoned during the Collapse, since there was no money coming from the state to keep it supplied and its officers paid. The police who utilized it previous to the Collapse stripped it of all valuable equipment (tools, weapons, desks, chairs, etc), locked it up, and left it to the elements. Since then, several scavengers and passing nomad gangs have broken in to search for anything useful.

[This is the station as it was the day we arrived in Crossroads: no power, no water, and no phones.]

ON THE OUTSIDE

The jailhouse, from outside, is a nearly square, sheetrock building that measures 72' wide x 78' long x 20' tall. It was, at one time in the distant past, white-washed. The paint has since faded and chipped. The building has no windows. The only ways in are the front door, situated on the east wall, or the garage doors, which are on the south face. The garage doors, remarkably, have survived relatively

intact. They are made of heavy aluminum and framed with steel, and are of the “roll-up” variety. They were never meant to be lifted by human arms, since they are too heavy. When the building was still a police station, they were electronically operated from the inside. All such garage-opening equipment was taken when the station was abandoned. The front door was steel-reinforced, but has since been smashed inward by a car or some other vehicle. It will need to be completely replaced.

1.) The Office

The main office is a room measuring 28ft x 28ft square. The floor, especially near the door, is littered with garbage, dirt, and a stray tumbleweed or two that found their ways inside. A DIFFICULT Awareness roll will reveal very old blood stains on the floor near the western door. There are five doors leading out of the office : (Clockwise) the main entrance to the east, an open door to the southeast, an open door to the south, an open door to the southwest, and an open heavy steel door to the west. Searching through the garbage on the floor will reveal nothing of interest.

2.) CO's Office

This room was once the CO's office. There is absolutely nothing in the room at all. There is a brass plate on the door which reads “Captain Sutherland”.

3.) Rest Room

This 6' x 6' room was the station's rest room. There is a sink next to a urinal, and a single stall containing an old toilet. The urinal has an old, crumbly deodorizer in it. The toilet, however, has some very old fecal matter which has since turned grey. It will crumble into dust if touched. All metal pipes in the room have been removed.

[Why he thought we'd want to TOUCH the contents of the toilet is beyond me, but he has a point: there's no accounting for what players will do.]

4.) Prisoner Holding Cells

The office's western door (the really heavy, steel one) leads into a hallway walled by barred doors, all closed and locked in place. Each cell contains a bunk bed (no mattresses) and a single commode.

4a.) Prisoner Holding Cell

This cell differs from the rest in that it holds the remains of a person who was possibly trapped within. The body is slumped in an upright sitting position against the northern wall, out of reach. Decay has been lessened by the dry atmosphere, and the corpse has been nearly mummified. Further examination will reveal the body to be that of a male. He is dressed in a t-shirt, faded, tattered blue jeans, leather cowboy boots, and a leather gun belt. A cowboy hat sits on the bottom bunk. In his right hand he holds a black revolver, and the back of his head has been blown out. It can be concluded that the person committed suicide.

[We later determined that this guy was probably examining the holding cell for some reason, and was trapped within when the door slammed shut behind him. With no key and nobody around to free him, he took the quick way out.]

5.) Interrogation Room

The empty room is spotless. It was at one time used to interrogate suspects.

6.) Weapons Locker

The door to this room is of heavy steel reinforcement. It looks like someone, long ago, tried to get the door open without success. The door itself is dented in several spots as if it was shot at close range. If anyone is able to open the door, they will find that the efforts made to open the door were in vain, anyway. The walls are decked with empty gun racks and shelves. In the south-eastern corner is a stack of old newspapers. The one on the top is dated August 14th, 1996, and the headline reads "MARTIAL LAW IMPOSED". The papers will tear easily, and if anyone handling them isn't careful, they will crumble into fragments.

7.) Bunk Room

This is another empty room that once served as sleeping quarters for cops between shifts. It is bare of anything except for some old, burned rags in the center of the room. It looks like someone tried to start a fire there.

8.) Store Room

Empty, except for the shelves lining the walls, and a can of tomato soup (the expiration date reads "March 2001").

9.) Tool Room

This room is littered with empty oil containers and a few, empty, dented gas

cans. A poster on the wall, if examined, is revealed to be a 1996 calendar — the picture is that of a sexy blond in a revealing bathing suit, posing with a power tool. In the years since the station was deserted, someone has scrawled lewd pictographs on the poster with a magic marker.

10.) Locker Room

The lockers, built into the structure of the room, are still present, but each of the doors has been forced open by a crow bar. They are empty, for the most part. One or two contain faded photographs of loved ones.

11.) Shower

This room is completely wall-to-wall tile. A near-mummified corpse is lying face down in a pool of dried blood. The body is clothed in a tattered flannel shirt and faded black Levi's; his boots have been stolen. If examined closely, it can be found that the cause of death was stabbing. All visible metal pipes in this room, as well as shower heads and knobs, have been removed.

[The first thing we did after examining the rest of the building was to bury this guy and his suicidal buddy (the occupant of #4a). Visitors to the station can still see the slightly sunken area marking the grave. I threw 4a's hat in with him; thinking back on it, I wish I'd saved it to hang on my office wall. Ah, well. 11's body is still marked as an open murder case in our files, and we'll investigate it if we ever get any leads.]

12.) Lounge/Ready Room

A green chalk board covers the western wall. Pieces of brittle chalk are still in their holders on the wall. Further searching will reveal a foam eraser in the southeast corner. Someone has written on the board in yellow chalk :

“Only the free have disposition to be truthful,
Only the truthful have the interest to be just,
Only the just possess the willpower to be free.”

[W.H. Auden. This quote opens Lt. Maitland's character file.]

13.) Broom Closet

Several old brooms and mops are propped in the southwest corner. The shelves are empty. An old burned-out light bulb hangs from a wire in the center of the ceiling.

14.) Garage

The floor in this immense room is marked with old oil stains. The room is almost entirely empty except for some plastic parts piled in a corner. The parts consist of old wires, distributor caps, spray paint caps, and the like.

Part 3

TOWNSFOLK NPC DESCRIPTIONS

Folks Living in and Around Crossroads, NMCombs, Jessica

Description : This is Wyatt's wife. She is 36, slightly overweight, and stands at about 5'6". She thinks she's exceedingly fat, and she's insanely jealous and afraid of losing her husband to some floozy. She has pretty blue eyes and dark brown hair.

Combs, Rebecca

Description : Wyatt and Jessica's 17-year old daughter. She's pretty, young, and bored to death. She has her father's hair (sandy brown) and her mother's eyes (blue).

Combs, Tommy

Description : This is Wyatt and Jessica's 8 year-old son. He's so cute, he's ugly. He has brown hair and brown eyes, with freckles everywhere.

Combs, Wyatt

Description : He usually wears bib overalls, and openly displays a very large, very ugly-looking revolver in a hip holster. He's about 36, handsome in a down-home sort of way. Sandy brown hair and brown eyes.

[We had words with him about carrying his revolver around in town, but we could never get him to quit, even after the time his wife got it away from him and tried to kill him with it.]

Cook, Bud, the "Gas Man"

Description : Bud is slow-witted, lanky, and geeky-looking (he has buck-teeth and his adam's apple is too big). He has black (almost oily) hair and brown eyes, and he's about 5'9". He operates the town's gas station.

Grimes, Gerald "Jerry"

Description : One of the workers at Phil Mahr's corn field. He's even shorter than his temper, at 5'3". As they say, though, dynamite comes in small packages.

Mention his height and he'll gladly beat you to a pulp. He has dark blond collar-length hair and green eyes. He carries an old 9mm Luger hidden in his pocket.

Livingston, Tina

Description : Tina is an employee of Louis Rogers. She makes sure that his two harvesters are working, and helps out with some of the other jobs in his fields.

She is homely, weather-worn, and has piercing cold blue eyes that seem unnatural (they are). She is an accomplished fist fighter, and hangs out at the Tumbleweed, jibing Mahr's workers.

Mahr, Phil

Description : Local corn farmer. He has control of the corn that covers the fields to the west of town and employs about fifteen men to help plant and harvest the crop, along with about five automated pickers. He is, quite easily, the richest man in the area. He is balding, white-haired, and blue eyed.

Miller, Candice "Candy"

Description : Richard Miller's wife. She is petite, pretty, and she's a wonderful country cook. Her hair is straw-colored, and her eyes are brown.

