

Seed of the New Flesh

by Greg Stolze



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"SEED OF THE NEW FLESH"

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SPECIAL THANKS TO ALEXANDRA SCHMIDT. SEED OF THE NEW FLESH WAS PLAYTESTED BY CHRIS BOVA, CHRIS GORILLA (REALLY), MARCUS GREGORY, BILL MULLINS, ROB VAUX, ROB WILKINS, AND TEAM SASKATOON.

Author's **Dedication:** To all the Y2K believers, UFO conspiracy theorists, musicians, artists, thinkers in tanks, and **Internet** pioneers who have done so much to ensure that the future will be even weirder than what I've imagined here. And a special note to all you old school Feng *Shui* fans: **Untold** thanks for keeping the fires burning during the dark days of Feng *Shui's* slumber. I'm sorry I couldn't incorporate all your disparate visions of the grim Feng Future, but all the re-writing would have been a drag. Fight the good fight!

Greg Stolze is perfectly normal. He has a house in the suburbs and a wife he loves very much. He adapted *Usagi Yojimbo* for roleplaying, wrote the acclaimed Spherewalker *Sourcebook*, did a bunch of stuff for White Wolf and AEG, contributed to Delta Green: Dark *Theaters* and Delta Green: Alien Intelligence, and co-authored *Unknown Armies*. What? What the hell more do you want?

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Chang

"Your courage is a credit to your ancestors," Bao said to me as I studied the portal to the future that was before me.

"I am weak," I replied. "Any bravery you see comes from the righteousness of the cause of the Guiding Hand." I would certainly need all my courage to face 2056, for it was a time when a man who had murdered thousands for the crime of being sick was hailed by all as a hero. A time when "equality" hobbled the best and exalted the worst. A time when people were controlled by fear and the lust for pleasure, instead of reason and the love of duty

I stepped through the door.

What I had been told about 2056 was true – the Architects had somehow scrawled their blandishments across the sky itself. Looking up into the night I saw stars blotted out by signs bigger and brighter than the moon. "Freedom Cola" said one. "Unity Footwear" said another. I wanted to watch and see if they moved as the stars do, but I was afraid of being noticed gawking. I ducked my head low and strode forward.

As I had been told, I came to a place where the floor writhed like a serpent, crawling endlessly. Beyond the first moving strip a second moved faster, and beyond that more strips, faster still. The people around me moved on and off of them without the slightest attention. Imitating them, I did so as well. It was disorienting, but I did not humiliate my masters by losing my balance. Mentally, I thanked them for the training they had given me so unworthy

The chaos and commotion of the place was overwhelming – it was noisy and dark and everything was moving impatiently in every direction – but I persevered. I had little trouble until my vision began to blur.

Before my departure, one of my brothers from 1996 had put small films in my eyes. These, he told me, would shield me from the notice of the Architects. I was hesitant to use sorcerous devices, but he assured me they were as mundane as any other disguise.

Clearly one of the thin lenses was moving on my eye. I stepped off the track to adjust it, and after a few blinks my vision cleared. As I think back now, the lens must have fallen from my eye instead of seating itself firmly. The police were waiting for me around the next corner.

Shiny

PubOrd is greedy I was testing out my new scooter, Greased Gravity II, and I siphoned a little bit of power. Maybe enough energy to power one of their big meatwagons for fifteen minutes. Maybe. For this, there were three squad cars on my ass.

Luckily, it wasn't much of a problem. A big heavy cruiser doesn't have the acceleration of a bike you can pick up with one hand. I was almost tempted to let them catch up, but the wind in my hair felt too good. Then I heard an amplified voice from above.

"Consumer! Cease your unauthorized selftransportation!"

Score! The Flying Squad! A real challenge!

I looked up, and there were these two really whizzer-looking wasp things. They opened fire and I couldn't help giggling. It was so cool! I veered towards some pedestrians, and they stopped shooting. Wimps.

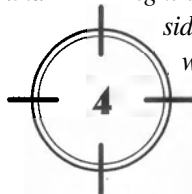
I raked around the next corner, dragging my knee on the ground. (I had a flattened-out can inside each pants leg just in case. I'm smart.) Those wasp-things corner real good, but they weren't expecting me to jump off the curb and go crashing through a skylight onto the sidewalks below.

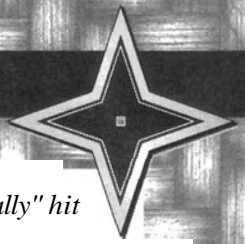
I was heading right towards the wall between the east- and west-bound sidewalks. I had maybe, oh, a blink to decide which way to turn. I dropped on the eastbound walk, facing west. I figured GG II could hit maybe 160 kph and I was curious to see if the wheels could handle it.

They could! Double score! Pedestrians screamed and scattered. For a second I was absolutely still, sidewalk screaming by below me. I just had time to see a slideway cop pointing one of those huge, slush-colored guns at me before he fired. I braked and shot away, backward.

Officer Fiendly gamely jumped on the sidewalk, still shooting. I gunned it right at him and popped a wheelie. Surprise, chump! I chewed right over him. Then I turned around and rode off, popping up the ramp maybe three clicks down.

One of the wasps was waiting for me. (Damn, they're fast! I want one!) He was good and pissed, and was all set to give me the sticky-net. Lucky for me there was one of those ugly Buro memorial statues right there – looked like a big crayfish with an eight sided mirror in its claws. I tipped my bike sideways and slid underneath Mr. Crawdad, popping





back up on the other side. The wasp wasn't as lucky – he went right through the mirror.

There were three or four PubOrd ground pounders coming at me, but I wasn't worried – much – because there was a railway right there. Time to test GG II's best feature. I jumped onto the tracks. If I'd figured out the maglev device right, I was about to go faster than I ever had, supported on a cushion of magnetic force. If I was wrong, I'd be sucked down and electrocuted.

I wasn't wrong, but for a second I thought I was. The speed-hit was so strong it felt like I'd slammed a wall, only from behind. Tears were getting pulled from my eyes straight back into my ears, and I could feel the skin of my face getting plastered against my skull. Four Gs acceleration, easy.

"Sniff my money hole, Pubic Order!" I screamed, but the cops were already *klicks* behind me. Without a doubt, it was the best moment of my life.

Then I rear-ended a train.

Jef

They arrested me in the crapper. Pretty standard, I guess. They had probably planned to get me in my apartment, but saw me go into a public restroom and decided to move right away

I don't even know what I thought when they kicked my stall door in, I just reacted. Threw my toolbox in the face of the guy who'd lunged at me. I didn't see it was Public Order until the box was in the air. He jumped back swearing, nose bloody I heard a click and was looking down the barrel of his partner's Buro 9. I recognized it from The Cop Channel – just last night I'd seen one blow a bucket-sized hole in a woman on Buro Beat Feats. I put my hands up.

They sacked me – put a big, black sack over my head and arms. Their movements were practiced, and the guy with the bloody nose punched me in the kidneys as he did it. Oddly, the thing most on my mind was that his partner was a woman and I still had my pants around my ankles.

They yanked me to my feet and flung me forward. Of course I fell – I couldn't see anything. With my arms in the sack, I could barely catch myself, and I felt the edge of the sink hit my ribs.

"Walk, consumer!" They pulled me up and shoved me again, and again I fell. I landed on my toolkit and groaned. They picked me up and frog-

marched me to their patrol car. I "accidentally" hit my head getting in.

They drove a while. I didn't say anything, but it finally occurred to me: Martinique. They know about me and Martinique.

The car stopped and then it was more of the same, pushed and pulled and struck until they took the sack off and I was in an interrogation room. There was a clean-cut, nice-looking woman with pink fingernails across the table from me, and a cop in the corner with a Crimestopper leveled at me. The guy behind me – whoever took the sack off – wrenched my arms behind me and secured them to my chair. I barely noticed my eyes homed in on the soothers I saw in the middle of the table by a plastic cup of water. One of those little pink lozenges and the pain of my bruises would quickly fade. The woman saw me look, and she smiled.

"Jefrey Moor, Omnipurpose Worker's Number 78235111503141?"

"Yes," I nodded. My mouth hurt, and I couldn't remember when they'd struck it.

"You're a polymer design technician at Good Things Incorporated" A question in the form of a statement.

"Yes . . . yeah." I wondered how long I'd be able to keep myself from **telling** them about Martinique. I hoped a long time – maybe never. Maybe love would conquer all.

"Would you like a soother, consumer?" The woman's eyes shone with a vacuous kindness.

"Please... yes, I would."

She picked up a pill with matching pink fingertips and raised it towards my mouth.

"Just one more question, then. Who do you work for?"

I blinked. "Good Things."

She shook her head **mournfully** and stuck one of her long fingernails into the cut on my lip.

I screamed.

"Who do you really work for? Blackwater Fury? The Free Sex Militia? You don't strike me as a Luddite . . . a Jammer, perhaps?" Her voice hardened with that last accusation.

Love was not going to conquer this.



CHAPTER 1

Welcome to 2056

A CRASH COURSE IN CONSUMER CULTURE

**Reveal yourself to me.
Nudity is insufficient;
Bare it to the bone.
— "At the Core"**

**by *Last National Leaders*
from the 2055 album *Gold Standard***

Welcome to 2056!

Welcome to 2056, consumer! Innerwalkers most familiar with the dark ages of the 1990s [or before] will find this juncture a shining utopia of state-mandated equality where the only limit on your achievements is your work ethic. General Olivet, the Buro's highest-ranking military officer, was the child of vat workers. You, too, can make the climb she did!

To help you understand this brave new world, this helpful pamphlet provides basic data on the facts of life, '56 style. Enjoy!

Food

Weather patterns are much different in 2056 than they were in your home juncture, due to the savage damage inflicted on

the ecosphere during the 20th century. Gradually, the depredations of the 20th century built up until there was a major shift of oceanic air currents. Because of this shift, areas that had formerly been fertile and temperate were raked with cyclones to an unprecedented degree. These catastrophic disturbances [colloquially known as "the Reckoning"] crushed the world's most fruitful areas and created world-wide starvation.

In less enlightened eras, hundreds of millions would have died, victims of horrible famine. Fortunately, the people could look to the Buro to save them. The Bureau of Tactical Management [commonly known by the acronym "BTM"] quickly established facilities for food production on a factory model. The delicious, nutritious nourishment they

This pamphlet highlights several **facts** about the **Buro** that startle most innerwalkers. First, **that** there's a pamphlet on 2056 aimed at Innerwalkers! The Buro **bureaucracy** has a pamphlet for every conceivable purpose, and many purposes that aren't. Everybody needs a **job**. Second, **rather than** mindlessly exterminating **Innerwalkers** from other factions, the Architects often try to turn their enemies. Native agents **in** other **junctions** are **useful**. Ironically, most secret warriors **wish** they had been killed when they're **subjected** to the **sanitized** tour of the efficient, clean, **peaceful** aspects of **Lonengel's** world.

— Dr. John Haynes



pioneered is still consumed today — and unlike "organic" food it is always balanced and healthful. Palates familiar with the crude unpredictability of food raised in the ground or slashed from slaughtered animals are in for a treat when they first savor the subtleties of Buro cuisine.

Shelter

In ages past, there was vast inequality in housing. Due to Buroresident Bonengel's high-minded foresight, this is a thing of the past. In 2056, all adult consumers are furnished with a basic BuroPad in which to live. Those who work hard and earn enough Hours are soon able to move to larger Deluxe BuroPads. Alternately, many choose to simply improve and customize their BuroPads with additions like the Lightweb Space Transformation System. While some homes are, of course, larger or better-appointed than others, no one lives in the wretched squalor common to other eras.

Economics

The basic unit of currency is the Hour (colloquially called a "dollar" by some). As one can guess from the name, one Hour is the average hourly rate of pay for almost everyone, worldwide. The strictly-enforced, absolute minimum wage is one-half of an Hour for an hour's work. Similarly, the maximum wage allowed by law is twenty Hours for sixty minutes' labor. Thus, even the most lucrative careers still do not allow the sort of decadent oppression that was commonplace in the past.

All worldwide banking is done electronically, through a central database called BuroBank. Fraud is prohibitively difficult; in order to access funds and records, an individual must have his or her unique retinal prints scanned. In fact, retinal scanning is the most common form of identification in 2056, replacing the "house keys" and "driver's licenses" of times past!

Travel

After the world's oil supply was exhausted by the unfortunate practices of the 20th century, the B3TM instituted a progressive rail system. Today's consumer can relax in one of the many luxurious trains that go everywhere in the world — often at speeds approaching Mach 4 — rather than waste non-work time piloting a cramped vehicle through streets crowded with polluting wrecks driven by other angry, distracted consumers.

Other consumers prefer to stretch their legs on the many pedestrian slidewalks that line our cities' streets and boulevards. Those familiar with the primitive "escalators" of the 1990s will quickly see the genius of the slidewalk. Essentially, a slidewalk is a moving surface onto which one can step. The slidewalk then carries you in the direction it moves. Many slidewalks are ranked, with each inward rank moving faster and faster. In this fashion, it becomes possible to attain an impressive velocity without recourse to dangerous and wasteful personal vehicles.



THE REAL DEAL

Players whose characters are new to 2056 should stop reading right now. This section is for **GMs** and players whose characters are 2056 **natives**. Trust me, it really will be more fun to learn the ropes in the course of play.

FOOD

If you're used to it, the food in 2056 isn't bad; it's just sort of there. To foreign palates, there are basically three flavors of food served up by the Buro: tasteless, painfully salty, and nauseatingly sweet. Buro food also comes in a variety of textures, ranging from crunchy to mealy to gelatinous. Naturally, Buro residents who travel to other junctures are in for culinary shocks.

Organic food is available, but it's rare. An organic meal for one typically costs 40-100 Hours. There's a black market where organic foods can be had much more cheaply, but quality varies wildly. Your black market eggs may be rotten — or they may be better than the ones in the restaurant. You pay your money and take your chances.

SHELTER

A basic **BuroPad** for one is small — about the size of a college dorm room. A panel in the floor slides aside to reveal a bed; the rest of the floor has more storage beneath. The toilet folds out of one wall, as does a desk top. On the opposite wall is the fold-out **stovetop** and oven. The desk and oven won't fold out at the same time, because working at the desk would put you in danger of burning your neck or back on the stove. One corner has a sink, which converts into a shower — the walls fold up out of the floor. Every inch of wall space that isn't used by the desk, stove or toilet has closet or cabinet space behind it. Refrigeration costs extra, but happily, most vat-food keeps fine at room

temperature. If you don't have more than two chairs (or one comfy one) and if you don't invite anyone else in, it's just barely livable — but there is very little tolerance for mess.

A **BuroPad Deluxe** has two rooms — one basic BuroPad with a double bed, and another room where actual furniture can be placed.

ECONOMICS

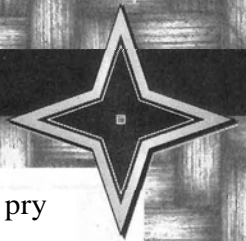
The standard Buro work day is six hours long, giving the average consumer about 120 Hours a month of income. Forty of those go right back into monthly rent for a basic BuroPad. That leaves things pretty tight.

Food is cheap — if you buy the bland and boring stuff. So are clothes — if you get the colorless fabrics made of extruded polymers that don't breathe or flow like real cloth. Travel is free on the slidewalks — but depending on where you work, your commute may take you an hour each way at a brisk walk.

All the costs of life in 2056 chip away at those Hours earned, while omnipresent advertisements chip away at the hours you spend at home. All non-advertising TV is pay-per-view. It's only Seconds and Minutes, but it adds up. Consumers are shown a world of wonderful consumer goods, all of which seem to be in reach — but spending decisions must be carefully weighed. Between rent, work and television, almost every waking moment of a consumer's life is spent either earning money or spending it. In the final analysis, no one feels he has enough.

The only way to make a lot of money — enough to own your own home, for example — is to work for the Buro. Of the 169 professions that pay 20 Hours per hour, 48 are military, 62 are Buro, 30 are in **Public Order**, and 26 are with the CDCA. The remaining three are entertainers.

This is not to say it isn't possible to get very wealthy illegally — dealing in black market goods, gambling and eyeball farming, for example — but most under-the-table transactions are done on a barter basis, since the Buro



controls the banks and watches closely for suspicious business.

TRAVEL

Sure, there are some really nice first class commuter trains with comfortable seats, good (well . . . average) food and tasteful decor, but they're rare, because few people can afford them. Most consumers get crammed into noisy, smelly, crowded subways, where they stand for the duration of their trip, cheek to jowl with their fellows.

Long distance travel is even worse. A coach class "seat" on one of the really fast Gravity Rammers is a very stiff, upright mattress. Travelers stand in front of their mattresses facing forward and get rammed into them by terrible acceleration — which may or may not let up, depending on the length of the trip. The force

is so great that most people can't even pry themselves free.