Miller, John

Description : John is Richard's son. He's 16 years old. When he's not working with his father, he likes to ride his bicycle into town so that he can see Rebecca Combs. He is quickly growing to his father's height (6' already), and he's fairly strong from the hard work he does. He has blond hair and brown eyes.

Miller, Richard

Description : Miller is an average-looking man, about 32 years old, with brown hair and blue eyes. He's respectably tall (6'3"), and fairly strong. He raises cows, and is pretty good at veterinary work (making him the town "doctor", too).

Phelps, Harold

Description : One of Phil Mahr's employees, Harold is in charge of the automatic harvesters. He has a knack for robotics and loves the area. He is black, and his

skin is a smooth chocolate brown. His eyes are brown, and his hair is blond (dyed). He hangs around with Jerry Grimes.

Sanchez, Jorge

Description : This is another of the Mahr's cornfield workers. He's hispanic, 24 years old, black haired and brown eyed, 5'8" and average weight. He carries a survival knife on his belt, and everyone thinks he can use it. He hangs around with Jerry Grimes.

Scheumaker, Justin

Description : Biotechnicia rep in charge of the Crossroads project. He's slick, he's a corporate, and he thinks that anything can be bought or sold with enough haggling.

Rogers, Louis

Description : Louis grows grain (mostly wheat) on the south east side of town. He is Melissa's father. His wife died when Mel was born, and he's never quite gotten over it. He originally hails from Kansas, but moved to Crossroads to "get away from it all". Of course, Melissa hates it and fights with him constantly. He is 6' tall, with brown hair and hazel eyes.

Rogers, Melissa "Mel"

Description : Another pretty girl, age 16, and Rebecca Comb's best friend. She's red haired, green eyed, average height and weight. She smokes Virginia Slims cigarettes when she's sure no one's looking. She works as a waitress for Sneed.

Sneed, Mathew "Matt"

Description : Sneed is an imposing man with a yellow streak down his back a mile wide. He's bald, overweight, brown-eyed, and loves telling made-up war stories (he was a navy cook during the 2nd CentAm War). He's about 38, and stutters.

Turner, Lloyd

Description : The manager/owner of the town's Hotel. He is honest, and scared to death of indians, nomads, and wild animals. He is 34, brown-haired, and brown-eyed.

Part 4

NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE OUTLINE #10k...this first episode...we gotta introduce the characters. What we got going for us is :

AMY LUTHER - Sophie Maitland, Lt. from the Airborne Division

BRANT CLABAUGH - Bruce Ingles ("Wheels"), Sgt. from the Cruiser Patrol

KATRINA KINDA - Fiona Grayson, Veteran Officer from Tech

JOE KILCOYNE - Jonathan Burke, Veteran Officer from Outback Cruiser Patrol

Kat won't be here until 10 (or after), and we still have to do her equipment. Brant and Amy still have to finish their equipment, too, and I'll take care of Joe when he gets here. They get called in one morning to the Captain's office. What should her name be? Captain Evelyn Morris. She's a nice lady, blond going to gray. Not attractive, but not repulsive, either... plain. Blue cyberoptics, interface plugs, and a chip socket.

As it is, the NMSP have restricted their operations to the northern half of the state. Since the collapse, funds have not allowed law enforcement to be spared to the desolate wastes of the south. With no population or property to protect, it was both a waste of time and money. However, during the collapse (and shortly after), Biotechnicia purchased large tracts of land in the south-eastern part of the state. It was hoped that these areas could be used in later farming efforts. Lately, the corporation has supplied extensive irrigation to the areas, as well as providing land grants to capable individuals seeking their fortune in farming the hardy grains and animals supplied by their benefactors. If the experiments work, Biotechnicia will move in and create another cornucopia of the southwest. All that the farmers have to do in order to keep their land is sell their produce to Biotechnicia exclusively.

However, it's not as simple as it sounds. The areas to the west of the Biotechnicia-held properties are primarily U.S. Military-controlled. The deserts provide the army with a wonderfully huge testing ground, where new and interesting weapons of mass destruction can be tested without attracting too much attention. There have been some incidents between military units in the area and local "Settlers", as the Biotechnicia farmers are known, which usually end with the military on the winning side. Incidents have so far been on a low level of intensity, with very few shots (if any) being fired. Individual military units

will march in, throw their weight around, and leave. Sometimes an aircraft will do low-altitude bomb runs (practice, of course) on the settler towns. As always, it seems mostly harmless, but it is frightening.

Biotechnicia has called upon the state of New Mexico to do something, since its citizens are being terrorized. The state first contacted the military, explaining the situation and the grievances involved. The military high command was seemingly unaware of the problem, and promised to look into it. Under pressure from the corporation, the governor of New Mexico has ordered small groups of police to be sent to settler towns in order to see that law and order is maintained. It is the state's intention to utilize existing structures for police housing in order to cut costs.

Evelyn will explain most of this to the players. They've probably heard something about it in the screamsheets, etc. The group is ordered to go to a once-tiny-now-nonexistent town and recon the area, esp. the old police station. They are to check the structure out, and report on its condition via radio. If it is in good enough shape, they will be delivered some bare essentials (desks, bunks, etc.), as well as a couple of "professional" estimators, electricians, and of course, plumbers.

COMING DOWN

On the way down, about fifteen miles from the station, the surrounding desert will give way to signs of life...scrub, etc. As they near the station, they will find that they can see irrigated farm land in the distance. They'll pass through the town proper, which is made up of about five or six old buildings that have been restored. These consist of some residences, a hotel, a bar/restaraunt, and a general store.

Matt Sneed runs the "Tumbleweedd Bar", which is a cozy little place that serves up home-made grain spirits and the usual fare of soy products, SCOP, krill, and kibble (if you're really hungry). They also serve up genuine bio-engineered steaks that farmer Miller sells him under the table for an arm and a leg, if you can afford the stiff bill (around \$30, not including side orders). Sneed is an imposing man with a yellow streak down his back a mile wide. He's bald, brown-eyed, and loves telling made-up war stories.

Wyatt Combs runs the general store. He sells farm and camping equipment. Anything he doesn't have he can get within a week or two if the shipments get through. He usually wears bib overalls and openly displays a very large, very ugly-looking revolver in a hip holster. He's about 36, handsome in a down-home sort of way, and his wife would kill him if he looked at another woman cross-eyed. He has two kids, Tommy (8) and Rebecca (17). Rebecca works as a waitress over at the Tumbleweed. The hotel is a rickety old building with "HOTEL" painted on the front in big black letters. The manager/owner, Lloyd Turner, is an honest man who is scared to death of nomads, indians, and wild animals. He is around 34, brown-haired and brown eyed.

[This session was mostly introductory, to get the characters and some of the major NPCs introduced, as well as showing us the station. However, some strange things did happen in the first game:]

WHAT CAN I HIT THEM WITH?

1) Mutilated Cows

Some of Farmer Miller's livestock are dissected in his field. It's happened a few times this month, with a loss of about four cows. There are no footprints, no marks in the ground; nothing to indicate human or animal involvement. The animal's organs have been laid out in a pattern reminiscent of an autopsy. Nothing was seen or heard the night before.

[This was just plain weird, and was a suitable introduction for the Twilight Zone meets Mayberry atmosphere which permeated the entire game. Basically, we all ended up standing around the neatly dissected remains of a giant genemod cow, scratching our heads. Totally bamboozled.]

3) Lights in the west.

Bright lights in the west, over the mountains, in the direction of White Sands and Alamagordo.

[Again, something we JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND (spooky music plays).]

Part 5

NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE OUTLINE #20k, this is the second episode. This game, I'd like to cover a few areas that I've been mulling over. These include several encounters that are designed to add suspense, action, and fear to the campaign. They are (in order) :

1) Lights in the western skies (again).

These should freak the characters out just a little bit. Not knowing what the lights are will make it all the more fun. The lights start, as if someone flicks a switch, at around 9 pm every night. They "shut off", all at once, at around 5 am the next morning.

2) A practice napalm strike in the distance.

Just far enough away to see, right across the river. Three jets in a tight formation at about 1000 feet drop a few thousand kilograms of napalm, and then fly off towards the west.

3) Nomad/Smugglers.