In the absence of firearms, many inventive suicides put a brick on the mattress and face it from about a foot away when the train starts. The force propels them against the brick, which knocks them out, and the g-forces suck them into the mattress, where they suffocate. "Facing the mattress" is the current euphemism for "committing suicide."

Those who accidentally find themselves in a Gravity Rammer's aisle when the train leaves the station get pulled the length of the car and slammed against the back wall. This is painful and sometimes fatal. (PubOrd officers escorting felons sometimes pick up recalcitrant prisoners, lift them above the floor, and drop them. This is known throughout the penal system as "having a train accident.")

October 9, 2053

BUROPRESIDENT ANNOUNCES DECISIVE SOCIAL RE-ALIGNMENT PROGRAMS

Buropresident Bonengel announced today that, since the Bureau of Tactical Management has successfully dealt with the major crises facing humankind — hunger, poverty, war and disease — the time has come for humanity to turn its attention inward. "We must not become complacent because we have defeated exterior threats," he announced this noon to a cheering multitude. "The most durable and entrenched ills reside within the social order, not outside it."

To execute his bold new plan, the Buropresident has instituted several new sub-bureaus.

The Buropresident's entire speech is available for download.

- Text (.01H): omnet/15.28.94.35.1.5/153
- Audio (.02H): omnet/15.28.94.35.1.6/153
- Visual (.025H): omnet/15.28.94.35.1.7/153

The Commemorative Collector's Edition is complete with commentary from Kiria Tse'nansenjas and Chang O'Relly, and has a special message just for you from the Buropresident himself!

Commemorative Collector's Edition (1.0H):
omnet/15.28.94.35.1.*/153

The 2053 proclamations crsating Tears Love, Peace and Joy demonstrate the absurd lengths to which Buropresident Bonengel will go to ensure what he sees as the happiness and well-being of all Buro citizens. Ironically, citizens of the 20th century would see his "progressive" reforms as draconian constraints: you can't choose your spouse, you can't know certain things, and you'd better quit whining about it.

—Dr. John Haynes



"Team Love:" The Sub-Bureau For Progressive Human Homogenization

Goal: Freedom from hatred!

Buropresident Bonengel's extensive study of history has taught him that the most violent and enduring conflicts are those based on race. While racial equality has always been a staple of Johann Bonengel's politics and personal philosophy, Team Love will take things a step further by encouraging intermarriage between ethnic groups. In this fashion, a single, homogenous human race can gradually be built. As we come together, the conflicts of the past will melt away.



"Team Peace:" The Sub-Bureau For Attitudinal Disarmament

Goal: Freedom from violence!

While the rates of violent crime have drastically decreased since the BTM took firearms away from private citizens, there is another pernicious sort of violent weaponry in some peoples' hands — literally.

Everyone knows that people are not violent by nature. Only those improperly educated believe violence is appropriate. The so-called "martial arts" are clearly among these unbecoming disciplines. These skills are not, in fact, "arts" at all. Rather, they are a collection of techniques which allow one person to brutalize another. Team Peace will phase out the study of these obsolete combat techniques, ensuring that the ability to inflict grievous bodily harm remains the sole province of those with the responsibility to use their skills in the service of the Buro and society as a whole.



"Team Joy:" The Sub-Bureau For Constructive Personal Perspective

Goal: Freedom from misery!

A startling number of illnesses, both physical and social, can be traced to one simple cause: negative personal viewpoints. The cynic, the moper, the mocker, and the pessimist do more than just ruin their own chances of happiness. They depress their co-workers, resulting in decreased production efficiency. They can undermine faith of the citizens in their government. They can even show otherwise upright consumers the way to the miserable, nihilistic despair upon which terrorist organizations like the Jammers feed. For these reasons — and because the happiness of all citizens is the primary concern of ethical government — Team Joy is dedicated to improving the attitudes of all consumers world-wide.

Free Sex Militant

"They forgot one slogan: Freedom from common sense."

The Buro was bad enough when it had armed resistance to quell. Now that it's settled the hash of the open rebels, it's concerning itself with what citizens *think*, not just what they *do*. The three sub-bureaus created in 2053 (Team Love, Team Peace and Team Joy) have rapidly gained in power and presence. It started with a special tax on non-homogenizing marriages; there are rumors that they will soon be banned altogether. Even non-marital same race relationships must be registered, and failing to do so is a misdemeanor. The most violent martial arts are being forced underground — even those that are primarily sporting, like Judo. Team Joy has passed a law allowing employers to fine their workers for negative comments.

Someone has to fight back. That someone is you.

The Free Sex Militia is a surprisingly well-armed group opposed to governmental interference with marriage. That's not so unreasonable, is it?



Juncture: 2056

Attributes: Bod 5
Chi 0
Mind 5
Ref 5

Divide 6 points between primary attributes. Add no more than 5 to a single attribute.

Skills: Guns +9 (=14)
Martial Arts +6 (=11)
Deceit +6 (11)
Intrusion +5 (10)[Max 15]
Leadership +4 (9)[Max 12]
Seduction +2 (7)[Max 13]

Add 4 skill bonuses. Swap Guns and Martial Arts if desired.

Shticks: 4 Gun Shticks

Unique Shticks: Inspiration, Recruiting (see next page for details)

Unique Limitation: Swimming against the flow of your culture isn't easy, especially when it's enforced by the flow of chi. You constantly feel guilty about your rebellious tendencies or "perverse urges." While in the 2056 juncture you have a -2 penalty in any situation (other than hiding) where you are acting against abominations or uniformed minions of the Buro.

Weapons: 1 gun

Quick Shtick Pick:

Weapon: Buro Crimestopper or antique Colt 19.

Gun Shticks: Hair Trigger Neck Hairs, Eagle Eye, Carnival of Carnage x2

Wealth Level: working stiff

More Militants

"Free Sex Militant" is actually the template for all non-Jammer militants in the 2056 juncture; I picked "Free Sex" as the example because I knew it would get your attention. You can also choose from the following list of rebel groups, or, with the GM's permission, create your own.

Other Groups

- **The Luddites:** A group devoted to the antique notion of "privacy," they despise the Buro's omnipresent technological spying.
- **Blackwater Fury:** An incoherent but ultraviolet splinter of the Free Sex Militia. They've been called "nuts" by Jammers.
- **Fists of Freedom:** The martial arts underground.
- **The Grumps:** A group demanding the right to feel as bad as they want. They often stage public tragedies to give people an excuse to be unhappy.

Group Modifications

First off, only Free Sex Militants get Seduction. If you're not playing a Free Sex Militant, lose it.

- **The Luddites** and **Blackwater Fury:** Add Sabotage +2 (7)[Max 13]
- **Fists of Freedom:** Lose Guns and take Martial Arts +10 (=15) instead. Lose the gun shticks and add 2 fu shticks. Lose the gun and add a hand to hand weapon. Add +3 to your Fu score.
- **The Grumps:** Add Fix-It +2 (7) [Max 13]

Militia Unique Shticks

Inspiration: If you have a group of unnamed characters fighting on your side, you can give them an inspiring speech before combat. (No, you can't do it if the lead's already flying.) Roll your Leadership against a Difficulty of 11. If you beat it, all the unnamed troops who heard it get +1 to their Guns or Martial Arts, whichever is higher. This can be a great chance to ham it up: "This . . . is our finest hour. . ."

Recruiting: You can try to persuade people to join your cause. This skill can be used to try and recruit GMC characters, or you can use it as a hook for introducing new player characters to your team.

Using this shtick requires about an hour without significant interruptions. (A waiter asking if you want drinks is not a serious interruption; Desdemona Deathangel tearing people's heads off nearby is.)

If you try to persuade a GMC who is listening with an open mind, roll your Leadership (or Seduction, if you're a Free Sex Militant). The Difficulty is your recruit's Willpower or highest Action Value, whichever is greater. Your GM may add modifiers (if, for example, your target is a Lotus Sorcerer who knows that betrayal will be punished by being fed to The Thing That Eats Your Kidneys Forever) or simply veto some recruitments for her own inscrutable reasons.

Alternately, you can use this shtick once per session to try to "pick up a stranger." In this case, roll your Leadership against a Difficulty of 11. On a success, design a named GMC who will do a fair job of working on behalf of your insurgent group. This GMC can have either Guns or Martial Arts at 8, or both at 7. You can also give this GMC some other, non-combat skill at 8 or an Info skill at 9. The GM controls this character, but you determine his name, story and personality. Have fun with it — these characters have the potential to stick around for a while. If you fail your roll, the GM may give you an inferior recruit or no recruit at all. Or, if you roll really badly, he may decide that someone you *already* recruited is a spy.

Drifter

"Where do I come from? Down the road, pal."

The drifter is a figure of mystery, never settling down, hitting the highway whenever he feels the need to shake some dust off his feet. Maybe he's running from a bad love; maybe he **killed** a cop down in the **Tex**. Only he knows for sure, and he ain't **tellin'**.

The thing about the drifter is that he always shows up when he's needed. Always in the nick of time. When he's done his duty he saddles up, or sticks out his thumb, or jumps a train and rambles on.



Juncture: any

Attributes: Bod 5
Chi 0 (For 2)
Mnd 5
Ref 5

Add 3 to one primary attribute, 2 to another, and 2 to a secondary attribute.

Skills: Martial Arts +5 (10)
Fix-It +2 (7)
Gambling +4 (6)
Intimidation +3 (8)
Intrusion +1 (6)
Seduction +3 (8)

Add 8 skill bonuses. Maximum for all skills is 14. You may change Martial Arts to Guns if from any juncture other than 2056.

Unique Shtick:

Nick of Time: Any time another character needs help, you can show up if it's at all plausible (i.e., you're not in jail, your buddy isn't in another juncture, etc.). Everyone present can offer an explanation for how you happened to arrive in time; you get to pick the one you like best.

Wealth Level: poor

Consumer on the Brink

"Can't you just **leave me done?** Just for **one damn minute?** I'm just, just, just trying to have a **normal life** here, just trying to **get by** and **mind my own business**, but **nooooo – you** won't let me!"

You're one of those quiet **types**. Maybe you work long hours at a menial job, hoping the exhaustion of your body will calm your nerves. Maybe you box or work out to vent your frustration and rage. Maybe you spend lots of time playing violent, shoot-em-up VR simulations.

None of it works.

Your boss is a jerk. Your head hurts. Your ex-wife is paying someone to harass you. The bank won't admit that the missing money is their error. The food you just bought tastes funny. Your stomach hurts. Your co-workers are telling lies about you so you'll get fired.

You try.

You really, really try to keep your cool. For a long time, you've been successful. Maybe too long.

The next guy who bugs you is really going to get it.

Juncture: 1990s, 2056

Attributes: Bod 5
Chi 0
Mnd 5
Ref 5

Divide 5 points among primary attributes. No more than 3 points can be spent on a single attribute.

Skills: Guns +1 (6)[Max 10]
Martial Arts +2 (7)[Max 11]
Info/Meditation & Relaxation Techniques +3 (8)
Intimidation +3 (8)

Add 6 skill bonuses. Max for all skills is 15.

Unique Shticks:

Irritant: Pick something that really, *really* gets on your nerves. When trying to destroy or remove your irritant, you suffer no Impairment from injury. Examples: **Buro** cops, sassy youngsters, rich people, puns, warm beer (1996 only), really loud noises, bigotry, people who harm or threaten children.

Adrenaline: When you have been attacked or are in the presence of your irritant, you get a bonus of +4 points which you may divide as you choose between Body and Reflexes. At the beginning of each sequence, you can redistribute your 4 points as you choose. *Be sure to remember that this can increase your combat Action Values.* You retain this bonus until the annoying situation ceases.

Mean Streak: Any time you connect with a hand to hand weapon, you do an extra point of Damage. This is added after everything else is figured out, so even if you hit a Big Bruiser who can soak off all your damage with Toughness, you still deliver one Wound Point from sheer bad temper.

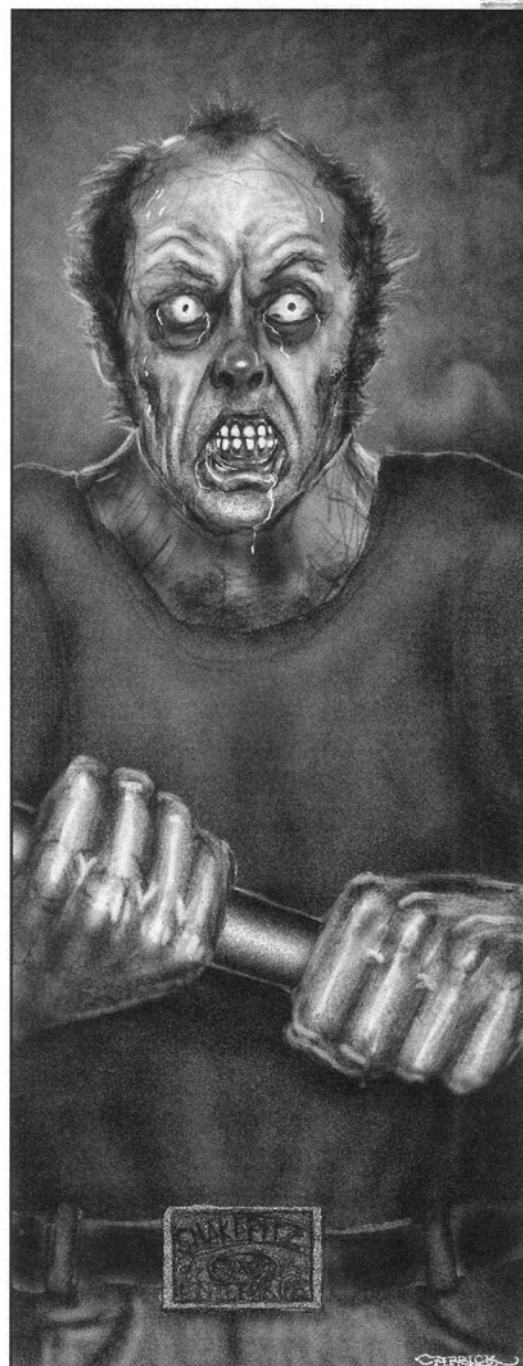
Weapons:

2056: 1 hand to hand weapon

1996: 1 gun or 1 hand to hand weapon

Quick Weapon Pick: lead pipe

Wealth Level: working stiff



Criminal Mastermind

*"Bwah ha ha ha! You Public Order fools are no match for... Doctor **Diabolos!** When I have trampled your pathetic Buro beneath my booted heel, I shall **rule the world!!!**"*

You're bad — a true blue, dyed-in-the-wool, **hardcore** criminal mastermind. You've done it all. You've smuggled booze and tobacco, run **eyeball** farms and floating card games, stolen weapons and sold them to Jammers. Maybe you've also hidden censored history books, or helped escaped prisoners get their court-ordered brain surgery removed. It could be that you've even hidden children when the Buro was trying to find them in order to smoke out their "subversive" parents. Maybe when the abominations were sent in to pacify your town, you helped people hide from the rampaging death squads. Oh yeah. You're bad all right. By Buro standards.

Fact is, you love it. Being a criminal mastermind is **fun** (unlike almost everything else in 2056). You're not cruel in your heart — all the sadists and vicious psychos went and joined Public Order. You just hate the Buro, the System and the repressive laws it enforces. It's more than an excuse to wear black, sneer, and call your employees "minions." **Really.**

Juncture: 2056



Attributes: Bod 5
Chi 0 (Fu=4)
Mnd 5
Ref 5

Add 4 points to primary attributes. No more than 2 can be spent on any one attribute.

Skills: Martial Arts +9 (=14)
Guns +5 (=10)
Info/2056 Criminal Underground +5 (10)
Leadership +5 (10)
Intrusion +2 (7)
Intimidation +3 (8)

Add 2 skill bonuses. Swap Guns and Martial Arts if desired.

Shticks: 4 Gun shticks, 2 Fu shticks, or 2 Gun shticks and 1 Fu shtick

Unique Shtick:

Mook Magnet: You have an almost eerie ability to discover, recruit and command the weak-willed and thuggish. In order to use your Mook Magnet shtick, you must fulfill three conditions. (1) You must be in an urban setting. (2) You must have some sort of incentive to offer your lackeys: money, booze, the lure of easy pickings — whatever. (3) You must spend a full day cruising dive bars, stockyards, wharves — the places where mooks gather.

When you've fulfilled those conditions, make an open roll and add one; the result is the number of mooks you've attracted. These mooks will serve for 2-3 days without a reward before they get bored and disillusioned. If they get what was promised (and don't get wiped out) they'll stick around as long as the goodies continue to flow.

Any mooks who survive three combats in your employment become "battle hardened." They don't gain any skill bonuses right away, but they do become named characters (you can pick names for them). Now they don't evaporate in firefights and can get experience points if you let them attune to one of your feng shui sites. (They cannot gain experience any other way.)

Unique Limitation:

Slave to the Cheese: If you capture or non-lethally defeat any named Cop or Buro characters, you are 100% unable to simply kill them, and must do everything in your power to prevent anyone else from doing so. Killing them out of hand — that's too easy. Too quick. You must toy with your prey by putting them in elaborate death-traps, or by offering them some desperate (but psychotically "fair") gamble with which to win their life and freedom. Furthermore, you cannot resist gloating to captured foes. You desperately need to tell them your plans in order to rub it in.

Weapons: 3 weapons

Quick Shtick Pick:

Shticks: Both Guns Blazing, Eagle Eye, Fast Draw, Lightning Reload

Weapons: Landridge Cutter, Buro 9, Buro Blade of Truth

Wealth Level: rich

Supersoldier

"What happened next was an object lesson in why it was a bad idea to send confused young men off in a haze of drugs to fight a war that no one understands and can not be won."

—"Stark" by Ben Elton

Somewhere along the line, you took a test and passed with flying colors. The test entitled you to be shot full of drugs, tinkered with by doctors, indoctrinated, deprived of sleep, and subjected to unspeakably harsh training by the most severe sadists outside of the Eaters of the Lotus. ("And I loved it! I loved every minute of it!")

When you got out of training, you were a member of the ultra-elite, hard core, gung ho, top secret, Terminal Gray Theta Circle Bravo squad. You were sent on suicide missions where you were outnumbered, outflanked and expected to pull off miracles of tactics without civilian casualties. ("And I begged for more!")

You got some sense of the secret war from the missions you went on in the Netherworld, and at first you got off on pitting your bad, buff self against all kinds of demons, sorcerers and megalomaniac tantric dog breeders. But then you had to fight these guys called the Silver Dragons, and they really had class. You started to notice a distinct difference between the way the Buro does things and the way these Dragons did. It was like the Buro kept talking about freedom and justice and righteousness . . . but the Dragons were the ones really doing it.

Then you heard the Dragons were all dead. You started wondering. You started poking around. It wasn't too hard to find the truth. You had Terminal Gray Theta Circle Bravo clearance, and besides, everyone had you figured for a brainless gun jock. Maybe they're right. After all, you could have just found out all these dirty little Buro secrets and stayed in the system as a crippling, silent mole. Instead, you shot up an army base. Maybe the Dragons are gone. Maybe not.

Juncture: 2056

Attributes: Bod 5
Chi 0 (Mag 5)
Mnd 5 (Wil 8)
Ref 5

Add 2 points to secondary attributes. Add 6 points to secondary attributes of Bod and Ref. No more than 5 points may be spent on a single attribute.

Skills: Arcanowave Device +8 (=13)
Guns +9 (=14)
Martial Arts +4 (9) [Max 10]
Sabotage +3 (8)

Add 4 Skill Bonuses. You may swap Guns and Arcanowave Device if you wish.

Shticks: 2 Arcanowave shticks, or 1 Gun shtick and 1 Arcanowave shtick.

Weapons: 2 guns from 2056 juncture

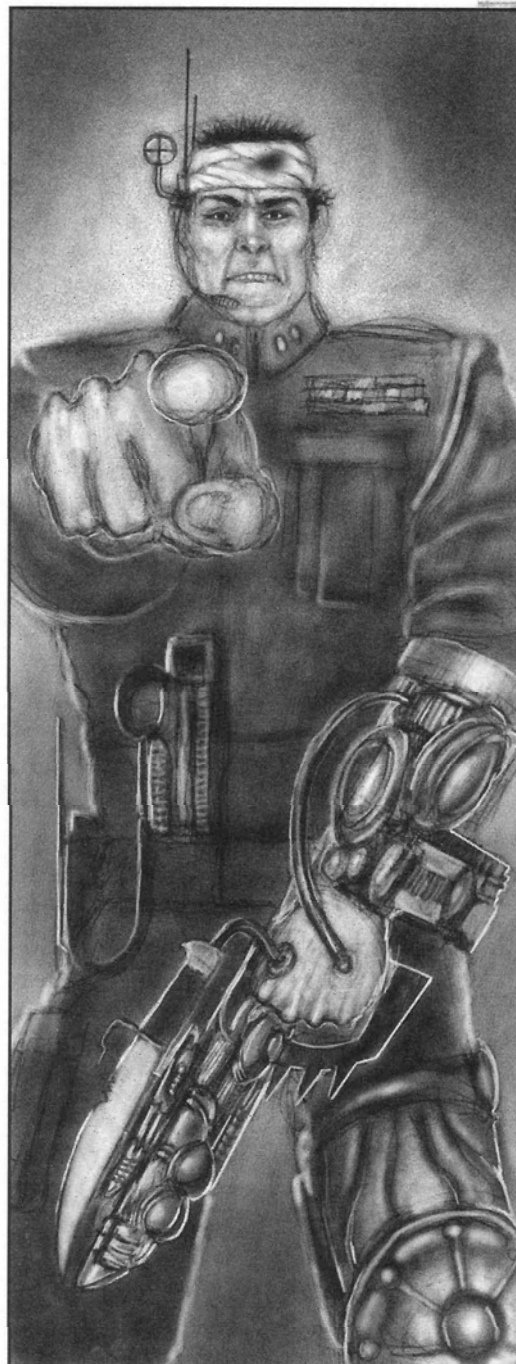
Quick Shtick Pick: Guns: Buro 9A, Buro Blade of Truth; *Schticks:* VM Bullets (see p. 65), Neural Stimulator

Unique Shtick:

Pain Feels Good: Whenever you suffer an injury that causes Impairment, make a Willpower check, Difficulty (5 x Current Impairment from Wounds). If you succeed, the Impairment becomes a *bonus* to all combat actions for the rest of the sequence. Making this check takes one shot. The **Impairment's** penalty returns in the next sequence, though you can roll again any time you suffer additional wounds.

Example: You're ground zero of a napalm strike and take 27 wound points, for 1 point of Impairment. You make a Willpower check, Difficulty 5, succeeding. For the rest of the sequence, you get +1. Later in the same sequence, you get shot for 6 more points, putting your total at 33 and your Impairment at 2. You roll Willpower, Difficulty 10. If successful, you're at +2 until the end of the sequence. At the beginning of the next sequence, you feel the normal effects of your Impairment, until you're wounded again, when you can make another Willpower check. On a success, you're back to +2 until the sequence ends.

Kindly GMs may give you a Willpower bonus for saying things like "I remember my drill sergeant screaming 'Whassamatter, flower? Got a hang-nail? Oh, a broken arm is it? Well quitcher sniveling, you pathetic piece of human refuse! It's only a little broken! I climbed that wall with both arms broken and a wounded buddy on my back! I dragged myself up with my eyelids!'"



Über-kid

"Gosh officer, I was just playing hide and seek. 'Restricted?' No, I can't read. Hey, what's that behind you?"

You are the result of CDCA experiments that still give you screaming nightmares. You were tweaked and trimmed from fertilization onward to become the perfect human being: Curtis Boatman's vision of the *Übermensch*. One thing the CDCA overlooked in their quest to create a better, smarter human being was that they might make someone smart enough to escape their lab, wean herself off their drugs, and stay out of their grasp long enough to make it to the Netherworld.

Actually, escaping the physical facility was a snap compared to what came next: debugging your own subconscious mind to remove all their control suggestions. You're pretty sure you got them all. Your highest priority since escape has been to learn how to fight — you're smart enough to know you'll need it. Luckily, you're a quick study, to say the least. Finding a teacher was easy. Convincing him to accept you into a secret martial arts school was equally simple. People's motivations are as transparent to you as technology and medicine.

Once things calm down a little, you'll apply your considerable intellect to the task of destroying the organization that so cruelly created you. It's just a matter of picking an insurgent faction to lead. The only problem is that the *Übermensch* project got greenlighted in 2047, and people are a little prejudiced against 9 year old leaders.

Juncture: 2056

Attributes: Bod =4
Chi 4
Mnd =11
Ref 5

Add 2 to one primary attribute and 2 to a secondary attribute.

Skills: Detective 0 (11)*
Deceit +2 (=13)
Fix-It 0 (11)*
Medicine 0 (11)*
Guns 0 (5)*
Martial Arts +8 (=13)
Info/Geomancy 0 (11)*

Add 4 Skill Bonuses in any Info skills. Skills marked with an asterisk () were not taught to you; you learned how to do them by paying close attention.*

Shticks: 1 Fu shtick plus the following:

Quick Study: You get an extra experience point every session because you learn things so damn fast.

"Elementary, my dear Watson:" Your keen intellect and superb perception allow you to figure things out that the hoi polloi wouldn't catch in a million years. You can spend a Fortune Die and have the GM tell you one fact. This can be a person's skill level in a given ability ("Only a highly trained martial artist would have such welldeveloped calluses on that part of the palm, referred to as the 'ox jaw' in traditional Japanese karate . . .") or details of a specific shtick ("I suspect that snout configuration evolved to facilitate the sucking of human spinal fluid, probably to aid the demon in reading the memories of its victim . . ."). It can also be used on the world around you ("Obviously whoever broke in here was over fifty years old"). You get to pick the fact, but it has to be pretty specific. The GM has veto power, of course ("What's the name of the assassin?") but should give you *something*.

Squirmy Lil' Bastard: Like the Scrappy Kid, your Action Value when dodging is always 2 higher than your Martial Arts value.

Weapons: 1 hand to hand weapon, 1 gun

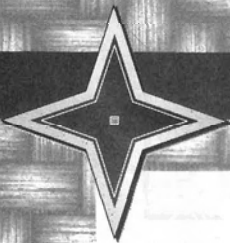
Quick Shtick Pick:

Shticks: Claw of the Tiger

Weapons: Buro 9, Kitchen knife

Wealth Level: poor





Chang

I was amazed that so many police officers could be brought to the place of the moving floors so quickly

They shot me and I was taken to a place of machines and glass and chemicals. I was drugged and my body was invaded by men with knives who made my wounds close, layered over with a sticky green paste.

They tortured me next. When I did not break, they filled my body with poisons to unseat my mind.

I do not know if I betrayed my brothers.

They took me next to a "courtroom" unlike any I have seen. The room was tiny, and contained only a gray machine with a great blue eye the size of my head. Attached to it was a tablet upon which letters were arranged. Letters and words appeared in the blue eye of the machine.

I later learned that this is called "blank court." The accusations against me were delivered to my judges through the device. I was supposed to use the tablet to make my response. This would prevent the judges from being influenced by my appearance, race, or charisma.

Unable to comprehend the letters, I was found guilty.

Shiny

When I arrived in jail I looked around for zipper-heads. I only saw a few, which was good. That meant most of the prisoners were first offenders, or, like me, had been able to get their Penal Restraint Operation reversed and the distinctive nine inch scar taken off their heads. Either way, they were less likely to hassle a fresh youngster like me. Still, I'd picked up enough hurts at the Mary Retton Institute for Socially Misguided Youth to be cautious.

First there was some kind of roundup. The warden, resplendent in black leather with chrome, yelled us into formation and stood up in front of us.

"Welcome to Penitent Holding Facility fer Men Number Six Hundred an' Eighty Eight. We pride

ourselves here on bein' tough but fair. If you learn a few simple lessons, you'll do jus' fine.

"Lesson number one. The floors are made of Larsonite."

He made a gesture and the floor turned doughy. We sank in to our ankles. A couple people fell. He snapped his fingers and suddenly it was as hard as rock. We were stuck.

"Lesson number two. Fer your protection and edification, the Penitence Assistance Officers are equipped with Pacification Implements." He held up a black rubber handle with maybe three feet of chrome chain hanging off it. He spat on it and there was a fat spark.

"Pacification Implements produce a 'lectric shock. Bein' struck with one results in debilitatin' pain, unconsciousness, and the loss of bowel control. Any questions?"

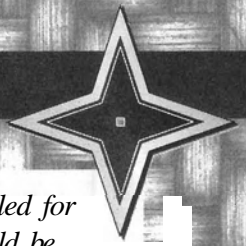
I winced as a guy near me raised his hand. The warden strode up to him and calmly lashed him across the ribs with the chrome chain. There was a crack – the electricity. Then there was a pop, which I think was the guy's knees as he rocked forward. With his feet cemented he rebounded back and fell headfirst to the floor with a thump.

"Lesson number three. If you have a question, refer to lesson number two.

"My job is to get you reprobates stripped, zipped, and shipped as efficiently as possible.

JARGON ENGINEER

Another booming field for new graduate consumers is JARGON ENGINEER. Every industry relies on communication between the work units employed there; jargon speeds and enhances this communication. As a jargon engineer, you will examine diverse businesses and give snappy, memorable "slang" names to unique processes and often-used tools or techniques. Not only does this increase productivity by cutting down on the time required for communication between workers, good jargon also creates a sense of teamwork!



Punishin' resisters decreases efficiency, but not as much as disorder does, so don't cross me. Just shut up and do what yer told."

Words to live by

Jef

The good news is they never asked me about Martinique. The bad news is they convicted me of conspiring to overthrow the Buro.

Someone who looked like me, sounded like me, and had my retinal prints had entered the Good Things research facility where I was working on a new firearm called the Buro Reliant. This someone made off with ten Reliants and our whole batch of test ammo – about eight thousand rounds.

The real pissar is I was with Martinique on the night in question. I couldn't prove my innocence without admitting our guilt of another crime.

They put me on a train to a holding facility – I didn't even know what city it was in. Immediately upon arrival I was stripped, shaved, and issued clothing too flimsy to hang myself with. No shoes.

My Penal Restraint Operation was scheduled for the following Thursday, after which I would be shipped off to the Happy Thoughts Institute for Behavior Quarantine and Correction.

Jail is supposed to be a hard place, but 688 was soft. Literally The floors and walls were made out of a rubbery, bouncy substance. Judging from the bright yellow color, I'd say Olkes Molecule #5. The nets across the fronts of our cells were Stretchtex 88 red, and the toilet and beds were the muted green of Synthol 7-12 And of course, the floors were Larsonite 22.

I was a prisoner of polymers. I don't know if the rumors about jail food being spiked with additives is true, but I did know that if I didn't escape before Thursday they were going to cut my brain open and fix it so that I couldn't see a strobe light without grand mal convulsions.

I just needed to figure out who to take with me when I escaped.

2056: TOP TEN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

No. 1

EVOLVE THIS MESS AROUND! • Crunchy Frog Games
Start out as a lowly wad of protoplasm and work your way through exoskeletons and central nervous systems. However, you can't just jump to developing vision right away; the other life-forms are evolving as well, and you need to compete for your niche or be left in the dustpan of history.

No. 2

BUROPRESIDENT BONENGL'S HISTORY CHALLENGE • From Mind's Liberty, Inc.
Explore history with the help of the Buroresident's expertise. Everything from the Great Wall of China through the present world peace is covered. See how

2056: TOP TEN VIDEO GAMES

No. 1

B.I.T.C.H.E.D, GLITCHED AND UN-TWITCHED • Bloodshed Entertainment
To get any more realistic you'd need live ammo! says Cooper Dawson, Put Commissioner for Liberty City. We agree; B.G.U. puts you in the shoes of a officer assigned the unsavory task of hunting down four deadly Jammers knocked over an armory. This is a game that will really get you pumping!
Crimestopper!

No. 2

FOODITY 3: PUMPIN' PIE • Brown Paper Wrapper, Inc.
Are you as cunning as the world's most beloved criminal sex pervert lets you find out. Start off molesting cheesburgers and work your way to the crown and cooked for the Thanksgiving

Us vs. Them

IF YOU'RE NOT WITH US, YOU'RE AGAINST US

Welcome to 1996

Greetings, Tactical Operative. You are about to visit a dim and violent part of the world's history — the racist and sexist world of the late 20th century. By now you should be familiar with the culture of the time, having been exposed to representative motion pictures ["movies"], music, and television, but we realize that the amount of data you have been required to assimilate is staggering. To help you, we have compiled a list of common mistakes made by previous Tactical Operatives. Avoid these errors and you should fit in well in this juncture.

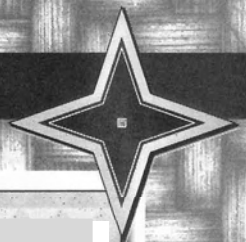
Modes of Address

"Consumer" is not used as a mode of address in 1996. It did not become common until the World Peace was imposed. In fact, 1996 has no greeting that conveys the respect and equality implicit in "consumer." Instead, males are referred to as "man" [often with a slightly exaggerated draw] while females are called "honey" or "girl."

[Refer to musical selection "Foreigner's Greatest Hits."] Similarly, our common honorific "Mr" is, in this juncture, split into "Mister" for males, "Missus" for married females, and "Miss" for unmarried females. These complicated titles were used to reinforce the dominance of the masculine hierarchy and to demonstrate the overriding valuation of women solely as a marriage commodity.