Five of them (4 male, 1 female), driving a large pick-up truck (with camper shell) and a motorcycle. These guys are trouble, no doubt. They're part of a LARGER group that has been terrorizing the area for a few months now called the "Wasteland Warriors". As far as these guys go, they're the total opposite of "The Maxes" nomad pack listed in "Home of the Brave" pg 37. They dress in leathers, wild crazy-colored mohawks, wrist crossbows, etc, just like the bad guys in the "Road Warrior" movie. They've got the same attitude, too, and they take what they want. Driving into town, they'll probably be wanting fuel. They're coming from the north, and are planning to smuggle some stuff into Texas. Besides being mean and nasty, they're also a little more technically sophisticated than their film counterparts in "The Road Warrior": they use guns, computers, and more importantly, a small one-man helicopter ... (read on ...)

[These guys showed up in town when Bruce Ingles (Brant) and Johnathan Burke (Joe) were on patrol. A short but extremely violent firefight ensued, but the two officers emerged victorious and relatively unscathed. One of the nomads survived, but I don't remember which one. This was a harbinger of MUCH more deadly nomad violence to come ...]

The truck they arrive in is primer grey and black, all around. The bed is covered by a shell, also painted black, and is painted on either side with crude "THE MEEK CAN INHERIT MY ASS" logos. Inside, if the players GET inside, can be found a treasure trove of goodies (and baddies). Among junk (sleeping bags, clothes, etc), there is stuffed a 3 meter long by 1/2 meter in diameter capsule which is quite heavy, wieghing 250 kilos. Amy's character (with an AVERAGE difficulty INT+GYRO PILOT skill roll) will recognize it as a K&K F-2 Fliedermaus helicopter. Its maximum speed is around 110 mph, and it can carry the pilot and 100kg of stuff. The passeneger seat has been replaced by a makeshift cargo area. The thing itself is painted very dark gray (almost black), and a very good rendition of a screaming skull, complete with red and blue mohawk, decorates the thing's nose on either side. The machine will take an AVERAGE Gyro Tech skill to assemble, or a DIFFICULT Basic Tech roll. All tools needed for the assembly are in the capsule, as well.

[When I attempted to assemble this, I fumbled my Gyro Tech roll and broke my right thumb.]

Also included in the truck are two crates, each painted OD green and marked "PROPERTY OF U.S. ARMY, HLAW 105mm, 5 Count". Inside each crate are five HLAWS (H.O.B. pg. 84). Each crate weighs 30 kg. Also included is one "Scorpion 16" surface-to-air IR missile launcher (the new version of the "Stinger"). This item is unpackaged, and looks as if the nomads were planning on using it if they needed to. The players will also find six cans of aviation fuel (for the Fliedermaus). Also they will find about 30 kilos of synthetic endorphins ("Dorph") wrapped in celophane and duct tape. Eeew. Score.

[We sent the 'dorph up north as evidence, and we grudgingly returned the HLAWS and Scorpion to the Army as a gesture of good faith (fat lot of good it did us). I kept the Fliedermaus. Lt.'s privelege.]

WASTELAND WARRIORS

Nomad #1 - "HawkWind" ("Hawk" for short) Captain-Type/Leader

INT 6, REF 8, TECH 5, COOL 7, ATTR 5, LUCK 5, MA 9, BODY 7, EMP 6

Endurance +4 ; Resist Torture +5; Awareness +5; Hide/Evade +4; Shadow/Track +4; Archery +5 ; Athletics +4; Brawl +6; Melee +3; Handgun +3; Rifle +2; Stealth

+4; Motorcycle +5; Leadership +2

EQUIPMENT: 5mm Polymer One-Shot in pocket (1D6, 20m), Wrist Crossbow (2d6+2 AP) with twenty bolts, leather clothes (SP4), Big Ass Knife (1d6+2).

LOOKS : Red & Blue mohawk...typical road warrior wannabe, chains & leather, motorcycle.

Nomad #2 - "Del" Chopper Pilot

INT 6, REF 6, TECH 8, COOL 6, ATTR 3, LUCK 4, MA 4, BODY 6, EMP 7

Athletics +2; Brawl +4; Rifle +4; Handgun +4; Hvy Weapons +5; Gyro Pilot +5; Melee +1; Hide/Evade; +3; Gyro Tech +5; Basic Tech +6; Awareness +4

EQUIPMENT : Sawed off over & under shotgun (one or both barrels, 12 gauge 00 buckshot (4d6 each), one hit with dual blast counts as both rounds hitting one area and a random adjacent one as well), 12 shells, hip holster, knife (1d6), flak vest (SP16).

LOOKS : Wears nothing but sandals, a pair of blue shorts, and an old military surplus flak vest over his prominent beer gut. Thin brown hair and a scarred, ugly face. No body hair at all except on his back.

Nomad #3 - "Clarissa" ("Rose") Hawk's Fucktoy/Everyone's Fucktoy

INT 5, REF 4, TECH 2, COOL 5, ATTR 7, LUCK 5, MA 7, BODY 4, EMP 8

Seduction +5; Awareness +2; Brawl +2; Fuck&Suck +4; Melee +2; Personal Grooming +3

EQUIPMENT : Her body, various make-up and hair spray stuff, a pocket mirror, and a small knife (1D3).

LOOKS : Could be prettier, but she's been high since she was 12, and lost her virginity at 10. She has blondish/brown hair with dark roots, pretty blue eyes, and her teeth have been filed to points.

Nomad #4 - "Casey" Truck Driver

INT 7, REF 6, TECH 8, COOL 6, ATTR 6, LUCK 6, MA 6, BODY 8, EMP 6

Awareness +5; Athletics +4; Driving +6; Melee +5; Handgun +4; Rifle +5; Basic Tech +5

EQUIPMENT: Militech "Plainsman" (+2, 5d6, 10, 2, VR) with three clips and a 6mm Dai Lung Cybermag (1d6+1, UR).

LOOKS : Rugged, unshaven, and mean. His left ear has been pierced twenty-

three times, and his hair is dyed day-glow safety orange. He wears a tiger-striped tank top and old faded ripped-up leather pants, along with pointy-toed cowboy boots that have been scuffed up so many times it's hard to tell they're leather. Wears a leather jacket over the whole ensemble with an armor SP of 11 (it's got some holes in it).

Nomad #5 - "Fleet" Tag-Along Gopher Geekboy

INT 5, REF 6, TECH 5, COOL 3, ATTR 4, LUCK 5, MA 9, BODY 3, EMP 7

Awareness +4; Dodge/Escape +6; Hide/Evade +6; Stealth +6; Brawling +5;

Athletics +2; Melee +2 (+4 with improvised weapons); Handgun +2; Pick Pocket +5

EQUIPMENT : Dai Lung Streetmaster 10mm (2d6+3, 12, 2, UR), Pocket Knife (1d6), soft-heeled moccasins, wierd hat and dark circular sunglasses, half kilo of snap-coke.

LOOKS : Like the weasel he is. Will beg for mercy, run and hide if given the chance. Doesn't mind backstabbing if he's sure he can get away with it...otherwise, he'll just grovel and ask for mercy. He has brown hair and dirty looking eyes with yellow whites. Has a terrible snapcoke addiction.

That's it for the Nomads.

As for military heat, check the stats in home of the brave, and ignore the combat sense abilities (of course)

4) A Militech AVX-9C Viper does some "blank" strafing runs on Crossroads, just for kicks.

Before it leaves, it does a fly-by on the police station, at about 450 miles per hour, at 200 feet, firing blanks the whole time from its 7.62mm minigun.

[I was out trying to fix the busted radiator hose on my four-by when I heard the scream of the AV's turbines and turned around ... just in time to see it lining up for its strafing run ...]

5) Late at night, the watchman gets a surprise : strange lights in the sky. They come down from above, and make weird patterns in the night sky; the maneuvers are too erratic and unconventional to be regular airplanes or AV's. One of the lights flickers, then falls to the ground. It impacts about five miles to the east. Characters who don't go looking are idiots, but I suppose they'll check it

out. The craft is a special military design taken from (supposed) alien technology. It suffered a propulsion malfunction and crashed. The pilot (a U.S. Army “Wingman” full cyborg conversion) will crawl out of the wreck as the players are investigating. He’s damaged, but is mobile. His vocal circuits are damaged, and he cannot talk. He will try to remain in the same spot, and will resist if messed with. If attacked, he will fight back (using his Colt AMT 200 and his wrist blade). After the players have been poking around for five minutes, they will hear turbines in the distance, coming from the west. Two AV-6’s and one AV-9 will approach and circle. One of the AV-6’s will come to a hover about 50 ft up. A voice will announce that the characters should leave the area at once, since there is a “radiation” hazard. Observant PC’s will notice that, as this message is relayed, the mini-gun in the AV’s chin turret will begin to revolve, warming up to cut the players down if they don’t leave quietly. If they don’t leave, the AV will ask for orders, and will be granted permission take warning shots at the PC group. If the group opens fire and tries to stick around, the AV’s will (very likely) both fly in and hose them down with full metal jackets.

[This crash was our first indication of how absolutely evil the military presence in White Sands was. We arrived at the crash site with every intention of rendering assistance to any survivors. We’d just begun to examine the twisted wreckage of a craft too bizarre to be described when one of the PC’s ... I don’t remember who, but I think it was Joe ... catches sight of a Wingman FBC watching us from about twenty feet away, from where he’d crawled free of the wreckage. Gary didn’t TELL us it was an FBC, of course, so there were a few tense moments while we tried to figure out if it was an alien, a robot, a pilot in a really odd flight suit, or what. It didn’t help that the thing couldn’t talk. After we figured out exactly what he was, and saw that he was injured, we attempted to help him, but he warned us off with his wrist blade and we were frankly too spooked to insist. Just as it looks as if things are going to get ugly, the Army AVs arrive, as detailed above. We took the hint and skedaddled, pissed off but not willing to press the point.]

6) If absolutely necessary (I don’t think it will be), I’ll throw in another cattle mutilation just for fun.

Part 6

NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE OUTLINE #30k, outline for this evening's festivities...alright, so last game, the players encountered members of the "Wasteland Warriors", a group of nomadic smugglers. All but one of the nomads was killed, and the stash of goodies that they were transporting was confiscated (most of which was sent upstate). We were also introduced to military testing practices, which included a far-away napalm strike, and a pseudo strafing run on the other players. That evening, they found a crashed UFO and it's inhabitant, but were shooed away by the army. Tonight, a week or two will have passed without incident.

This game...what should we do?

1) Lights In The Western Sky.

Same shit as usual. Starts around 9pm, ends around 5 am the next morning. One of these days, the lights won't go on, and then the "War Of The Worlds" thing will start. He He He. Maybe next game, depending on how this one goes. I'd like to go for a little sci-fi/horror element. We'll see.

2) Mrs. Jessica Combs.

She's caught her husband's eyes wandering in the direction of Katrina's character, Fiona. She's finally made up her mind, taken his gun, and is threatening to blow him away. He's hiding behind the counter of his store, trying to talk her out of it. She's already shot at him twice, missing both times. The general store reeks with the smell of dill pickles (one of her shots hit a shelf of them, knocking the jars (crashing) to the ground). This situation can be defused very easily (I figure) by Katrina (though part of Mrs. Combs' anger will be at her character in particular, so a failed roll might induce a shooting).

[This encounter took place a few weeks after we'd settled into the station, and since everybody'd been working like dogs to get the place up to speed, I gave all the PC's the night off. That left me to run the station all by my l'il old self, and I got a frantic call from someone ... I can't remember who ... regarding the trouble at the general store. Fiona and Burke (Joe) were eating dinner across the street at the Tumbleweed, and we converged on the store. This was a humorous

situation which could quickly have turned ugly if we'd reacted differently (i.e., charged in like gangbusters and blown Mrs. Combs away). Instead, we threw ourselves into the roleplaying, and had a vastly amusing "talkdown" with Mrs. Combs ... "Put the gun down, Jessica! No, I can't arrest your husband for adultery for looking at Officer Grayson ... No, I'm really sorry, but I can't fire her, either ... " We eventually got her calmed down and confiscated Mr. Combs' gun. Unfortunately, we had to give it back. Mrs. Combs went to stay with her sister in Albuquerque.]

3) Smugglers

An AV lands in an empty field near Louis Rogers' house. He calls the cops to inform them that there are possible trouble makers out and about. In reality, the smugglers have just landed after making their way out of Texas. They aren't carrying any contraband (right now), except for their weapons. All they want is to get back to Albuquerque. There are three of them : the pilot (Joshua Ames, "Twitch", but his friends call him "Josh"), the muscleman (Wilhelm Stein, lovingly known as "Frank" or "Frankenstein" because of his enhancements), and the co-pilot/navigator (David Darwin, "DD"). Ames is 5'8", 145 lbs, with shoulder-length red hair and blue eyes, with neural interface jacks at his temple. Stein is 6'4", musclebound, with two cybernetic arms, a shaved head, and red eyes. He wears a tank top that threatens to tear at the seams. Darwin is 5'10", a little chubby, with black hair and brown eyes. He has a neural interface jack in his left wrist. All men are armed (Ames and Darwin with pistols in shoulder rigs, and Stein with an FN-FAL slung over his shoulder). They don't want any trouble, they're just taking it easy. They'll try to talk their way out of a fight (or arrest).

[The story behind Twitch dates back to our very first Night City Cops game, in which he was my character's best friend (till an apartment bombing sent her to Cop Heaven, anyway). Again, another situation which could have turned ugly if handled poorly. We drove up and played the hick-country-sheriff role to the hilt. We harassed, searched, dressed down, inspected, and hollered, but couldn't find anything to hold them on, so they left. In truth, we didn't want to arrest them ... we were just getting a kick out of abusing our power.]

4) The Cowboys

The Cowboys ride in on their hogs. Actually, three neo-cowboys on Harley Darkwing motorcycles ride into town. They're dressed like cowboys, talk like cowboys, and drink like cowboys. Each of them wears a black sash tied around his/her waist, below their gunbelts.

Cowboy #1 - "Strawberry," Nomad "Cowboy"

INT 6 REF 7 TECH 4 COOL 8 ATTR 4 LUCK 5 MA 7 BOD 6 EMP 6

Intimidate +4; Awareness +5; Hide/Evade +4; History +2; Spanish +4; Track +5; Athletics +3; Brawling +5; Handgun +6; Melee +4; Motorcycle +5; Rifle +5; Stealth +4

Equipment : Crossed gunbelts; the left holster holds a Colt AMT2000 handgun (4d6+2, 8/1), the right holds a Militech Arms Avenger (2d6+1, 10/2); he also carries a large Bowie-style knife on his left ankle, and has all the cowboy accoutrements (including an armored duster, SP14).

Description : Strawberry has a raised, red birthmark covering about 90% of his face. Even though that's where he gets his nickname, he's very touchy about it. He is also mute. His hair is brown, and his eyes are blue.

Cowboy #2 - Mary Ann, Nomad Cowboy (Cowgirl?)

INT 8 REF 7 TECH 6 COOL 6 ATTR 6 LUCK 5 MA 8 BOD 5 EMP 6

Streetwise +5; Fast Talk +4; Awareness +5; Spanish +4; Track +4; Wilderness Survival +5; Archery +3; Athletics +3; Brawling +4; Driving +3; Handgun +5; Melee +2; Motorcycle +4; Stealth +3; Basic Tech +2

Equipment : Gunbelt w/Fed Arms 454 DA Super Chief (4d6+3, 5/1) and hunting knife. She dresses in tight jeans, cowboy boots, and a loose-fitting white cotton blouse, as well as a black stetson. She has two frag grenades in her saddlebags amid her other gear. She also smokes.

Description : Mary Ann could be pretty, but she chooses not to be. Instead, she takes on the role of a tom boy. She has blond hair tied back in a pony tail, and blue eyes. She stands at 5'7", and weighs a little over normal.

Cowboy #3 - Cagney, Nomad Cowboy/Leader Type

INT 7 REF 8/10 TECH 5 COOL 9 ATTR 7 LUCK 7 MA 6 BOD 8 EMP 8/6

Intimidate +5; Fast Talk +6; Awareness +7; Spanish +6; Navaho +5; Track +5;

W. Survival +5; Athletics +5; Brawling +4; Driving +5; Handgun +8; Melee +5; Motorcycle +6; Rifle +6; Stealth +5; SMG +5; Basic Tech +5; Disguise +4; Weaponsmith +4

Equipment : Old, polished leather gunbelt w/.338 Nova Citygun (3d6, 7/3) and ammo. Also carries a lever-action .44 rifle (4d6, 8/2) in his bike's saddle bag.

Cyberware: Reflex Boost +2, Cybereyes (It is milky white, rt is blue) w/Flare Compensation, IE, Thermal, and teleoptics.

Description : Cagney is usually good-natured, but very serious. He's about 45, but looks around 35. He wears an eye-patch over his left eye (which is made to look cataract), but the patch is a fake — he can actually see through it. He has short brown hair and is about 6'1". (GM's Note : Cagney was probably the most dangerous character the players ever ran into, though they never really found out.)