Racism

Racism is the guiding fact of life in this juncture. Do not attempt to interact as an equal with others of different races, as it will only alarm or annoy them. The racially homogenized are lumped in with African Ethnic in the "black" category, Euro Ethnic are "whites," while Oriental Ethnic are known as "orientals." Blacks typically express resentment and rage towards whites, while whites regard blacks with contempt and/or fear. [Refer to film selection "Sweet Sweetback's Badasssss Song."] Orientals



generally remain aloof and only interact with other ethnicities under duress. They often feign incomprehension. [Refer to film selection # "Sixteen Candle- "];

Guns

Guns are considered a fashion accessory in the 1990s. Although it is technically unlawful to own one, the laws against carrying firearms are usually not enforced. You should only have difficulties when carrying firearms if the law enforcement officers of the time are looking for an excuse to cause trouble for you. In such situations, it is customary to bribe them with a sum of cash such as a "double sawbuck" or with a delicacy known as a "dough nut."

Goods

People of this time are imprecise in their speech due to their society's poorly evolved grasp of consumer values. People from this juncture tend to refer to objects by their general classification — thus, they would call a Honda Civic a "car" in casual conversation. A Buco Crimestopper would be called a "shotgun" or even just a "gun." A Ruger Red Label would be called by the same names, although the differences in quality and value are obvious.

All this is due to the pernicious 20th century belief that things in the same category are of equivalent value. Thus, a car is a car to them, and only a few of the forward-thinking and perceptive really appreciate the difference between a Yugo and a BMW. [Refer to televised commercial selections #178 and #442.] In order to fit in, it is essential to behave as if brand names make no differ-

ence, despite your knowledge of how much they do.

Food

The food of the 1990s is highly impure and organic in nature. Exert extreme caution in its consumption. Previous operatives have experienced great gastric distress after consuming so-called "Mexican" food.

The dietary staple for this age is called the "cheeseburger," despite the fact that its main components are ground animal flesh, bread, and soy byproducts. A common beverage is "coffee," which bears only a passing resemblance to our beverage of the same name. Do not drink it. Do not purchase anything that has been "fried." Avoid the chocolate; it is desperately inferior to our own.

If you must eat, in order to maintain your cover, consume rice or soup. Finally, while the notion is disgusting to many, you may be required to eat something that was, at one time, alive. Special training to help you adjust to this is available upon request.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is not tolerated in this juncture. If you are homosexual, do not reveal it to 1936 natives. The average man in this juncture would rather commit suicide than be considered "gay." (Refer to film selection "Heathers.")

Dress

Skirts, kilts, and dresses are restricted to women, as is the use of facial cosmetics. Men who wear skirts or use cosmetics are



considered homosexual, no matter how much evidence to the contrary is presented.

Do not laugh at the "high heels" worn by women or the "neckties" worn by men. They are considered perfectly normal — even enticing — by the backward standards of this age. Though they are obvious signs of cultural submission to us, no one in the 90s realizes this.

Cultural Icons

Surprisingly, the greatest writer of the age, Daniel Pinkwater, is tragically underrated

during his lifespan. Do not attempt a serious discussion of his works; you will be looked upon askance. The great cultural icon of this age is the singer Michael Jackson. [Refer to musical video selections "Beat It" and "Thriller."] If you fear you are not fitting in, the phrase "Man, that Michael Jackson is one cool motherfucker" should set things right.

ADVICE TO PLAYERS

One way to use *Seed of the New Flesh* in your campaign is for the players to take on the roles of Buro TacOps. (Mixing TacOps and non-TacOps characters in the same campaign is tricky. It's best to choose one or the other for all the characters.) If you decide to go for it, you may want a little help getting into character. This section is that help.

Things in 2056 are pretty dark and grim. The "socially undesirable" are treated like garbage, it's nearly impossible to succeed at anything, the bureaucracy is a nightmare, and the only freedom you're guaranteed is the freedom to choose between brands.

If you've become a Tactical Operative, entrusted with sensitive time travel missions, you must have distinguished yourself highly and given the Buro good reason to trust you. The average *Feng Shui* character is obviously hyper-competent in his chosen area, so distinguishing yourself is no sweat. Winning the Buro's trust, on the other hand, might be a little rough for a generally decent person. A few ideas for leaping that hurdle follow.

YOU'RE APPALLINGLY PATRIOTIC

It's easy to be deeply, profoundly patriotic in 2056; the government rests on the back of feng shui sites that can bend the world to its will. Most people are sucked into Burothink even without propaganda. If you have been an unswerving flag-waver all your life, the Buro will trust you. This is doubly true if you did something patriotic like rat out a family member for pilfering.

Once you reach the Netherworld and other junctures, however, your unstoppable faith in the Buro may start to waver. After you leave the shadow of influence cast by Boatman and Bonengel's chi, you may begin to wonder if those kids you shot for the Buro really deserved to die. Maybe punching an old woman in the kidneys for hoarding food was a bit of an over-reaction . . .

These doubts might be stronger when you're exposed to the freewheeling Hong Kong of 1996. Contrary to what your bosses told you, people there aren't miserable, and don't seem as evil, sexist and racist as they were



depicted. In fact, you may find yourself wondering about a government that punishes **intra-racial** marriage in the name of racial harmony.

Playing out the "awakening" of a brain-washed goon getting his first taste of real **freedom** can be really cool.

YOU'RE A BURO BRAT

If mummy or daddy (or both) are highly placed in the Buro or in the corporate **structure**, you may indeed believe that the world of 2056 is a great and noble place — because you've never seen the dark and repressive aspects of it. If you've been sheltered all your life, you're likely to be grateful to the organization that sheltered you.

However, once you get to another juncture, you may discover pleasures that even the Buro can't match. Even the wealthiest families in 2056 eat vat grown psudeofood for two meals a day. If you disobey your orders and eat a cheeseburger, you may find yourself going native.

Leaving the culinary delights aside, most folks in other junctures don't live with the same habitual fear that Buro rule imposes. Sure, you were sheltered to some extent growing up, but in the back of your mind you always knew the Buro was something to be scared of — something even mom and dad couldn't protect you from.

In other junctures, you can get lost in a crowd. You can hide. You can be anonymous. In 2056 there is no escape. You may find the lure of doing things without Big Brother's supervision harder and harder to resist.

YOU'RE A BURO HERO

If you did something terribly heroic — ran into a burning hospital to save children, offered yourself as a hostage to amok terrorists who were going to dynamite a bank, single-handedly prevented a train from being hijacked — the Buro may have mistaken your desire to Do

What's Right for the jingoistic patriotism they strive so hard to inculcate. They may have tapped you for TacOps training without **realizing** that you have heavy reservations about the Buro and its policies. (If you understand the value of your own life, you would never reveal these reservations.)

As a trusted Tactical Operative, you're in a position to really stick it to them — if you can pull the wool over the eyes of those Buro brats and patriotic idiots.

YOU'RE UNDER COVER

The Buro is nothing if not arrogant. (Well, they'd still be brutal and sneaky if they weren't arrogant, but they're arrogant, too.) This makes it possible for an exceptionally weasely spy to infiltrate even a closely watched TacOps squad. If you want a Deceit score ratcheted through the ceiling, don't be afraid to play a spy.

Spies' motivations are as diverse as the organizations that might want to spy on the Buro. In addition to the obvious — the Jammers — you might be **working** for any of the other major factions or any of 2056's underground movements.

YOU'RE AN ABOMINATION

As a general rule, abominations don't rebel any more than army jeeps run off into the **jungle** to live on bananas. You're not most **abominations**.

Perhaps your fellow TacOps have treated you with **kindness** and decency (rare, but not impossible — especially if you spend most of your time as a transformed human). Or maybe you found out, completely by accident, that your Neural Grepper (the little gadget that blows up your brain if you disobey an order) doesn't work, and you've been biding your time waiting to drink some Buro blood.

You might be out for revenge, or **motivated** by a desire to Do What's Right.



DIVERGING PERSPECTIVES

The essential thing for GMs and players alike to realize when playing in 2056 is that the comparatively free 1990s are absolutely not regarded as a golden age. Rather, people from the 2050s look back on the earlier age with revulsion equal to that felt by Innerwalkers from ages past who visit 2056.

Basically, both time groups stare at each other, aghast, wondering how such a horrible state of affairs could possibly exist.

Naturally, people tend to notice the best things about their own juncture and the worst things about other times. The following lists offer a quick summary. Don't think too hard — this isn't philosophy class and these are rough caricatures — but these ideas will at least let you get the slogans right.

THE WORST THINGS ABOUT 2056

- Rights are rhetoric. There is no *place* in *the world* where anyone has the legal and civil rights enjoyed in the contemporary United States, Canada, and (most of) Europe.
- No pets. After the first Reckoning, famine was widespread. Most doggies, kitties, and guinea pigs wound up in stew pots, and they're just now beginning to breed their way off the endangered lists. Ironically, "freak" breeds like the Chihuahua and those German wiener dogs are the most widespread now by virtue of having less meat on their bones.
- Police entrapment is standard operating procedure.
- Except for the ads, all TV is pay-per-view.
- The CDCA's biological experimentation occasionally gets out of hand, spills, and contaminates the environment. This

produces hideous mutations, deaths, and illnesses whose behavior would baffle the contemporary Center for Disease Control. Worse, most people never hear about it.

- It is so hard to find out the truth about anything controversial that most people don't even try. They accept that they are being lied to by the government and that there's nothing they can do about it. A graffiti seen from New Des Moines to Hong Kong reads "The Truth Is Nowhere."
- It's essentially impossible to get ahead. The "level playing field is so ruthlessly enforced that even bright, **hard-working** people are not that much better off than lazy slackers. The government far prefers those who sit down, shut up, and do what they're told.
- The government is more a "**corrupt-ocracy**" than anything else. The lowest grade government worker has a standard of living better than those at the tops of other fields (except for entertainers, who are, as always, the pampered exception). This is essentially the only exception to the **general** rule "**you** can't get ahead," above.
- Incessant fear. No matter your social level, there is always, *always* the fear that through discovery, mistake, or simple bad luck you'll end up falling into the **PubOrd** machine — or worse, the BHP — which is something like a sausage grinder for human souls. Most citizens of 2056 are so used to the habitual terror that they can't imagine any other way to be.
- Ninety-nine people out of one hundred accept that there is nothing they can do to make things better.

THE WORST THINGS ABOUT 1996

- Shoddy consumer goods are a blight on a populace that can't fight cornercutting



Chang

The ruler of the prison came to my cell on my first night in the six eight eight. The others called this man "warden." As he approached, all my fellow prisoners fell silent. Two of his warriors accompanied him, armed with guns, which they pointed at my head. With this assurance, the warden felt secure enough to open the netting of my cell.

"I hear you like to fight, ethnic."

"No sir. Violence is shameful to me."

"That so?" He cocked his head. "Didn't seem so shameful when you killed six cops back in the Tex."

I remained silent with my head bowed.

"Answer me boy You kill them six cops?"

"I did, sir. I deeply regret my actions, although they were necessary"

He sucked in his breath. "So killing cops is necessary, is it?"

"In this degenerate nation, I fear it is."

He hit me with his chain then, but it only felt like a chain – he had not put the shock into it.

"You did it with your bare hands, ain't that right? Well, you may think you're some kind of big deal, but I got me here a zipperhead who's killed him upwards of seventeen men, and each one with his bare hands. Now, you take him down and you'll have a right fine time here in 688. You got some kind of beef on your record so I can't get you assigned here as a trusty, but I'll keep you here a good long time, feed you right, maybe get you a TV . . ."

"Sir, I do not wish to fight."

He laughed. "You left your choices outside with your hair and your shoes, penitent. Bag him, boys."

They put a black sack over my head and arms once more, and when they removed it I was in a makeshift arena, facing a huge man covered in scars. The floor and walls were stone, unlike the rest of the prison. The warriors of the warden surrounded us, eagerly watching. Many had guns in their hands.

"Fight!" cried the warden, and the scarred man roared and charged at me.

I could have killed him, easily He was strong, but without technique. I could have avoided his blows, but to do so would only enrage the warden. Yet I saw no **purpose** in killing this man for their brutal joy

The scarred man struck for my head. I covered it with my arms, and could feel his great power through them. I ducked, but ineffectively His fists rained on my back and ribs, but with decreasing force. I looked up into his face, and saw his confusion. He stopped striking me, and seemed unhappy that I did not attempt to strike him in return.

"Fight him!"

"Cowardly old bastard!"

"Kill him, Scars!"

The warden was livid. "What're you standin' there for? If he ain't gonna fight you, whup on him!"

The scarred giant unhappily came back to me and struck me a few more times.

"Body slam!" shouted an officer. Soon the others adopted it as a chant.

"Body slam! Body slam."

The giant grabbed me by my shoulder and hip and lifted me.

"I forgive you," I whispered to him as he threw me to the floor. The crowd roared with delight.

"Stomp his head!"

"Cripple the little freak!"

"Kidneys! Kidney shot!"

"That's enough," said the warden, holding up his arms. He glared at me.

"You've got to live for your questioning, so I'm pullin' the leash on Scars here. But your world of hurt is just beginning."

I do not doubt it, sir," I whispered – but in my heart I rejoiced. My captors would not wish me alive *if* I had told them of my brothers. And *if* I had betrayed the Guiding Hand, I would have truly deserved death.



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Jef

"We're gonna make it . . . we're gonna make it . . ." I had been thinking right when Wilkes' head got blown off. The strobe lights kicked in a second later.

"Get back! Back to the doorway!" screamed Shiny, who then grabbed me and pulled me to safety. There were maybe eight guards, armed with Crimestoppers, between us and the gate. We were down to three from four— they'd just killed the only other convict I trusted — and we had two Pacification Implements between us.

"Shit . . . shit!" muttered Shiny, which didn't seem very helpful. He was maybe thirteen — barely old enough for adult prison — with fiberoptic cables in the place of his hair and eyebrows. It was pretty and damn expensive, and it made him a great target at night. He was in for stealing juice from maglev trains and using it to joyride on a home-made motorcycle.

Chang looked inscrutable, as always. An oriental ethno, maybe fifty or sixty he'd somehow learned I was planning to escape by making Larsonite knives with the generator for Shiny's hair. He'd threatened to tip off the guards unless we brought him too.

As it turned out, Chang was the most capable escapee of us. As the eight guards slowly advanced he jumped them. AN eight.

The whole scene was lit by the strobes, so I only saw jerking moments of movement. Chang's leap cleared fifteen feet, easy. A couple guards fired, but they aimed too low. Who knew the old man could fly? He let out a loud cry, scissored the heads of two guards with his legs and bashed them together, knocking them out. Then he was behind them.

"Go! Go! Go!" shouted Shiny, running forward while the guards were spinning to deal with the spry codger. I swung the chain of my Pacification Implement up between the legs of a guard and grabbed his gun as he screamed and fell.

Another guard turned towards me — the one who'd killed Wilkes. He pumped his gun and said "drop it," but I'd already pulled my trigger. Nothing happened.

He grinned sadistically and put his barrel right in my face. "You have to pump it," he said, and fired.

Or tried to. Nothing happened.

Examining the guns later, I realized they were model 2.1 Crimestoppers — the ones with the real bad jamming problem. I guess the guard never got the retrofit.

"Thanks for the tip." I pumped and shot. He flew backwards and knocked over the last standing guard.

Shiny shrieked with glee and shot them both again. "Take that, Penitence Ass-Offs!"

Chang shook his head and started to steal a guard's shoes.

I heard a high pitched whirring and turned just in time to see an *aircar* coming in for a strafing run. What I did next didn't make much sense. I don't even know why I tried such a stupid thing. Maybe I figured it could only shoot forwards so running under it would get me out of its arc of fire. But that wouldn't explain my impulse to throw my Pacification Implement up into the left front jet. All I can say is, it worked. There was a thump and a shriek as the *aircar* pivoted and slammed into the front gate. Then it blew up.

"Krishnds cojones!" howled Shiny "We're out!"

"Not quite," said Chang, quietly;

Things were coming out of the *aircar* wreckage. Not people. Things. Slimy things with legs and guns. Too many legs and too many guns. I'd seen abominations on TV, but they're different when it's for real.

I gulped and pumped my Crimestopper.

Making History My-Story

SECRET WAR TACTICAL OPERATIONS OVERVIEW

TACTICAL OPERATIONS OVERVIEW EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CODE BLUE SUPREME SECRET:
BUROPRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

Our current tactical project (the so-called "secret war") presents many challenges:

- Three foreign junctures in which the laws of nature (or, at least, **supernature**) are different from our own.
- A bewildering array of opponents, each possessing abilities powerful and unfamiliar.
- The Netherworld battlefield, in which literally anything seems capable of attacking us.