The Cowboys don't want any trouble with the locals, or the cops. They're part of a scouting group that is looking for any Wasteland Warriors in the area. They won't tell anyone this, though; they'll just say they're passing through. They'll arrive one night, stay at the Hotel, and probably stick around a couple days to watch the cars rust.

[Being small-town cops, we had all the prejudices against Nomads that small-town cops usually do. We rode herd on these guys about wearing weapons on the street, but they proved to be remarkably quiet visitors ... and the trouble which happened next made them a secondary concern.]

5) R&R.

Two NCO's from the military base ride into town in a HumVee. They park at the Tumbleweed and get to drinking. This lasts a couple hours. When they get really drunk, they start grabbing at Rebecca and Mel (the waitresses). When Sneed pipes up that they should leave the girls alone, one of them draws his service pistol and tells Sneed he'd better take a walk. Sneed takes a walk — into the kitchen, where he promptly calls the police.

NCO #1 - SSGT. Trevor Cobb, Military Bad Guy

INT 6 REF 6 TECH 4 COOL 8 ATTR 7 LUCK 5 MA 7 BOD 6 EMP 6

All Weapon Skills at +4; Handgun at +5; Melee and Brawling both at +3

Equipment : Uniform, combat webbing and Colt AMT 2000 pistol (4d6+2, 8/1) with three clips.

Description : Tall, about 22 years old, with short blond hair and hazel eyes. Has acne scars on his cheeks.

NCO #2 - SGT. Phillip MacKenzie, Military Bad Guy

INT 6, REF 5, TECH 6, COOL 6, ATT 6, LCK 7, M.A. 8, BODY 5, EMP 8

All Weapons skills at +4; Rifle at +5; Melee and Brawling both at +3; Drive +4.

Equipment : Uniform, combat webbing and Colt AMT 2000 pistol (4d6+2, 8/1) with three clips. Militech MkIV Assault Weapon with three clips in the HumVee.

These guys will be ready to shoot the resisting girls when the police show up to spoil their fun. Gunfight or peaceful? Suppose it depends on the boys and if they make their cool rolls or not.

[Hoo, boy. Here's the firefight that cost me my arm. We got a call from Sneed about nine o'clock on a Saturday evening, screeching about a pair of Army men who'd collared Rebecca and Mel (as you may recall, two fifteen- and sixteen-year old girls who worked as waitresses at the Tumbleweed). We scrambled to the Tumbleweed, sirens blaring. Grayson (Katrina) and I went around the back, and Burke (Joe) and Ingles (Brant) slammed in through the saloon-style doors. This scared the Army boys so badly that they panicked, and shots were fired. One of the Army men was too slow in dropping his pistol, and Burke nailed him in the leg, whereupon both Burke and Ingles jumped on him and did that cop "beat-about-the-head-and-shoulders" thing that they do so well. The other Army man hightailed it straight through the kitchen and out the back door, where he ran into Grayson and Maitland ... except when WE yelled, "Police! Put down your weapon!" he freaked out and blew my left arm right off. Yikes. Grayson responded by shooting HIM in the arm, and at that point the combat was over. I was medevaced to Santa Fe, and was in hospital for a week or so, getting my new arm. More about this in a bit.]

6) Hope it doesn't come to this.

Wasteland Warrior patrol comes into town looking for their buddies from last game. Of course, they'll only find the Cowboys sitting around, waiting, not to mention the cops. I'll just use the stats from the old ones...

Wasteland Waste #1 - "Kilroy"

Description : 5'8", Hispanic. His arms have ritual scarring up and down their lengths. He wears tight black spandex bicycle shorts, a snake-skin print tank top, and combat boots. His hair is combed out into dreadlocks that fall onto his shoulders. His teeth are stained, and he chews tobacco.

Wasteland Waste #2 - "Franz"

Description : 6'2", White, Muscular. Has wolvers installed into each arm. He is dressed in biker pants (with lots of zippers, studs, and buckles), biker boots (with more of those zippers, studs, and buckles), a white t-shirt with a picture of Donald Duck on it (with the faded words "Walt Disney World, Florida" on the breast), and a black kevleather biker jacket (complete with...you guessed it, zippers, studs, and buckles). He also has a machete and a medium autopistol of some kind.

[These guys did come into town, but what with the hullaballo at the Tumbleweed, both we and the Cowboys kinda missed them. Wish we hadn't, because they reported back and mustered the rest of their group.]

Part 7

NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE OUTLINE #4Ok...the next game. What shall we do? Well, last game, we had the obligatory "lights in the sky" bit. Mrs. Combs tried to turn her hubby into a man-sized piece of Swiss cheese. Twitch and his smuggler buddies came and went. The cowboy nomads rode into town, and are looking hard as blue steel. And finally, we had those two drunk NCO's try to get some poontang from the Tumbleweed's unwilling waitresses. What a day that was.

What's up for this game?

1) Lights in the sky. Same shit, different session.

[Obviously, these became a regular feature of the game. Every night, the lights would come on. Every morning, they'd go off. We came to take them for granted ... until the next game. More about this later.]

2) Colonel Tagge

Air Force Colonel Tagge shows up in an armored HumVee with two armed MP's. He marches into the office, or up to the nearest cop, and asks, "Who's in charge here?" Everyone looks at Brant. Tagge is a scary individual. He is 5'10", and weighs in at a lean, mean 160 pounds. He has cotton-white hair, and one green eye. That is to say, his left eye (as well as the left side of his face) has been replaced. Think Breetai with white hair, almost. The left side of his face has undergone extreme cranial reconstruction. The flesh around his jaw is scarred; however, he has no other skin/hair on the left side of his face to speak of (his ear is also missing). A gun-metal skullcap was installed, as well as an artificial eye (red, of course).

Colonel Kevin Tagge (USAF)

Administrator of Army Testing Grounds, ex-Delta Pilot

Age : 38 Ht : 5'10" Wt. : 160 Hair : White Eyes : Green/Red

REF 7/9, INT 7, COOL 9, TECH 6, ATTR 8/4, LUCK 5, MA 5, EMP 7/3, BODY 5, BTM -2, Save 5

Awareness +6; Handgun +5; Basic Tech +4; Athletics +3; Electronics +4; First Aid +3; 0G Maneuver +8; 0G Combat +6; EVA +2; Space Survival +6; Spaceplane/Shuttle Pilot +8; Astrogation +6; Intimidate +4; Leadership +6; Pilot Fixed-Wing +6; Brawling +4; Melee +4

Cyberware - Kerenzekov Booster (+2), Neural Processor, Pain Editor, Vehicle Link, Interface Plugs, Left Side Cranial Reconstruction/Plate, Left Cyberoptic w/Times Square, Anti-Dazzle, and Thermograph, Left Cyberarm w/Thickened Myomar (Total HC - 43.5)

Small History/Personality - Tagge was one of the best Delta pilots until his craft was hit by a missile in the Euro-American Conflict of 2008. He survived by crawling into a rescue bubble, but at a terrible cost - his left arm and most of his face had been horribly wounded. He underwent months of surgery and treatment, but when it was all over he was forced into a desk job earthside, maintaining the joint army/air force testbeds in New Mexico. Tagge is grim, proper, and ruthless; he is also a good tactician.

Tagge walks in, stares everyone down. He asks about his men, since he's heard that they are in the custody of the NMSP. Same day service, by jove. Anyway, he'll probably be denied. He'll ask the circumstances surrounding the arrests. He'll ask to see the men. Once all this is over, he'll ask for a word with Brant in private. In short, he'll ask for his men back. He'll promise that military justice will take its course. He'll ask Brant not to waste anyone's time with the formalities of sending the boys north. He'll even go so low as to offer a favor in return for Brant's cooperation. Failing this, he'll mention that he can quite easily go over Brant's head. If he's completely rejected, he will leave standing tall, without a word or glance behind.

[This was perhaps the most intense moment in the entire game. Picture, if you will, the Colonel entering as though he owns the station. Sgt. Ingles (Brant) meets him midway, and then the shit hits the fan — two men, both determined to have their way, one with enough military power to have the station and all the officers within it blown away at a single word, the other with nothing more powerful than a Militech Mk IV at his disposal, but who knows the law is on his side. At this point we did not know if my character (the Lt.) would make it, as she was in ICU in Santa Fe when Tagge showed up at the base, so Brant had to consider the fact that the two Army guys might be facing homicide charges. No dice were rolled, but this goes down as the tensest, most classic confrontation in my entire roleplaying career.]

[Brant didn't back down.]

Now, if Brant lets Tagge take the two guys (which I REALLY doubt), Tagge will be much in Brant's debt. What this debt could consist of is up to Brant, I suppose. However, if he doesn't get the men, he'll be fairly displeased, though not at all angry. He'll call his superiors and try to get things done. His superiors, in turn, will reply that (for the sake of public relations, etc) the boys should burn. Tagge is concerned because the soldiers have knowledge of confidential material and activities. He'll let them go if he has to, since they'll end up back to him about a week or two later, anyway. Either that, or more likely, he'll set up a few snipers and blow the boys new assholes when they're shipped north.

[And that's exactly what happened. Tagge left. The Army men were held at the station pending orders from our higher-ups (who were suffering from the consequences of Tagge's behind-the-scenes maneuvering, though we didn't know it at the time). By the time word came down, I had been released from the hospital, jacked up on speedhealing drugs and endorphins, and the Army guys were scheduled to be taken up for arraignment on the same AV that I flew back in. So, we have me, climbing out of the AV with both of my arms wrapped up (remember, I broke my thumb on the other arm trying to put together that damned Fliedermaus). We have the two Army men, looking hangdog and pathetic in their jail clothes and restraints. It's a hundred degrees in the shade, a mini-dust devil kicking up from the AV turbines, and blindingly bright from the noon sun. We're all deaf from the AV, so, in perfect silence, the head of one of the Army men explodes into a rain of red gore. Everyone freezes, and then, as though in slow-mo, we hit the dirt. But not fast enough, and the second Army man goes down. No more shots were fired, and though we canvassed the area immediately with our AV, we found nothing. I can imagine how antish and ineffectual we must have looked to the Army sniper, scrabbling around trying to pick the second guy's brains up out of the dust.]

3) Phillip Mahr calls the station.

"There's somethin' movin' 'round in my corn. It attacked one of my men, so git yer asses out here and shoot the fucker." This'll happen at around nine o'clock at night, which won't make for happy people — the workers are tired from working all day, and want nothing more than to relax.

Story is, one of the workers was out taking a leak when a spidery clicking thing sprang out of the corn and jabbed him a couple of times, then took off back into the corn. Jerry Grimes is my number one man for the injury. He'll be crying bloody murder when the cops arrive. As it is, he's got two bloody holes in his body - one in his thigh, about six inches from where his dick is, and the other in his lower abdomen. The holes are about a centimeter across, and remind anyone taking a closer look at them of the holes you can make in an apple with a straw, where the piece in the middle is removed. Miller will be looking him over when

the characters arrive. Mahr tried to get some of the men to go into the corn and find whatever it was that got Jerry, but they're all too scared to go.

It's not an alien in the corn, my friends, but a small spidery botanical robot with a severe malfunction ... or is it programmed funny? Whichever, it's running around with a modified version of its "pest control" software running. It will use sharp, hollow tubes used to sample soil in order to do away with any pests that get in its way (including the cops). The tubes do 1d6+2 to any body location hit.

The John Deere Botanical Spider Droid

1 - Sensor Array (SDP 5)

2 to 4 - Main Body (SP4, SDP 20)

5 to 7 - Legs, Right Side

8 to 0 - Legs, Left Side.

The droid has ten legs, five on each side. Once all legs on one side are destroyed, the creature can only walk in circles with its non-functional side acting as a pivot in the dirt. A hit in the sensor array that destroys it will render the droid "blind," and it will strike out randomly. Main body hits must inflict a total of 20 SDP before it stops functioning. If it takes more than 30 SDP, the programming circuits will have been destroyed. The critter has a movement score of 8, and is about a foot in diameter, with the legs sticking out an additional foot on each side. It has a base 10 chance to hit with its tubes, and can make two attacks per round. It also has a nozzle in its "face" which can spray ten "shots" of an industrial strength pesticide which will cause vomiting, blindness, and possibly death if ingested.

If the critter is "caught" or "killed", it will be found that Louis Rogers' name is laser-etched on its belly. If questioned, he will state that yes, indeed, it is his equipment, but he doesn't know how it got to the other side of town, much less why it was attacking anyone. After all, Tina Livingston is in charge of his bots. If questioned, she won't admit to anything (though if anyone rolls a human perception roll of 15 or better, they'll know she's hiding something).

Truth be told, she sent the droid over as a practical joke against Jerry, but she didn't know it would turn so ugly. This is all true — she didn't think it would do any harm, since it was programmed to come back the next morning. This could

lead to her dismissal from Louis' farm, and possibly her arrest by the players.

We'll have to see.

If the bot isn't totally wasted, and someone checks its programming, they'll find it's running a modified version of a pest-control routine that increases the pest size to human configuration.

[Specifically, it was modified to attack anything under 5'3" in height, and since all of Mahr's workers were over 5'5" tall, there wasn't much chance of it going after anyone besides its designated target, Jerry Grimes (coincidentally, 5'3" tall ...).

Let me emphasize, since it's important in the next part, that WE DID NOT KNOW THIS LITTLE BIT OF HEIGHT TRIVIA! To add insult to injury, its pesticide reservoirs had been refilled with cat piss, so Jerry got a hefty dose of Nature's finest fragrance.]

[Ingles (Brant) and Burke (Joe) got the duty again, so, on a windy, moonlit August evening, they ventured into Mahr's 12' genengineered cornfields to track and capture something which just might be an escaped alien from the nearby Army base. You can probably imagine the scene. It's a full moon, the wind rushing through the cornfields, and these two officers (scared shitless) are creeping through the rows, pistols drawn, jumping at every insect movement and owl hoot. Of course, what they don't know is that the bot has been programmed to ignore them, since they're over its height restrictions (5'3", as you recall). However, they're trying to be smart, and so they're crouching, weaving, and bobbing as they move through the field, and so the bot's getting confused — now they're targets, now they're not. It gets closer, and they freeze and stand up, and it loses interest ... and they crouch, and it comes back. It's only a row or two away when they decide the search is fruitless, and stand up to start laughing at each other for being such pussies. As they stand, it stops. But they hear it rustling and ticking, just a few feet away, and they instinctively crouch back to back to reduce their profile. And, of course, that's the trigger it needs to launch its attack.]

[Two freaked-out officers exit cornfield a few minutes later, dragging the destroyed remains of a John Deere Botanical Spider Droid behind them.]

[We examined it, as Gary had suspected we would, and tracked it back to Tina,

and wormed what she'd done out of her. Jerry pressed charges ... actually, the little bastard tried to shoot her, and after we broke THAT up, we took her back to the station on an assault w/deadly weap. charge. She remained in custody until the end of the game.]

4) The matter of Lt. Maitland's medical bills is covered below.

Lt. Maitland's Medical Bills

SERVICE FEE

Cyberarm 3000

Quick Change Mount 200

Reinforced Joints 200

Standard Hand 150

Surgery 2500

Nanoid Treatment 1500

Speed Healing Drugs 1650

Two Days I.C.U. 2000

One Day Hospital Room 300

—

SUB-TOTAL 11,500

Insurance Coverage - 5750

12 Month Plan (30%) + 1725

—

TOTAL 7475

TOTAL COST PER MONTH : \$623.00 per month

[Unusual for a Cyberpunk game in that a player actually had to make payments on a limb she didn't even want.]

5) The newbie will come up with Maitland, or shortly before.

His name is Paul Charlemagne, known by his friends as "Char". He is/was a paramedic with a unit in New Mexico, but due to some trouble he has been reassigned almost permanently to the Crossroads project.