Each front presents unique difficulties and opportunities.

THE NETHERWORLD

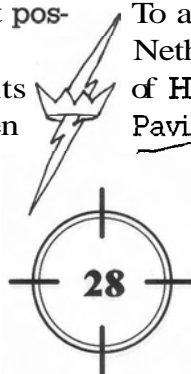
The value of the Netherworld cannot possibly be underestimated. As the sole avenue of travel between junctures, its tactical significance was obvious even

before the Molten Heart fiasco.

Additionally, the unique physical laws of the area make it essential for the research of the CDCA. Finally, if a new juncture opens, its opening will be discovered in the Netherworld.

Unfortunately, we are not the only faction to perceive this value. While the Biomass Reprocessing Center is secure and we have safe corridors to gateways in every juncture, we can strike a decisive blow by dominating the Netherworld instead of merely inhabiting it. Of necessity, this must be gradual process; if we learn nothing else from the Molten Heart affair, it should be the danger of relying on a single artifact for dominance.

To accomplish our goals in the Netherworld, I recommend the cultivation of Huan Ken, the Monarch of the Thunder Pavilion. While we have had conflicts with



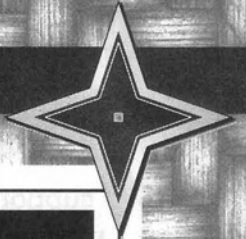


PHOTO 1: A typical Netherworld encounter. One of our elite TacOps forces and Huan Ken's Thunder Knights. Chaos is typical of Netherworld actions.

him and his forces in the past (see attached photo #1) these skirmishes do not seem to have embittered him towards us. In fact, our battle prowess has earned Huan Ken's admiration. Too, our gift of one hundred Hellharrower rifles has done much to soften the Thunder King's heart towards us.

Huan Ken is valuable to us in a **number** of ways. He is already firmly established in the Netherworld and knows much of its secrets. Furthermore, his knowledge of sorcery – especially its destructive aspects – is deep and broad. Both of

these advantages can be ours if we ally with him.

In return, Huan Ken desires the destruction of his siblings. The other three Monarchs are difficult targets. Attacking them now would be the height of foolishness. However, offering Huan Ken assistance in his own attacks upon them is definitely wise – **especially** if we can keep our aid covert. We must strike a balance, being subtle enough to prevent crushing reprisals against us from Huan Ken's siblings and being open enough to



support the Thunder King's opinion of us as fierce warriors.

A group of abominations equipped with hidden Feedback Enhancers would be eminently appropriate. Not only would they be devastating against the sorcerous defenses of his siblings, if the arcanowave modifications of the abominations were disguised well enough, the blame could be seated upon the Lotus.

Of course, our effort on Huan Ken's behalf might simply result in his ascendance to dominance, instead of our own. If we wish to become kings instead of merely kingmakers, we must dictate the terms of battle instead of reacting to the terms of others. In short, we must play to our strengths and make others react to them.

What are our biggest strengths? The first is that we have an entirely pacified world in our juncture. This makes a full-blown armed confrontation less costly for us than for our enemies. However, while our deep pockets can carry us against one foe, nothing can save us if we appear overwhelming and become the target of all. Therefore, we must reinforce this strength with our second advantage; superior technology.

We have used military might with mixed results; I suggest that we make our medical and pharmaceutical knowledge work for us as well. The release of a biologically engineered agent into the Netherworld would wreak havoc upon its residents. The healing powers of magic and "fu" would save many, but these must be administered personally by skilled (and

vulnerable) practitioners; only science can create inoculations and cures.

The release of a biological agent of choice would have attractive results. In addition to demoralizing our foes, the knowledge that the Buro had "discovered a cure" for a menacing disease would encourage many neutral Netherworld denizens to pledge themselves to our cause. Recruiting from the Netherworld is a necessity; not only do Netherworld residents have valuable knowledge of their own domain, they can often be deployed to other junctures.

I recommend the release of bio-agent **MXL42290**, "Crimson Loss." It is painful and deadly, but its low mutation factor **will** prevent it from becoming a hazard to our troops. Furthermore, while it can reliably be inoculated against and cured by the medicines of our age, the materials required for the cure cannot be created in any juncture besides our own and the Netherworld.

A final matter is the **Transtemporal Communications Cable**. We have been doing preliminary surveying, and have encountered unusual resistance (see photo \$2). It does not seem that the purpose of the cable has been compromised. Rather, these attacks seem to be the acts of those who assume that anything we do is dangerous to them.

While these setbacks might make the TCC look inviable, I continue to endorse this project strongly. Transtemporal Vocal Communication Devices have already more than proved their value in the field, but they are available only to arcanowave

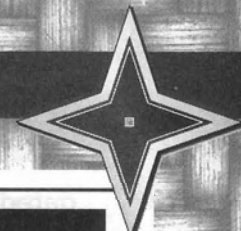
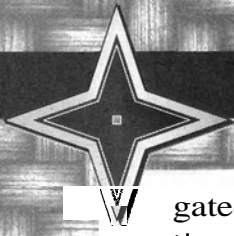


PHOTO 2: *Our* Bio-Engineered Assets encounter what appear to be enormous, fire-breathing infants. *Who the hell are these?!?!*

modified operatives. Completion of the TCC **will** allow substantial, real-time data transfer between all junctures without recourse to arcanowaves. To reiterate the benefits of such data transfer capacity:

- Transtemporal communications would remain secure even if the CDCA was compromised or a means to interfere with arcanowave broadcasts was **dis**covered. (In fact, there is evidence that such interference is occurring right now.)
- The **ability** to communicate vital data, or call for backup, from agents in other junctures would no longer be limited to arcanowave modified **indi**viduals or units.
- Espionage activity could be **dramati**cally increased in all junctures via the use of remote agents such as Loyalty Roaches.
- Electronic surveillance of (for example) the 69 juncture would no longer need to be administrated by agents in that juncture. Those duties could be dele-



gated to operatives in 2056, freeing up timewalking agents for other activities.

- If the TCC can be introduced to the 1990s juncture, we **will** be able to apply the full force of our computing power to the primitive phone, banking, and computer networks of the 20th century. The advantages of such a breakthrough are too obvious and numerous to mention.
- Overall, the TCC would provide a greater degree of communication between various operations. Greater communication means greater flexibility. It means increased speed and intensity of response. Instead of having individual organizations for each juncture, we would have a large, responsive body of personnel, capable of quickly responding to emergencies in other junctures.

Plainly speaking, the TCC needs more and stronger troops. I realize that there is opposition to the cable in some sectors. I cannot help but suspect that this opposition stems more from a fear of lost influence and prerogative than from genuine tactical concerns.

Discuss Curly's situation w/ Or. and Mac.

69 AD

The unique tactical challenge of the 69 juncture is the willingness of the Eaters of the Lotus to go **head-to-head** with our challengers. The Ascended wish to squelch all reports of supernatural activity in 1850 and 1996, because such manifestations challenge their authority. But since the Lotus base a large part of their power over the masses on the threat of attacks by supernatural creatures, our attacks

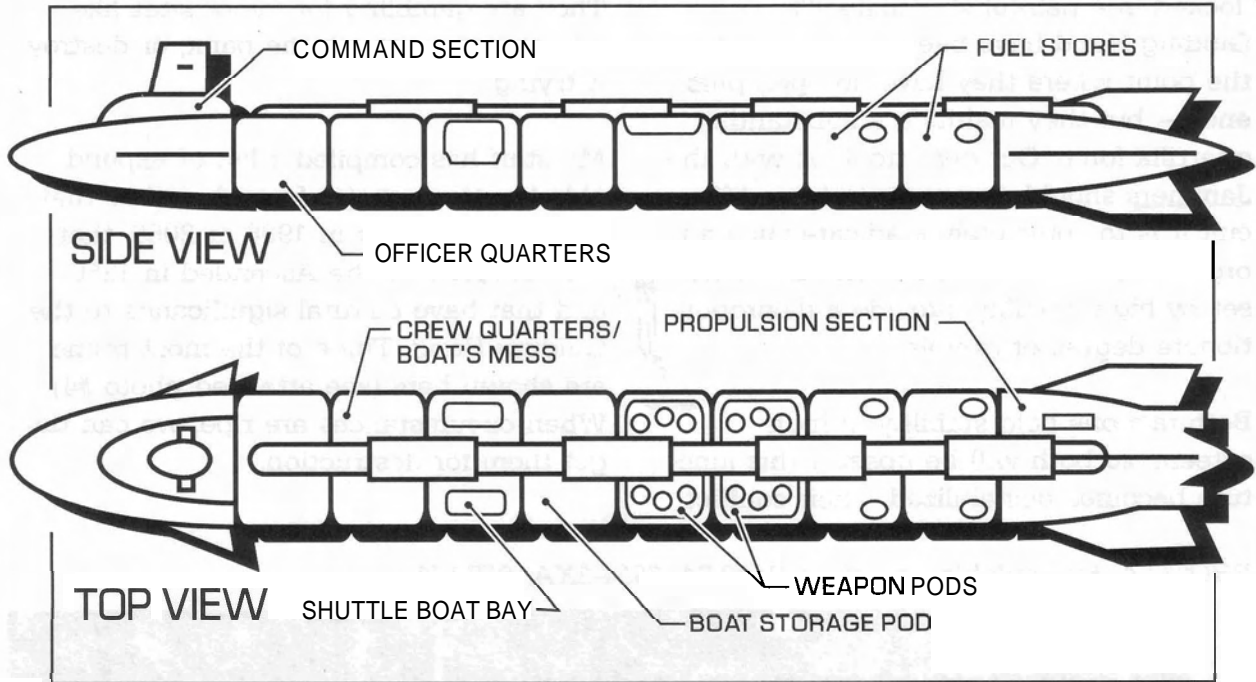
play into their hands; we drive people to serve the Lotus in order to gain protection from us.

Therefore, I recommend a slight decrease of overt hostility in the 69 juncture. We should concentrate monster hunting in the Netherworld, where the average denizens know about the secret war already. This **will** give the added advantage of bolstering our Netherworld force. Losing our 69 toeholds would be a painful setback, but losing our presence in the Netherworld would be nothing short of disastrous. We should keep pressure on the Lotus, but let them think we're at an impasse.

In reality, we can take advantage of the unique backwardness of the 69 juncture. We are aware of natural feng shui sites in Australia, South America, and Antarctica. While not as strong as those in China, they are not valueless. Best of all, the Eaters of the Lotus are not even aware of these continents.

I recommend the construction of a fleet of swift submarines in 69 AD. "Kraken" class submarine vehicles (see attached diagram #3) can be built in a modular fashion; once the parts are moved through gates into 69, we can assemble them there. Dominance of the sea **will** give us access to remote – thus, easily defensible – sites where we can build our strength until a decisive blow can be dealt once and for **all**. Antarctica is an especially ripe plum; the technology to merely survive there **will** not be available for centuries.

If this plan has a danger, it is the potential that others will mobilize from the



KRAKEN MODULAR SUBMARINE VEHICLE

DIAGRAM 3: *Kraken Modular Submarine Vehicle*

Netherworld and attack our **virgin territory**. Therefore, **securing** these gates should be our primary tactical goal in this operation. One back door into Antarctica could completely change the situation; instead of hardened, well-defended sites accessible only by conventional means, we would have the same old guerrilla mess. If they can only reach us conventionally, we will **win**, full stop. If they can reach us through gates, it's anybody's ball game.

A final note regarding the Lotus: We have successfully recruited one middle-ranking Lotus minion in the 1996 juncture by repairing the punitive castration inflicted upon him by the Emperor in 69. His **vat-**

grown replacement parts function to his evident satisfaction, and being **technologically** naive, he does not suspect our inclusion of a biological radio microphone in his testicles. Furthermore, if he betrays us, or even presents a significantly tactical situation, we have a traitor bomb in place as well. This tactic may be hazardous in 69, where the supernatural perceptions of the Lotus are most concentrated, but we must not underestimate what we offer eunuchs in Lotus employ.

1850

Of all the junctures we can currently access, 1850 demands the least urgent attention. Our two subtlest foes, the



Ascended and the Guiding Hand, are locked in a painful stalemate. The Guiding Hand have been suppressed to the point where they have no open presence — but they maintain a substantial guerrilla force. Our own troubles with the **Jammers** should demonstrate how difficult it is to completely eradicate such an organization, and their low numbers, offset by high mobility, provide a disproportionate degree of trouble.

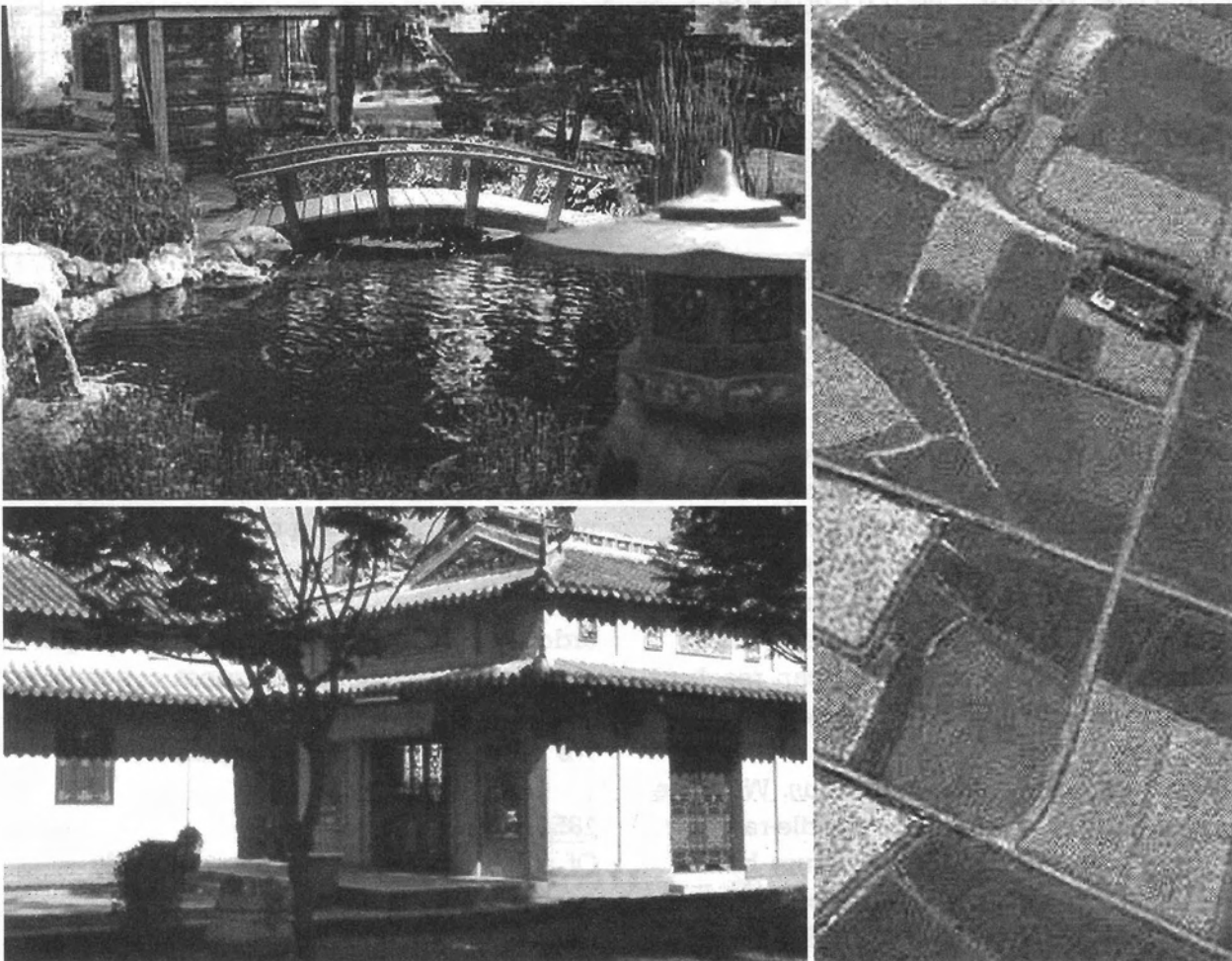
Both factions hold stability in high esteem, so both **will** be upset if this juncture becomes destabilized. Their **conflict**

smolders; we must pour gasoline on it. They are gambling for minor sites like misers; we must rob the bank, or destroy it trying.

My staff has compiled a list of **expendable** locations: major feng shui sites that we do not occupy in 1996 or 2056, that are occupied by the Ascended in 1850, and that have cultural significance to the Guiding Hand. Three of the most prime are shown here (see attached photo #4). When circumstances are ripe, we can **target** them for destruction.



PHOTO 4: *Expendable Locations 2493-34, 6854-3XA, 9572-11*





"Burning" these sites, rather than occupying them, offers us a number of advantages.