Name : Paul "Char" Charlemagne Paramedic/Medic

Age : 28 Ht : 5'10" Wt : 170 Hair : Brown Eyes : Brown

REF 7, INT 8, COOL 7, TECH 8, ATTR 7, LUCK 6, MA 8, EMP 7, BODY 7, BTM

-2, Save 7

Resist Torture/Drugs +4; Streetwise +5; Fast Talk +4 ;Awareness +4; Biology +4;
Diagnose Illness +4; General Knowledge +4; Gamble +5; Library Search +3;
Brawl +2; Handgun +4; Medtech +5; Cryotank Operation +2; Pharmaceuticals +2
Cyberware - Biomonitor, Neuralware Processor, Pain Editor, Chip Socket, Total
HC - 7.5

Advantages/Disadvantages - Greedy (-4), Strong Stomach (+3)

Small History/Personality -

Char was put into an administrative limbo when he shot a young boy at a crime scene. He and his unit had responded to a call for help involving shots fired. He went in a little bit edgy. The boy, a ten-year-old, had run from the shadows suddenly, and Char fired without thinking. The local authorities hushed up what might have been a circus for the media by blaming the boy's death on those involved in the original crime. Nevertheless, his license was revoked and he was left without a job, to wallow in his guilt. When the Crossroads project came about, Char was notified that he was being assigned to it, far away from the prying eyes and ears of News 54 or WNS. Char carries his service pistol, but he never loads it anymore. It's more for looks. He's also developed a small problem - he can't sleep without taking a soporific, and he can't wake up without taking a stimulant. He has a small supply of these pills with him at all times. He's glum, with a macabre sense of humor. He's not happy with where he is, and he's not shy about letting you know, either. He's not a cop, and will stress this if ordered to do something he's against doing (like loading his gun or helping with an arrest). He dresses in a blue paramedic jumpsuit.

Equipment - Armor T-Shirt (SP10), Budgetarms Auto 3 (P -1 J E 3D6 (11mm) 8 2 UR 50m.) pistol and shouler holster, a large assortment of medical gear, several pill bottles filled with medication.

Part 8

NEW MEXICO STATE POLICE OUTLINE #51) Justin Scheumaker.

Justin Sheumaker, Biotechnicia's representative for Crossroads, will show up in a

blue and green helicopter with an armed (pistol only) corporate bodyguard. He'll shake hands, check up on people, and stay for a while. He'll give the characters a thumbs up on their performance, tell them how much the corporation appreciates them, and then he'll hand out \$1000 checks to each and every officer. If the officers ACCEPT the money, well, that's as good as a gratuity. Worse yet, it's as good as a bribe, ensuring future blackmail.

[This guy was a slimy suit with a smile. We refused the money and sent him on his way.]

2) Wasteland Warriors ride into town.

How many? Let's say that there are five of them, just for kicks :

"Skull" - Skull is about 6'3", rides a big Harley Thundergod motorcycle, and likes pinching the heads off of newborns. He dresses in a black kevleather (SP16) bodysuit. His head is shaved bald, and the likeness of a skull has been skillfully tattooed all over it. He is equipped with cybereyes (low lite, thermograph, flare comp) which glow an eerie green, and armed with an old Thompson SMG (military, not gangster).

"Dirge" - Dirge subscribes to the typical biker fiend philosophy from "The Road Warrior" in that he dresses in biking leathers, chains, zippers, spikes, etc, and he's got the obligatory wrist crossbow. He's also armed with a mini-uzi. 5'9", 180 lbs. Green mohawk and brown eyes.

Frankie - The whiner of the group, Frankie is a wimp who'd sell his buddies out for a nickel, though he's probably too scared to. He chews tobacco and smokes cigarettes, usually at the same time. He is 5'10", 165 lbs, with wiry blond hair that spills onto his shoulders. He usually dresses in jeans and a t-shirt, making him the most "normal" of the bunch. He's armed with a 9mm Polymer 1-Shot with six rounds left in the magazine.

Sybil - Amazon bitch from hell, lemme tell you. She's about 6'5", 210 pounds (which is mostly muscle, and only partly tit). She's shaved one side of her head, and her long, copper hair flows down the other side like a waterfall. She has silver eyes (cyberoptics with flare comp & IR). She dresses in flak pants (SP18), an armored t-shirt (SP10), and a red tank top with the word "Dyke" written on it in

“Nike” style. She carries a Kalishnikov A-80 Hvy. Assault Rifle, a Stolbovoy ST-2 10mm pistol, and a machete.

“Gremlin” - Biker mechanic, Gremlin dresses in a heavy black leather jacket (SP4) and ripped black denim jeans. He carries a Llama Commanche .44 in a hip holster, and wears a hockey goalie’s mask that is painted up to resemble a drooling green beastie. He also has a tool belt strapped onto his waist opposite the holster. He has greasy black hair and brown eyes.

This group will drive in on three bikes (Skull’s thundergod, Sybil on a similar hog, and Dirge on a rice-grinding crotch rocket, as well as Frankie and Gremlin in an old beat-up RX-7. They’re not in the best of moods, and won’t be none too overjoyed to see cops. The first thing they’ll run into will be law enforcement’s intervention. That is, however, if the Cowboys don’t get them first. I suppose I’ll have to have the cops show up downtown before I unleash my dogs of war upon the coppers. Say there’s a face-off between cop and Waste(land Warriors), and just when it’s looking either real good or real bad, the cowboys pop one of them (maybe Dirge) from a roof. Chaos ensues. Could be good.

[Yup. Grayson (Katrina) and Burke (Joe) were, I think, eating lunch in the Tumbleweed at the time. Maitland and Ingles (Brant) were stocking up on toilet paper, beer, and other necessary sundries at the grocery when the Waste rode into town. They pulled up right in front of the Tumbleweed, stormed in, and demanded to know where their friends were (the Fliedermaus guys, from earlier). When Grayson attempted to talk reasonably to them, they beat the crap out of her and took her hostage. Yee-haw. Things Were Looking Bad for Our Heroes ... Grayson’s on the ground outside the Tumbleweed with Dyke holding a pistol to her head, Burke’s stuck inside, being covered by (I think) Frankie; Ingles and Maitland are down the street, but we can neither advance nor open fire without getting Grayson’s head blown inside-out.]

[Enter the Cowboys. While we’re facing off, we see the three (Strawberry, Mary-Ann, and Cagney) take up positions around the Tumbleweed and the building across the street. With no words spoken, Burke teams up with Cagney (on the roof opposite), and I kinda hang out with Strawberry. Then all hell breaks loose. Once again, we had an absolutely amazing fight in which everyone got shot, but

thanks to armor, etc., the officers made it out with only minor wounds. Even Grayson lived.]

I suppose that once done with their job, the cowboys will get on their bikes and leave, unless the cops try to detain them, which won't happen without a fight.

They'd better watch it.

[Fight's over, Cowboys are saddling up, Ingles and I mosey up.

"Well," I say, "I guess we'd better be arresting you three now."

Nobody says anything. The Cowboys continue to pack their gear. Ingles and I look at each other. Cagney, without looking up, says, "Uh-huh." Keeps packing.

Long pause.

"Guess that would be a bad idea," I say.

Cagney, still packing: "Uh-huh."

Longer pause.

Ingles and I mosey away. The Cowboys leave town, never to be seen again.]

3) Char forces Amy to submit to an exam.

He'll take a sample from her, and then tell her the results of Joe's exam, versus the two army goons. Thing is, he's showing signs of some sort of chemical in his blood and tissue. Char doesn't know what it is, but he found far greater quantities in both of the army boy's samples. He'd like to perform sampling on everyone, if he could. He'd also like a copy of the autopsies done of the army corpses.

Problem here is that the corpses were taken by the army less than an hour after landing. Seems the army goons had all the proper paperwork.

What's Joe got inside him? Well, someone (or something) did a good one on him. This chemical will remain a mystery for a long time. I'm not sure now what it does. I'll say it's just an alien knock-out drug. Why not?

[This requires some explanation. Earlier in the game, after Scheumaker showed up but before the Wasteland Warriors-Cowboy incident, Burke (Joe) was out patrolling the outlying farms one night. He got out of his car to look at the stars, and after he came back to the station, he found out that he'd been incommunicado for several hours, none of which he remembered. Upon physical examination (I thought he'd been out there shooting up with some of Char's stash), we found airhypo marks on his neck. We never found out what had

happened. Chalk it up to alien abduction. Just more of the general craziness that marked this game.]

4) The lights.

Anyone on watch at around 11:15pm one night will look up from whatever they were doing, because the lights in the sky over the base are out. Kaput. Like flipping a switch. About a minute or so later, loud noises will be heard from that quarter : booms, bangs, and the occasional ground-shaking KA-BOOM. The sky over there will light up as if someone were setting off fireworks. This lasts about 15 minutes, and then ends.

[Whoever was on watch woke everybody up, and we all stood out on the roof for the next few minutes, watching the festivities.]

At around 2:30am, three AV-8 Assault Aerodynes will start flying around the town. They will be unresponsive to all but military communications. If the players attempt to radio Santa Fe (or Albuquerque or wherever), their transmission will be jammed by an AV-8 rigged for electronic warfare. The AV's look like they're looking for something.

Several more AV-6 Combat Aerodynes will start to fly in, each packed with eight combat-ready troops. They will land in pairs at each of the four compass points of the town, and set up roadblocks. Anyone resisting will be subdued. The army doesn't care how. One of these AV's will land near the police building. The officer will inform the PC's that the town is under military quarantine and that they have orders to search every building in the area. This could get ugly if the PC's resist. By this time, the phone should be ringing off the hook. Mahr is calling, etc. The army has landed at his place and is searching through his houses. Two of Mahr's workers have been shot because they resisted. One is dead, one is only wounded, but bleeding heavily. Mahr's call will be cut short.

[We got this call before the AV-6 carrying the officer listed above landed, so Ingles (Brant) and Grayson (Katrina), being fastest to get their shit together, were sent out to see what the hell was going down out at Mahr's farm. Maitland and Burke (Joe) were to follow, but we were intercepted by the officer, and I ended up having a shouting match with him out in front of our garage while Burke barred the soldiers from entering the station. I managed to intimidate the officer, who

decided to call back for direct orders from Colonel Tagge before forcing his way inside our building and massacring all the officers ... bad public relations, as you recall. We told Tina Livingston, still prisoner, to get under her bunk and STAY THERE, and I wish we could have joined her.]

An AV-9 Transport will land in the center of town. Four Dragoon full conversion 'borgs will emerge and begin to search the area. Each is armed with a 25mm Grenade Launcher (MM pg 77) which is armed with a mix of flash/bang and tear gas shells, a weapon equal to a 12mm submachine-gun armed with gel rounds (SMG 0 - - 2d6+3Gel 200 30 ST 150m.), another weapon that equals the Arasaka Restraint Caster with some changes (P -1 - - Tangle 15 1 ST 25m), and a nozzle which delivers the solvent needed to break the restraints.

[Here is where we knew we were in serious trouble, because one of them broke off and joined the soldiers outside the station.]

As it so happens, the military has lost an alien test subject, which they've nicknamed "Ellie" after the acronym EL (Extraterrestrial Lifeform). They need to recover Ellie as soon as possible, before Ellie eludes them and escapes into Texas (where they (legally) couldn't follow without risking an incident). There was a short in the base's main power building, which led to an explosion. In the ensuing chaos, Ellie escaped.

Far from being a "little green man", Ellie is more or less similar to the traditional "Close Encounters" alien, or as I will refer to him, as a "sectoid" (a la X-Com). Ellie is about four feet tall, has a large head and big, black eyes. His skin is a pale whitish-grey. His facial features include a hole on each side of his head (ears), two holes in the center of his face (nose), and a slit for a mouth. Ellie's stats follow :

Extraterrestrial Lifeform ("Ellie") -

INT 12, REF 6, TECH 10, COOL 6, ATTR 6, LUCK 6, MA 8, BODY 4, EMP 6
Awareness +6; Chemistry +8; Hide/Evade +6; Physics +6; Brawling +4; Melee +2; Pilot UFO +8; Electronics +6; Elect. Security +6; Basic Tech +6; Alien Tech +6

Notes -

Ellie was one of two survivors of an alien crash site, and was recovered by the US

Military some years previous. Since then, he has been poked, prodded, and tested. Linguists have come in and attempted to communicate with him. Despite the humans' petty attempts, he has refused to cooperate. He eats the protien-rich slop they give him for nourishment, but only because he's been waiting for a way to escape. The other alien survivor was injured badly in the original crash, and died due to a combination of his wounds and a loss of his will to live. Ellie was (originally) a pilot, and as such can probably figure any vehicle out given time. His goal is to get away, but now that he's seen the army's recovery force, he's starting to doubt the wisdom of his plan. He knows that his race's ships frequent the area, and his goal now is to find a radio, modify it, and use it to transmit his own SOS.

Ellie, once entering town, will head towards the first structure he sees (which will be, coincidentally, the station). He'll scale the walls, and go down the trap door into the garage area. He'll quietly explore the station via air ducts, looking for anything usable for his cause. The police radio would be perfect, with a little subtle modification, but he's got to get past the humans first.

He'll stay hidden until the humans leave. He'll then crawl out and steal the radio, and any tools he can find (probably the ones in Katrina's stuff). He'll begin to modify the radio, and once complete, will send his SOS. Response from his alien buddies should take about five to ten minutes. When they arrive, they'll zap the whole area with alien technological goodies, take Ellie, and escape. All anyone will see is a bright flash of light, and the UFO will be gone.

A perfect scenario revolves around the players dealing with the military, having the aliens leave, and then having the army depart back to base with its tail between its legs. The players will discover that the radio is gone, as are Kat's tools. If they scrounge around, they will find the modified radio up on the roof. It will be switched to "on". Mods are subtle, of course, but noticeable to anyone rolling Electronics above 15. The radio is transmitting a binary code that repeats at intervals of 30 seconds.

Still, Ellie might be found by a PC before he has time to finish his chore. This could mean death for Ellie. I doubt that the players will want to give him to the army. Besides, anyone actually seeing "Ellie" will be apprehended and

“debriefed”, not a likeable alternative at all. The army could conceivably catch Ellie and take it away. This probably won’t happen without the PC’s help, anyway. All army soldiers have average stats. Each is armed with a Militech Mk IV assault weapon, several grenades, and a bayonet. Officers are armed with Militech Dragon light assault weapons and Colt AMT 2000 pistols. Every soldier will be wearing a flak vest (SP20) and a ballistic helmet (SP20). Military personnel include 24 Pilots/Crew Chiefs (2 per aerodyne), 4 field officers (one per 16-man squad), and 60 soldiers (15 per every two AV-6’s with the officers mentioned above). There are also the four Dragoons which have been programmed to find and subdue Ellie (civillians are secondary, and the Dragoons are programmed to subdue any that compromise mission success).

[Ellie evidently gained access to the station right when the soldiers arrived, because when Burke changed guard duty with me, Char (the NPC paramedic) informed me that something weird was crawling around inside the station, and the radio had been screwed with. We were too pissed off (and scared of) the Army to tell them that the thing was in the station, since if it was classified, they’d assume we’d seen it or helped it and probably nuke the whole station once they got it out. We were hoping to hold off the Army, and then either kill or flush out the thing once they left, but nothing doing—orders came back from Tagge, and it was either get the hell out of the building or get shot.]

[Burke was forced out and taken into custody, and the Dragoon kicked the door down and shot Char with a restraint caster, nearly killing him. Rather than face the Dragoon, I elected to go into the air vents after Ellie. I was hoping to catch it and somehow use it to negotiate with the Army ... it was valuable, and we weren’t, and maybe one plus the other equalled us getting out of this mess alive.]

[Here I am with a dying flashlight, crawling through ducts thick with two inches of twenty-year old dust (the air conditioning never worked), while the Army starts to search the building.]

[The thing’s trail led to the roof. I crawled out of the vent inside and up through our trap-door onto the roof after it, and outside is utter chaos — AV’s shining spotlights all over, Dragoons crashing through the town, Army guys tearing the hell out of the station under my feet. I went around the airvent and came face-to-

face with Ellie in all his Sectoid, Communion-esque glory. He hissed at me, I yelled ... and the Dragoon, attracted by the noise, jumped onto the roof. Now I'm staring down the barrel of the Dragoon's minigun. One desperate leap later, I'm lying on the floor of the station, staring up at a bright pink tangleweb spread out over the hatch.]

[That's when Ellie's friends pulled their little flashbulb-EMP trick. There's a heavy thud! as the Dragoon on the roof falls over, and screams from the blinded Army men outside. When the light clears, Ellie was gone, and the Dragoon's memory was wiped.]

[The cleanup was short and, for the Army, rather embarrassing. I had an extremely uncomfortable meeting with Colonel Tagge — my first of the game — when he arrived at the station to take charge of the debacle.

Tagge : "I understand someone was on the roof at the time of the incident."

Me : (lying through my teeth, visions of needles and bright lights dancing in my head) "Nope."

Tagge : (not believing a word) "I see."]

[That was about the end of the game. Captain Morris came down a few days later, and told me I had a choice: rotate back up to Santa Fe and ride desk for the rest of my career (at Lt. rank), or take a promotion to Captain, and run the station in Crossroads. You can guess what I picked. Fiona Grayson (Katrina), Bruce "Wheels" Ingles (Brant), and Johnathan Burke (Joe) all elected to get the hell out. Can't say I blame them.]