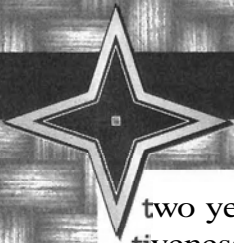
- It denies them to the Ascended in 1996, their juncture of greatest strength.
- We will not have not set up the Guiding Hand for an easy seizure of 1850 (a real danger in opposing the Ascended) because the sites **will** not exist for them to occupy.
- There is the "burn rush effect. Though difficult to measure and comprehend, it appears that the act of destroying a feng **shui** site provides a temporary influx of arcanowave energy. The manifestations of this **flux** are poorly understood, but have been **uni**-versally beneficial. It's not as good as possessing one, but we can't possess major sites in this juncture without substantial tactical disadvantages anyway.
- The psychological effect of these attacks **will** also be damaging. The Guiding Hand in particular are attached to a nauseatingly nationalist concept of "traditional **China**." Many of these sites are practically shrines of sinocentrism; destroying them not only weakens both factions, it mocks and emasculates the Guiding Hand by trampling their beloved country in the dust. **If** we proceed with our alliance with Huan Ken, we can present the destruction of these sites to him as an affront to his sister **Ming I**.

One such "slash and **burn**" raid is likely to take both groups by surprise, since our interest in this juncture has traditionally been slight. A second direct raid would be foolish without overwhelming strength and numbers. Once the Transtemporal Communications Cable is in place we would be able to mobilize such a force for rapid raids, after which they could immediately be re-deployed to guard our sites in other junctures.

While these lightning raids are a sound strategic decision in their own right, they also provide a distraction from another project which requires the utmost secrecy. "Project Rip Van Winkle" has been described but a short summary here seems appropriate. *Who thinks up these names??*

The open junctures are "hot spots" where large concentrations of troops, firepower and (not least) attention are focused. The years between 1850 and 1996 are "secure" to the Ascended, because the only way to "get" to them is the long way, by aging forward. However, our opponents may not appreciate our technology's potential to "fast **forward**" from 1850 to a vulnerable temporal point, such as 1932, when military conflict left a number of powerful sites open to destruction (if not occupation) by a well-coordinated and elite squad operating with the advantage of surprise. We can put that force in place by securing a remote site in the 1850 juncture and establishing a cryogenic **stasis** facility. In suspended animation, our force could wait until the time was ripe.

While removing a cadre of elite combat **timewalkers** and appropriate abomination backup from the conflict for **eighty-**



two years **will** reduce our present **effectiveness**, the sudden application of this force to a vulnerable time point, when the Ascended and Guiding Hand are unable to call for reinforcements from other junctures, would be nothing short of **devastating**.

As a final note, I recommend that a **disproportionate** number of female **TacOps** be assigned to 1850. The traditional views of the Guiding Hand incline them to underestimate females, and every bit helps.

1996

1996 is the most fiercely contested **juncture**. While it is nominally held by the Ascended, the combined attentions of the Guiding Hand, Lotus, Silver Dragons (and, of course, ourselves) have created a seething chaos which no one can **command**.

Give me a break.

The eradication of the Dragons is mourned only by those who value gullible pawns. It has, however, changed the equation substantially. Previously we shared the distinction of being the Dragons' primary targets with the Eaters of the Lotus. Since the Guiding Hand and the Ascended were able to evade the Dragons through guile and stealth (something at which our **arcanowave** modified operatives had a serious disadvantage), one must question why the Ascended saw fit to destroy them.

The most obvious reason is that they could. The Dragons were the smallest and least organized faction (unless you count the Jammers, which I do not). Too, the

damage the dying Dragons did to the Eaters of the Lotus is not inconsiderable; however, I do not believe that this alone justifies the effort the Ascended must have exerted to crush them so utterly.

No, the Dragons threatened the Ascended in some way in which we do not. Individually, the Dragons were frightful menaces, but their pitiful numbers should have offset their individual talents, leaving them little more than a nuisance to a **conspiracy** of the Ascended's size and experience.

The chaotic nature of the Dragons may have been a factor; the Ascended simply wanted a more predictable playing field. Without the erratic careening of the Dragons, they certainly have that. More than that, however, the Dragons had a tenacity, a daring, and a willingness to take big gambles that is unmatched by any operatives remaining in the field. The Guiding Hand are as dedicated, but are too logical for the sort of hare-brained schemes that were routine for the Dragons. The Lotus are as ferociously tenacious, but are hampered by their own essential short sight; motivated by selfish impulses, they are too quick to sell each other out to survive. The Ascended seem to have an endless supply of lackeys, but the small numbers of their mysterious ruling class leave them open for eradication if they show themselves.

I **am** not criticizing the Buro; I fully appreciate the power of fear as a motivator. The trump argument in any debate about the motivation of personnel is simply this; the Dragons are dead and we are **still** strong. Nonetheless, improved **perfor-**



mance can be had from the true believer. Therefore, I recommend a strategy which **will** not only achieve our tactical goals, but provide our operatives with a sense of self-esteem above and beyond the simple thrill of patriotism.

The Buro was built on ideals. If we lose sight of those ideals, we become just another monolithic power structure like the Ascended. Therefore, I recommend that more attention be paid to areas of the 1996 juncture where the suffering, injustice, and indifference of that dark decade can be known firsthand.

The choicest feng shui sites are in highly developed and wealthy areas, where their good fortune provides a seductive atmosphere to those raised in our more austere age. If our agents can see the suffering and poverty on which this sumptuous wealth is built, they **will** attack the Ascended with renewed zeal, not only because they are ordered to, but because they want to.

Areas of warfare and strife are easy to come by in the 1996 juncture; send our agents to acquire sites there. True, the sites are of an inferior quality, but ten sites with hundred-Dao ratings are equivalent to a single thousand-Dao site. While it takes more personnel to guard a number of small sites, it also means that the loss of a single site is less tactically significant. If we can take minor sites in war-torn areas and make reclaiming them from us disproportionately difficult, the other factions may decide not to bother.

The Ascended have created a world of rampant greed; this provides us with

opportunity. We have amassed a **substantial** war chest simply by looking up old sports scores and gambling on them. Most major events are now being fixed by the Ascended to prevent this tactic, but small events are still easy to milk. (Incidentally, your idea of rewriting all sports histories in our archives to prevent other timewalkers from using this profit-generating method was extremely sound.)

Using this sort of future knowledge, we can not only gain money, but also influence. Through our foreknowledge of tragedies, atrocities, and accidents we can present ourselves to temporal locals as saviors. By demonstrating our virtue to them (along with our wealth) we **will** be able to recruit a cadre of loyal 1996 dwellers. The advantages of local allies are too numerous to mention.

Wouldn't it be ironic for the Ascended to see capable, dedicated, and suicidally "virtuous" individuals who would have become Dragons pledge allegiance to the Blue Flag instead?



APRIL 8-DAYS
-Marjory - case study jan
-Brawley - " " "
-Curtis - ? antique remote
for his collection?



Jef

"Hold. . . on a second. . . guys!" I was gasping. So was Shiny, so he didn't seem to mind stopping. We were in the maintenance tunnels under the street. Shiny and I had managed to pry up a personhole cover while Chang was going man-to-whatever with the *beasties* from the *aircar*, and we had made good our escape.

Chang turned and gave me a pissy look. "I thought your 'Cop Channel' said we must run for a full day to be free."

"What I said. . . was that. . . Gina Corbett, Buro Personhunter. . . said she made most of her catches . . . in the first day when the . . . trail was fresh." My gasps for air were finally starting to slow down.

"So why do you wish to stop now?"

For an answer I pumped my gun and fired upwards. "Because I'm hungry."

I don't know how long we'd been going when I noticed that one of the tubes running along above us was made of Dupuis 99. My gunshot opened up the tube and we were rewarded with a flow of tan, mealy spew, which Shiny and I began eagerly consuming. After a moment of hesitation, Chang followed suit.

"The tube – Dupuis 99 – knew it was a food tube," I explained. Shiny looked up suddenly.

"Won't this pinpoint our location? What did you do, you dumbshit?"

"That's the beauty of it. Dupuis 99 was recalled in 2050 because it decays faster than expected. But a lot of city administrators took the funds for replacing it and pocketed them, figuring they could replace the Dupuis piece by piece when it failed. A few got caught – you can imagine what happened to them. So the food distribution officer here is not going to want to report this directly to the cops. He'll probably just send a work crew down nice-and-quiet-like to replace it."

"So all we have to do is wait and ambush 'em!" said Shiny.

"Maybe," muttered Chang.

Chang

I did not want to kill the men who worked underground. They were only doing their duty, even *if* their masters were corrupt. The one called Shiny – the one with the hair that glowed like fire – showed no such compassion. The other one, Jef, was disgusted as well, but perhaps only because he was splashed with their brains.

"Dammit Shiny," Jef was yelling "that was completely over the top! These aren't cops, you dumb kid, they're just regular –"

"Yeah, so?" he replied. "So what? If they turn us in, we'll be just as dead." He turned his gun towards the two guards I had put to sleep.

"The older one will sleep for eight hours," I told them. "The younger one will sleep for seven hours and fifteen minutes."

"Oh yeah? Just how do you know that?" demanded Shiny, but I knew that my *skills* left him ill at ease.

"The same way I knew how to make them fall into a slumber."

"Huh." Shiny considered the possibilities and perked up. "You gonna teach me that some time?"

"Perhaps." Never. Then I decided to chide him in a manner he would understand. "It was not necessary to use ammunition on them. We should steward it with care."

Jef gave me a disgusted look. Let him think me cold. It does my heart good to know that this time's degenerate rule has not choked compassion out of every soul.

"Hey," said Jef, "good tools!" He was looking in the case that one of the workers carried – probably for something to clean himself.

"Lemme see," said Shiny, leaping onto the stolen goods like a carrion crow

"Omnimap," said Jef, unfolding a sheet of paper. "We must be here," he said, pointing. He touched some runes at the bottom of the page and the image reworked itself into a new map. "Here's the surface. We're in Montana, for God's sake." He began poking more symbols on the map, and the

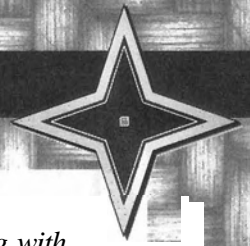


image continued to swim magically before his eyes.

"Screw that," said Shiny, and the glee in his voice told me he had found something destructive. "It's a landridge cutter!"

"Those are pricey," said Jef with a touch of longing.

"Dangerous too," said Shiny. The object he held was the thickness of a thumb and slightly longer than a finger. There was a slide on the side, and when he pushed it forward, a dimly glowing red disk appeared at the end of the wand. As he pushed it farther, I could see a piece of metal extending; its tip was the center of the red circle.

"Watch this," he said, and using the red disk like a saw, quickly carved "SHINY WAS HERE" into the stone wall. "It'll go through Buro armor just as quick."

"Put it away and look at this," said Jef, pointing at the map.

"What is it?" I asked.

"A storage shed and workshop. If we can get there, I just might be able to whip us up some disguises."

"You really think so?" asked Shiny.

"Beats living in the maintenance tunnels."

Shiny

When we got to the workshop, the first thing I did was grab some superglue and go to work on my two Crimestoppers, securing the pumps together.

"What are you doing?" Jef asked.

For an answer I grabbed the twin pistol grips – one in the left hand and one in the right. Pulling the left grip back – KA-CHINK – cocked the right gun. Again with the right and both were ready for business.

"Double your pleasure," I said.

He grunted and went back to trying to make contact lenses to disguise our retinal prints. Like that would work. Like the Buro doesn't come down like a million ton shithammer on anyone with unfamiliar prints. But Jef was convinced it would fool them, and, as it happened, we never had a chance

to find out. Instead, we **got** found out.

Our first clue was when this big thing with four arms and a second face in its chest kicked down the door and started firing at us with some kind of gun made out of bone and plastic.

Chang was on it fast. Yeah, he was an annoying old fart, but the way he charged the thing ran up its chest, and kicked it in the face with both feet has to count for something. Unfortunately, the thing shot him point blank with the bone rifle. Ugly purple energy snarled around him and he fell back with a cry.

Jef opened fire and the thing returned the favor, using a pair of familiar Buro 9s in its spare set of its hands. Its head was turned towards Jef while the face in its belly was watching Chang who looked dizzy but still plenty mad.

I always hated being ignored.

"Die, ugly bastard!" I screamed, and let 'er rip with both barrels. KA-CHINK with the left, BLAM! KA-CHINK with the right, BLAM!

Jef jumped behind a table (coward) while Mr. Ugly turned his attention towards me. It was raising its guns and I was wondering what I'd get on my tombstone when Chang whirled in with a weird kind of slow speed – I know it doesn't make sense – and gave it a huge whack right in one of its bullet holes. What's strange is, Chang was bleeding all over the place as he hit it: out his ears and eyes, even out of his fingertips.

It howled and fell, and Chang stood over it, panting.

Then about two billion PubOrd goons poured through the doorway, and I realized my guns were empty.

R & D

GOOD GOODS FUEL THE CONSUMER CULTURE

THE FALL CATALOG

This section of describes some of the technological marvels of 2056 that are either commonplace or well-known. Players whose characters are natives of 2056 can read this section if they wish.

EFFICIENCY SHOES

Efficiency shoes are available in a wide variety of styles from Unity Footwear. What makes them special is the soles: they have wheels on them.

Efficiency shoes are not roller skates; the wheels are much smaller, they only go forward, and they can be locked in position by hitting a button on the shoe's toe. The same button frees them up for rolling again.

The soles of efficiency shoes are about three centimeters thick, but they compress when weight is put on them. This weight turns the wheel; when your weight comes down on an efficiency shoe, it has the effect of pushing your foot 10-20 cm forward (depending, of course, on your weight). Essentially, the shoe takes the "wasted energy of your foot striking the ground and transforms it into forward velocity. It works and feels sort of like rid-

ing a bicycle when you stand up on the pedals.

These shoes are wildly popular at all levels of society. Executives like them because efficiency is a sacred ideal in the Buro. Average Joes like them because they make it quicker to get around — remember, very few people own cars in 2056. Kids like them 'cause they're fast. The hot shoes for kids are Silver Dragons (I swear, the name must be a coincidence) which send showers of sparks out the back while they roll.

Game Notes: When wearing efficiency shoes, add half of a character's **Bod** score to his Move score. (Obviously, this doesn't make anyone using a **flight** shtick any faster.) Clicking the toe-button removes the bonus and imparts the wearer a pair of regular (albeit thick soled) shoes.

Characters raised in the 2056 juncture can automatically use these. A character from another juncture must spend an experience point and describe a comic scene of trying to figure them out before he can get the advantages listed above. If he tries to use them without spending the experience point, have him roll Agility, Difficulty 6. If he makes it, he gets the bonus for a sequence; otherwise, describe a humiliating pratfall.



EYEBALL FARM

"Eyeball Farming" is the name given to a particular illegal activity — that of growing unlicensed, cloned human eyes.

In 2056, the retinal scan is far and away the most popular form of identification. A **DNA sample** can be used in any major hospital to clone the eyes of the sample's donor. Growing new eyes takes about a day; these eyes can be implanted in another person in a routine ninety-minute operation, though some eyeball farmers are said to be so skilled that they can "jack the peepers" in thirty minutes or less. The recipient of the cloned eyes is then able to access the home, personal effects, bank account — anything whose security depends on retinal scan — of the **DNA** donor.

Impersonation is actually the least common use for farmed eyeballs, however. More common by far is the creation of new identities using retinas created by amalgamized cloning — that is, eyes whose retinas have never been read into the **Omnet** (see p. 47). Almost every major hospital has a ring of doctors who can grow a pair of eyes, put them in your sockets and get you registered as a newborn infant — usually for an outrageous fee. More advanced operations hack into **Omnet** and create a whole new history based on the new retinal pattern.

Game Notes: This is a good (albeit **yucky**) way for characters to dodge the ever-present Public Order — at least until they do something violent with their **new** retinal record. Even eyeball farming can't protect someone forever, though. A criminal who is wanted badly enough

FASHION DESPOT SPECIAL

FUN FALL FASHIONS FOR THE FIFTIES!

"Asymmetrical" is your pass code for fab fashion this fall, Consumer. The "puffy-on-the-left/skintight-on-the-right" gown worn by Gina Corbett to the Cop Channel Awards has started a trend that's so popular anyone without a lopsided outfit or two needs to be examined for Jammer sympathies! ☞ The only notable buckler of the lopsided trend is Gina's costar cutie, Dan Dammer. Off-duty, Dammer's manner is leaner and meaner than Gina's; he sports basic black skinsuits that show off his ever-fascinating physique. He was spotted at the exclusive Private RecFac AAA6 in a polymer suit that crawled subtle gold pinstripes over him. These beauties are hand brewed by Polytrude Inc., and are expected on store shelves this spring. Waiting is such sweet torment. ☞ Polytrude's prime competitor already has a polymer suit on the market with a "continual redesign" feature. It changes shape and color continuously. It's fun to watch, but I wouldn't wear it out in the rain without a good bodycycling underneath; it tends to gap. ☞

If you're saving for another skinjob, hold on! Rumor has it that the price on subdermal

hologram projectors is expected to drop again. Popular singer Yoesie Yoodle's dragon pattern, complete with moving, flaming vomit will soon be available for imprint on *your* back for as little as 100 hours — a bargain at twice the price! ☞ Fiber optic hair implants, on the other hand, are clearly no longer a Productive Fashion Accessory. Their reign was total, but brief; if you got one, buy a good hat. ☞ On the distant fashion front, researchers are making promising progress with skin transplants that are totally, terrifically, thrillingly . . . **transparent!** That's right — soon you won't have to worry about that opaque skin getting in the way when you want to show off your muscles — a patch of ClearSkin will show the world that you've got meat in there, not just silicone. (Not that there's anything wrong with silicone, mind you.) Doctors are cautious about issuing a release date for this product, but waiting lists are already forming — I'm personally signed up to get clear stripes put on my thigh in a zebra pattern. This is going to be bigger than the Jammers' bandage budget, folks.

*



can be hunted with voice-print searches, DNA trace tracking, face and mannerism recognition software, and other tricks so top secret that even Dan Dammer, Jammer Slammer (see p. 70) doesn't know how they work.

GRAVITY CRANE

The Architects have learned quite a bit about gravity in the last sixty years. They can warp it, cancel it or reverse it. One of the most common civilian uses for the last application is in construction.

A gravity crane doesn't look much like a 20th century crane. Whereas a traditional crane works by pulling from above, the gravity crane works by canceling the gravity beneath a beam or girder.

The gravity crane looks like a really big ugly rug. When you put something on the rug and turn it on, the object on the rug becomes weightless, making it much easier to get into position.

Another setting on the crane reverses gravity. Here's how it works: when the reverse gravity is turned on, everything on the rug is propelled upwards at a great rate of speed — just as if it had been dropped off a plane, only it's "falling" up. The operator of the crane usually turns off the reversed gravity when the object's halfway

to its target height, returning the girder (or whatever) to the pull of normal gravity. The girder continues moving upwards, but slows as normal gravity tugs at it. At some point, for just a moment, the beam will be motionless in midair, just like a ball that's been thrown straight up, right before it begins to fall. At that moment, the operator turns the crane to null gravity, leaving the beam floating, motionless, in midair. The process of timing this procedure is usually left to pre-programmed computer routines, but can be done manually. After all, even if there's a little misjudgment under manual control, the beam will only be floating upwards or downwards gently, waiting for the construction workers to move it into place. All Bureau-approved gravity cranes also have a safety mechanism which limits the amount of time for which the reverse gravity setting will remain on at once. This avoids many potential mishaps.

Game Notes: Stunt potential abounds. Bad guys (or unsuspecting heroes) can be lured onto a crane, flung upwards and then either (a) frozen helpless in midair while taunted through a bullhorn or (b) dropped.

Anyone flying a small aircraft over one of these (anything smaller than a jet — SPUD-Us are certainly included) has to make a Driving check to avoid crashing. The Difficulty is 8 if the crane is producing zero gravity and 15 if it's reverse gravity. On the other hand, if the pilot is expecting the change, the gravity flux can be used to gain a lot of altitude suddenly or create a burst of speed.

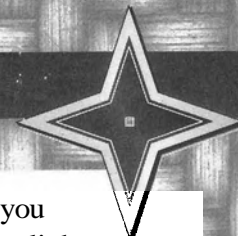
It requires a Fix-It roll of Difficulty 7 and about 10 shots to remove the safety features on a gravity crane. Once they're off, the reversed gravity function can be activated for as long as the operator wishes.

Incidentally, your characters may get the bright idea of turning the crane on its side and using it to push things horizontally. This doesn't work; when put on its side, it simply affects the area above its edge.

Physics Alert

Keep in mind that just because something is weightless, it doesn't become massless. It still takes a hell of a lot of energy to overcome the inertia of a ton of mass, even in weightless conditions. When two weightless objects interact, the one with less mass usually moves; that's why a spacewalking astronaut pulls herself around the outside of the space shuttle, instead of pulling the shuttle around into position.

What this basically means is that, while a character on a gravity crane will be capable of tremendous leaps and feats of great strength, he won't be able to pick up a beam that weighs more than he does and use it like a baseball bat.



HAND HELD GRAVITY DISTORTING UTILITY TOOL

Only cops and military personnel have access to these. They're included in this section because they're not secret; everyone's seen these on the Cop Channel. However, few citizens know the proper name for this device; they're universally called "suckerlights."

A suckerlight looks like a standard Maglite — those big flashlights that cops used in the 20th century. In fact, it operates exactly like one as well, except that it's a bit less weighty and it's brighter. (It also has a "strobe" setting which can be used to take down people who've had Penal Restraining Operations — see p. 48.) Oh yeah — and it has a "gravity distortion" function. When this is turned on, everything the light touches is drawn towards the suckerlight. The strength of this attraction depends on how diffuse the beam is; a wide beam is useful for pulling a lot of loose stuff into the air, while a narrow beam can be used to unbalance an opponent from across the room.

Using a suckerlight is kind of like using a lasso. When you've got the light beam on a target, it's like you're holding one end of a rope tied to that person. Furthermore, this rope is taut: going towards each other is easy, pulling away is difficult.

The uses for a suckerlight are legion. If your gun gets knocked out of your hand, you can vacuum it back. If a bad guy is getting away in a helicopter, you can cling to the bottom with your suckerlight. If your apartment is dusty, you can vacuum it up real quick. Suckerlights can be used to scale buildings — just point it at the wall and walk your way up. It's like having someone at the top pulling you up on a rope. In fact, the standard PubOrd utility belt has a built in harness that can be hooked up to the suckerlight for just such occasions.

The gravity feature still works even if the light is covered up or doused, so if you're

hanging from a chopper by the beam you won't get knocked off just because your lightbulb burns out. In fact, the new model suckerlight (the HHGDUT-IR) has an infrared setting in addition to normal, visible light. The IR version is only available to SWAT and special forces types used to wearing IR goggles and working in the dark.

Suckerlights are in great demand on the black market, but they're difficult to come by. This is because they have a self-destruct mechanism built in. The self-destruct gives each suckerlight a 24 hour countdown before it's permanently scrambled. The countdown can be reset at any Public Order station, which is where they get recharged anyway. The rumor among PubOrd officers is that the self-destruct was put in to prevent officers from using suckerlights to vacuum their homes, but it really is more likely that they're there to prevent black market use.

Game Notes: Again, stunts abound. You can point one of these at someone, turn on the suction, and let it go. It will fly like an arrow along the path of its beam. Unfortunately, as it falls from your hand, the line of the beam will almost certainly change, so it's useful to hold it above your head and aim a few feet above your target. A suckerlight that hits someone in this fashion has a damage rating of 6.

The suckerlight has a Strength of 4 on diffuse beam; this increases to Strength 5 when the beam is concentrated. A "suckee" with a Strength greater than 5 can resist being pulled in automatically, no matter how strong the person on the other end is — the beam just "stretches." Those being sucked who have lower Strength must roll their Strength, Difficulty 5, to stand their ground. Likewise, a person on the suckerlight end of the equation with a Strength 5 or less must make the same roll or be forced to either turn off the suction or let the suckerlight get pulled out of his hands!

If used as a hand to hand weapon, the suckerlight has a damage rating of Strength +3, just like a normal club. However, if the suckerlight is turned on and its pull is used to augment the strike, the damage is Strength +4.

PubOrd cops are trained to take advantage of this.

As a general rule, if a character is in hand to hand combat with a PubOrd cop while her boyfriend is pulling the cop off balance with a suckerlight, the cop suffers one point of Impairment for as long as the suckerlight is messing with his equilibrium.

INTEGRATED SUSPECT RESTRAINT DEVICE

Once again, the Buro gives one of its devices a lengthy name. Once again, it gets a much more descriptive nickname. In this case, the device in question is known as a "blackout sack."

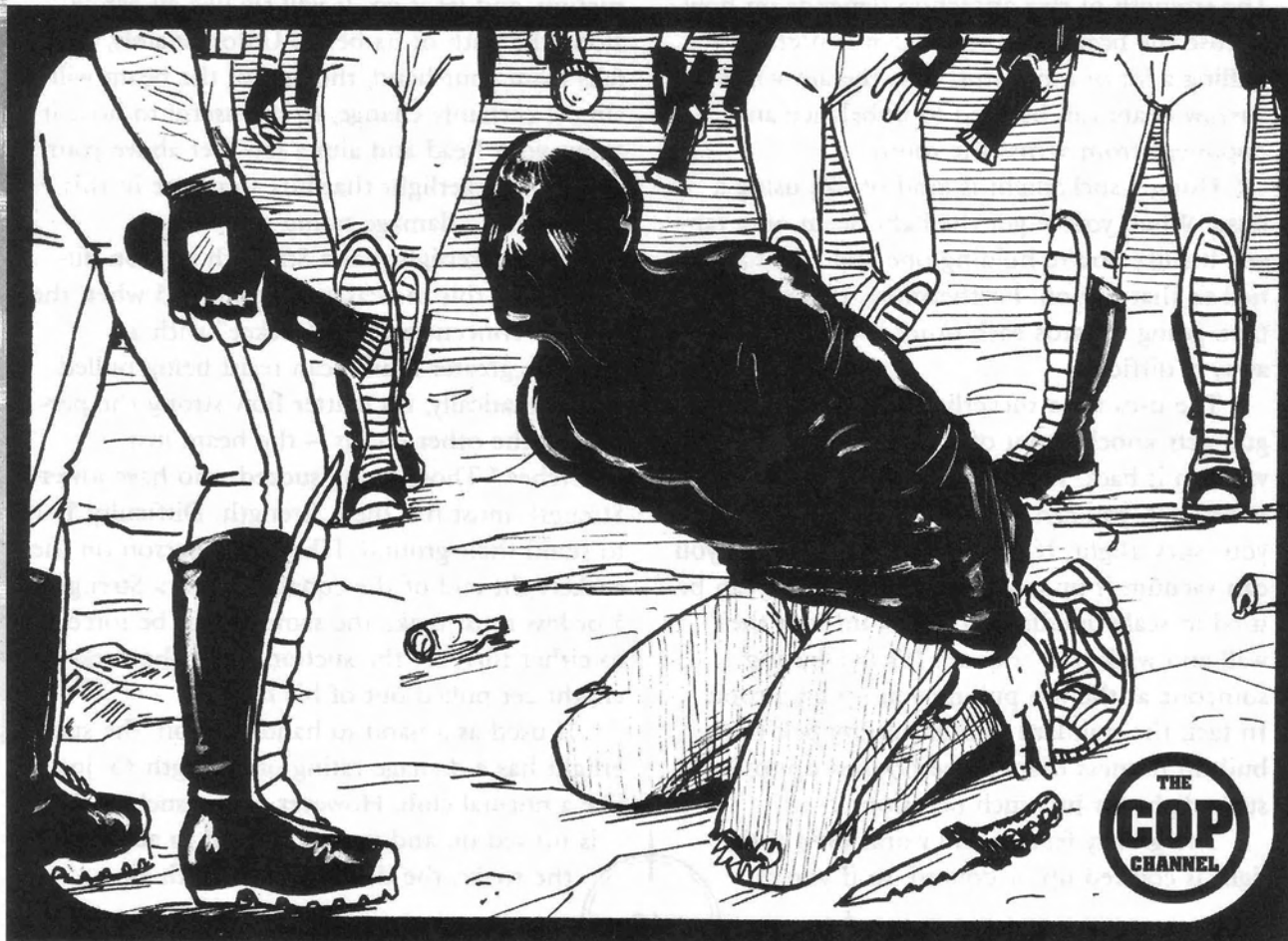
Unactivated, a blackout sack is a hoop with a skin stretched across one side — sort of like a black tambourine without the jingly bits. When

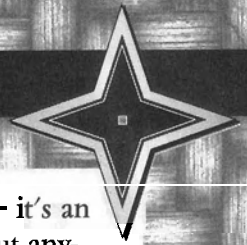
it's on the belt, it's about the size of a saucer. It's got a single button.

When the cop pulls the sack off her belt, she pushes the button and the whole apparatus gets much bigger: the hoop expands until it's about 70 cm across and the skin expands to become a big, loose sack. When the button is released, the sack contracts, trapping whatever's inside. PubOrd cops are very adept at whipping these gadgets off their belts and getting them over the head and arms of a suspect in one smooth motion.

The fabric of the sack is completely opaque; no light gets in or out. It normally has tiny pores in it so the person inside can breathe. It's tight, though. Breathing is hard and the arms are pulled next to the body very uncomfortably.

Of course, most people give up once the sack is on, but some panic. When this happens, the sack's "extreme sanction" feature is employed: a button on the sack's belt clip





makes the normally uncomfortably-tight sack even tighter and closes the breathing pores up, suffocating the victim. Another touch on the belt button relaxes the sack's grip to normal intensity and opens the pores again.

In any case, the sack won't come off until a special magnetized key is touched to the button on its mouth. These keys are usually kept in patrol cars and at PubOrd stations, but some cops carry them on their persons. Keys can either be coded to certain single sacks, to a whole run of sacks (say, those used by a given PubOrd precinct), or to all sacks in the world. The universal keys are only possessed by very high ranking PubOrd and Buro employees.

Game Notes: Whipping a blackout sack on someone requires a successful Martial Arts check and takes 3 shots. Anyone with a blackout sack on suffers 4 points of Impairment on any action that requires the use of eyes (which can be negated by the Fu shtick "Friend of Darkness") and 2 points of Impairment (for a total of 6) on anything that requires the use of arms.

When it's just tight, the sack cannot be torn or punctured; it simply stretches out of the way. When it's really tight (when the belt button has been hit to make it smother the suspect) it can be cut by any edged weapon (or Abyssal Spines) that does 6 points of damage to it. It has a Toughness of 3. Remember that someone cutting his way out from the inside has Impairment to contend with. The mouth of the sack can be pried open, but it has a Strength of 9.

One final note: A blackout sack hit by lightning or a strong electrical charge will expand and expand until it pops. Of course, anyone inside will get electrocuted too, but hey, he's out of the sack!

LANDRIDGE CUTTER

This expensive little gadget looks something like a big ballpoint pen with a bell-shaped guard on the end. In function, it does what every 20th century buzzsaw dreamed of doing —

cutting through *anything*. That's right — it's an etcher, it's a saw, it'll carve up just about anybody who crosses you in less time than it takes to say "sliced thin, piled high."

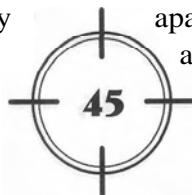
The cutting surface looks like a whirring, buzzing, glowing red disk. It's actually a loop of very strong, very thin wire. There's a slide on the side of the cutter. Push it out for a wider disk! pull it in for a fine point.

The only problem with a landridge cutter is that every once in a while the wire breaks. When this happens, there's an ugly snarl that slashes around and makes a big mess. Luckily, the cutter will only break if used to cut things beyond its capacity — diamond, marble, solid metal thicker than a centimeter, or the edge of another landridge cutter.

Just to put it in perspective, one of these gadgets costs about three months' salary for the average worker. Only rich characters will be able to afford them. The battery is guaranteed for life.

Game Notes: This doodad has many uses. It can be used to cut raw materials, can be fixed to a vise and used to polish, can etch fine details on the smallest setting, and . . . what? Oh very well. The Damage when used as a hand to hand weapon is Strength +4. Mundane armor will affect it . . . once. In the process of protecting, the armor is destroyed. Armor gained from sorcery, fu or other shticks is not destroyed and continues to work normally.

Cutters can malfunction in two cases: if used to cut items on the no-no list (which includes very heavy stone; diamond; lots of metal; or the armor of abominations, supernatural creatures, transformed animals, or those with the Reinforcer arcanowave shtick) or if used in combat. In either case, it malfunctions when its user fumbles a roll. A malfunctioning cutter self-destructs, doing 10 Wound Points to the person holding it. This is modified by armor and Toughness, as usual. Note that a cutter that has been used — even once — in a wrong way is forever after in danger of coming apart anytime it's used, even when being used appropriately.





LIGHTWEB SPACE TRANSFORMATION SYSTEM

The **Lightweb Space Transformation System** (or just "lightweb") is a holograph projector designed for home decoration. Turn it on and the cramped walls of your **BuroPad** fade away, replaced by just about any view you could desire — the interior of a great cathedral, a mountaintop or beach, the set of your favorite TV show . . . the possibilities are nigh limitless. If you're interested, *someone* has designed it. The only catch is you're not really there. Your chair may look like an emperor's throne, but it still feels like cheap Buro polymer. It can't make your apartment any bigger, or cleaner, or (if you're a bachelor) less smelly.

Many companies have invested in huge **lightweb** systems that integrate every office in their building. Sure, you may be working in a cubicle the size of a toilet stall, but it looks like your desk is in the middle of a peaceful vale in deep virgin timber. To go see your supervisor, you have to go by the secretary's shadowy glen, turn right at the comptroller's meadow, and cross the brook into the managers' section. (Only managers get brookside offices.)

Integrated **lightweb** systems also make most office supplies obsolete. Your computer terminal isn't really "there," but the computer can follow what you're touching or asking for. A certain set of gestures can "summon up" a piece of paper and a pen. You won't feel either, because they're not really there, but you can write a message to someone, fold it into an airplane, and send it flying to them — anywhere in the world. (Beats email, eh?)

There are subtle clues that show where the "real" walls are, but people from junctures other than 2056 need lots of exposure to be able to spot them. It can make a firefight very interesting when you don't know where the walls or doors are.

Some police stations are experimenting

with lightwebs that create holograms of lots of extra cops. This is very disconcerting to prisoners; they can't tell which cops are real and which are decoys, which makes it impossible to tell if they're getting the hairy eyeball from a real cop or a simulation. These stations are also fooling around with hologram walls. If the prisoners attempt a jailbreak, the cops can see through the walls to shoot them unseen. When these systems are used, the actual cops wear special goggles or contact lenses that polarize light, making the bogus cops and walls shadowy and transparent.

Game Notes: You can run very surreal fight scenes with these — just use your imagination. If a shooter can see through a hologram and the target can't, the target cannot actively dodge.

Furthermore, if you don't mind a little subtext in your sessions, the **lightweb** can be used as a metaphor for the whole experience of visiting the Buro. On the surface, things look pretty good, but underneath there's nothing but cheap, inflexible crap.

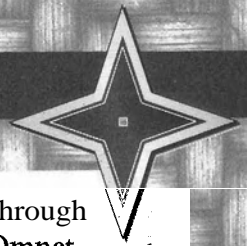
LOYALTY ROACH

Oooh, ick. Those sicko Architects have been playing with bugs.

It all started back in the 90s juncture. Scientists in the employ of the Ascended were working on self-directed spy robots that could broadcast sounds and images while **repositioning** themselves in order to get a better idea of what was going on. The Ascended even managed to build them, but they were really too damn expensive for what you got; it was much easier to use shotgun microphones, hidden cameras and bribed janitors.

When the Architects finally dusted the Ascended, some clever folks down at the CDCA found the self-directed spybots. They realized that a common spider or cockroach could do everything the Ascended had wanted except broadcast sound and video. With the tech of

56, mounting a camera and a microphone on a roach wasn't much trouble.



Thus was born the Loyalty Roach. Bioengineered to be better, stronger and faster than the ordinary roach, these little buggers are invaluable to the Buro police state. So many are used that watching their broadcasts for **treasonous** activity is an **entry** level job. The people who watch Roach TV all day are commonly called Roach Rustlers; each one is in charge of 10-12 roaches. The real pro level Roach Rustlers can monitor 20 roaches at once and still get their monthly quota of traitorous activity reports.

Officially, Loyalty Roaches do not exist. After all, a free and honest government doesn't need to spy on its loyal citizens, right consumer? But almost everyone knows a Roach Rustler, is related to one, or knows someone who knows one.

Usually the roaches are just given their head and allowed to wander around at will. The Roach Rustler will tune in the sound of a specific roach now and again, but obviously he can't listen to all of them at once. If he spies something suspicious going on, however, he'll tune in the sound and start maneuvering the roach towards the action. (The roach is controlled by giving it tiny shocks to scuttle away from.)

Game Notes: If any GM would, hypothetically, feel bad about having a squad of Buro goons break in on the characters because things had gotten boring, these lil' beauties give a perfect excuse.

It should be noted that while the "ecologically safe" pesticides of 2056 won't kill loyalty roaches, most of the bug sprays from the 90s will do the trick. Secret warriors from '56 habitually engage in black market bug spray profiteering.

OMNET

Omnet is the sole provider of information services for 90% of the world. There are countless news and entertainment channels (both passive and interactive) but they're **all** carried by Omnet. Banking is universally done over Omnet. Most shopping is done on it as

well. Telecommunications? It all goes through Omnet. Research? Downloaded from Omnet. Entertainment? Tuned in through Omnet.

Omnet has many interfaces, but underneath them, all the information is getting pumped across millions of miles of cable or bounced through satellites from central databases. Various Omnet services are **described** elsewhere, but they all come through this **one** central, government-controlled network.

This means, of course, that Omnet gets a piece of the action from every transaction that occurs on it. That's part of the reason that taxes were eliminated in 2049.

20:07 BURO STANDARDIZED TIME

Channel Banal: *Love, Buro-Style.* Neal buys an accordion; Marion tries to hide her bad grade in Citizenship.

The Bux Network: *Combat Shopping.* This special episode pits champions from Europe, Africa and Asia against the American champion in a condemned mall in the Texas Pacified Zone.

CBS: *Star-Trek: Farther Reaches.* Captain *!-Tu* must decide **between** the crew's safety and the dictates of his own heart. A space warp gives Noodle a sex change. Ensign Eastman's voice changes.

The Cop Channel: *Dan Dammer, Jammer Slammer.* Jammer involvement is suspected when a nursery is dynamited in London. Dan is flown in to consult.

Edutainmecorp: Kitia Tse'nansenjas interviews General Oliver.

Execution Network: A special documentary of Free Sex Militia leader Elmer Kathe's last days.

GPS: *Fools For Speed* (Movie). Young velocity freaks learn a tragic lesson when they violate the law in New Des Moines.



—Excerpted from *What's On?*
"The All-the-Time TV Ticker-Tape"
 February 8, 2056



Game Notes: Omnet is one means by which the Buro keeps track of *everyone*. Criminals often have their Omnet privileges reduced – not only preventing them from using their money freely (one of the problems with having the government run the bank) but also preventing them from communicating with friends and family (or criminal confederates, of course). Particularly severe crimes are punished with the revocation of entertainment entitlements. That's right – cross the government and they'll take away your movies!

PENAL RESTRAINING OPERATION

Convicted criminals in 2056 give up medical sovereignty over their own bodies, meaning, among other things, that they can legally be used for gruesome and debilitating experimentation by the CDCA. Even so, gruesome and debilitating experimentation is usually reserved for third time offenders, and is rare even then. Occasionally experimental subjects with abnormal abilities escape to wreak horrible revenge – especially the man from Room Five . . .

The Penal Restraining Operation, on the other hand, is administered to **all** convicted felons. First off, the operation leaves a **gruesome**, prominent scar on the scalp, giving convicts the nickname "zipperheads." More **importantly**, a PRO makes its victim subject to epileptic fits in the presence of strobe lights and anything else that flickers brightly and rapidly. Any zipperhead subjected to such conditions has a straight 50% chance of falling into seizures for 2-12 minutes, unable to do anything else. It goes without saying that all prisons and public buildings are equipped with strobe lights for use in case of an emergency. Many exclusive restaurants, and even private homes, have them outside as well, and keep them running all night.

The PRO is reversible, but it costs big money. (In fact, everyday epilepsy is 100% curable in 2056 as well – and non-PRO epilepsy is much cheaper to treat, though the procedure for fixing it is identical.)

Game Notes: The game uses should be obvious. As a final note, it's not very difficult for Healing Chi, Slap Patches or the sorcerous Healing shtick to negate a PRO.

PHALLUSAURUS MACHINE PISTOL

The history of the Phallusaurus pistol is the story of a bad idea whose time has come. Basically, this is a .22 caliber machine pistol with a five foot long clip. That's right; pitiful damage, but you'll never have to reload it. The purpose for which the Phallusaurus was built explains it all: it's one of the guns offered to contestants in the popular game show *Combat Shopping*. The bottom of the clip has an edged spike that can be used for a mean slash or stab (Strength +4). It can also be poked in the floor to provide 1/3 of a tripod.

It became wildly popular because it looks really cool and has a blatantly macho name. Eventually, cops started asking how they could get them. Though initially hesitant to give police such a (frankly)silly weapon, the Powers That Be initiated a test case in Toronto and discovered that people were so intimidated by the Phallusaurus (As Seen On TV!) that resisting arrest decreased by 4%. That was good enough for the Buro.

Game Notes: (8/8/200) Naturally, you can't just nip down to the mall and buy one of these; all firearms are illegal for civilian consumption in 2056, and possession of one is considered Blatant Intent To Commit Homicide. It's included in this section because everyone in 2056 recognizes these.

Being a hybrid melee weapon and firearm, the Phallusaurus is pretty **sucky** at both jobs. If fired without poking the end into the floor, the Phallusaurus has a -1 to hit. When fired on full automatic, you don't get the two "free" 3 round bursts without the penalty described on page 62 of the *Feng Shui* rulebook. It cannot be used with the shticks Both Guns Blazing, Eagle Eye, Fast Draw or Lighming Reload (not that you should ever need the latter). Remember,



Productivity Drugs: Not Just Good For You...



this is a weapon for a game show; people aren't supposed to die from it (very often).

It's almost as bad trying to smack someone with it. Because it's poorly balanced, it gives a -1 to anyone who tries to strike with it, unless the clip is empty.

PRODUCTIVITY DRUGS

In the 69 juncture you had booze. In the 1850s it was opium. The 90s ushered in Prozac. Last in the chain are the Productivity Drugs of 2056.

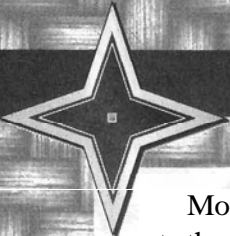
Alcohol makes you relax. Opium makes you really relax. Prozac makes you feel a general sense of well being. Productivity Drugs give you the comfort of Prozac and the relaxation of alcohol, along with just a touch of opium's complete apathy. However, they do so without the hangover, without the lethargy, and with-

out the wait. (You have to take Prozac for weeks before it kicks in; Productivity Drugs take effect within minutes.)

It has to mean something that there are no significant underground markets for alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, or heroin left in 2056. (There is money to be made on hallucinogens, but it's a pretty narrow market. The biggest criminal cartel is for tobacco.) However, over 65% of the population uses Productivity Drugs at some level. In a recent poll, 13% of the population said they "couldn't get out of bed in the morning" without Productivity Drugs. Only 1% of the 13% felt bad about that, however.

Productivity Drugs slightly impair critical thinking skills while creating a feeling of comfort that greatly increases tolerance for dull and repetitive tasks. It does all this without any loss of alertness or manual dexterity.

In short, it makes you much more likely to shut up and do your boring vat job.



Most consumers in '56 haven't figured this out; they just know that the Productivity Drugs make them less miserable and, hey, **they're** not, like, *narcotics* or anything, right? After all, the Buro really cracked down on *deadly* drugs like cocaine and marijuana and gin — so they wouldn't go and sell anything dangerous like that to their citizens . . . right? Everything is just fine. Yeah. Just fine. What **was** I saying?

Game Notes: Taking one dose of Productivity Drugs makes your character mellow, pleasant, agreeable, safe and secure. It also lowers his Chi (including secondary attributes) by one and his Intelligence and Willpower by two. The mechanical effect lasts as long as the mellow feeling — about an hour.

Multiple doses are cumulative. The only "benefit" to be gained by taking Productivity Drugs is that you'll feel better, and PubOrd is a little less suspicious of people with the glazed and distant expression of the habitual user. On the other hand, lots of Jammers and Free Sex Militants are just as addicted as anyone else in '56. They just feel cheerful and safe while blowing things up, instead of feeling cheerful and safe while working in the vats.

YUUZIK

A Yuuzik rig includes a pair of earphones; monitors that gauge your heartbeat, galvanic skin response, and something of your facial expression; and a computer the size of your thumb with about a zillion sound samples. Bingo! Constant music based on your mood. Sure, there's a little loss of perception (depending on how loud you play it) but Yuuzik units are no worse than the portable stereos that have been around for decades.

A standard Yuuzik rig "learns" its user's tastes by gauging what sounds make him wince and which ones make him smile. This makes Yuuzik units highly personalized. Some were even stolen and held for ransom before a **feature** was installed allowing personalized sound catalogues to be backed up.

People are steeply divided on the

Yuuzik issue. Some people love their Yuuzik rigs so much that they wear them everywhere: in the shower, to the boardroom, and in bed with their spouses. They claim the constant soundtrack it provides gives their lives an added layer of excitement and interest. On the other hand, you'll see a lot of people running around with "Yuuzik Makes Mee Zik" t-shirts.

Game Notes: Yuuzik rigs don't affect the rules, except that **characters** with Yuuzik units get their own soundtracks all the time. If you're feeling generous, let the gal with the rig run the CD player in the game room.

ZOGEEVATOR

These are far too much fun for poor people; zogeevators are only found in high rent apartment buildings, Buro office complexes, corporate HQs, and really expensive department stores.

The word "zogeevator" is a compression of "zero gravity elevator." It's not really an elevator, though; it has no enclosure. It's basically a big vertical shaft. At the bottom is a machine that cancels out gravity, so as soon as you step in you become weightless. There are handles on the walls so you can propel yourself up or down to the floor you desire. Some zogeevators have handles that move on electromagnetic tracks so transportees don't have to work at all. If a zogee field unexpectedly ceases (if it's been, oh, say, blown up, for example) a giant **airbag** inflates in the bottom of the shaft.

Note for Miscreants: The trigger for the **airbag** mechanism is suspended above the zero gee device, under the floor of the zogeevator. If the device turns off, normal gravity pulls the trigger down and inflates the bag. Some ungrateful punk kids have learned that if you can hit the floor with enough force, it knocks the trigger down (after all, nothing is holding it up except inertia) and inflates the bag. If you're standing on the bag when it inflates and the zogee field is still on, it whips you up to the top of the shaft really fast. Whee!

The Great Mall in the Buro's capital



city (which is unimaginatively named "Capital") has a zogeevator that's 35m across, with a fan above it that pulls people up. At the top there are handholds so that people can get over to the side and get to the shops. If you want to go down, stay near the sides and pull yourself with the handholds there.

SPUD-U pilots are always careful to keep track of zogeevators, since the zogee field usually extends at least a mile above the building. (That's why zogee field generators are illegal for private use.)

Game Notes: See "Gravity Crane," p. 42.

EYES ONLY

The devices in this section are only for GMs and some players whose characters have high security clearances. If your GM tells you not to read something in here, don't; you'll just be spoiling your own fun.

DEATHSABER

The guy who named this weapon really knew his stuff. The intimidating name is appropriate — this gravity based weapon is very, very nasty.

A deathsaber is a lot like a suckerlight (p. 43). Turned off, it looks like a small flashlight. Its pull is not as strong as a suckerlight and its range is shorter, but it makes up for this in two ways. First, it can push as well as pull. Second, it can oscillate between pushing and pulling very, very rapidly.

When turned to "vibe" a deathsaber makes a loud, howling noise, like metal being sawed. A gravity column about 1 centimeter wide and 3 meters long projects from the front. In this column, every bit of matter is pulled towards the deathsaber and then pushed away roughly one hundred times a second. Anything that passes into the column (or that the column passes through — it's usually swung like a sword) gets shaken to pieces. Furthermore, the speed at which the matter is agitated causes lots of friction — enough to ignite wood

(which will already be splintered), melt lead, and char flesh.

A deathsaber "blade" is transparent when it's turned on, but as the saber is used particles of smoke, destroyed matter and dust get trapped in the gravity column, showing where it is.

Deathsabers are expensive, and are usually restricted to Tactical Operatives.

Game Notes: The only thing moderating the nastiness of this gadget is that it is not Strength-dependent. Damage from a saber is 3 + Outcome — and it ignores armor and Toughness. It also cannot be parried (but let your players learn this the hard way.)

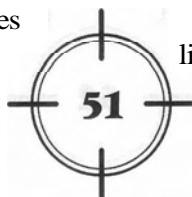
Holding a deathsaber is hard on the hand. The wielder takes a -1 penalty to all Martial Arts attacks made with the weapon during the first sequence it's used, a -2 during the second sequence and so on. If the wielder turns the saber off for a sequence to flex his hand (especially by hitting someone or feeling the soothing massage of a pistol's recoil) he starts again with the -1 penalty.

A deathsaber can be used like a suckerlight, save with an effective Strength of 2. It can push objects as well as pull them, but does not have a light to use as a guide.

DISINTEGRATOR RAY

This nasty chunk of ordnance is given only to operatives who are expected to encounter heavy resistance — cops sent to take down rogue abominations, for example. When fired, it emits a silent ray which separates any matter it hits into its component elements. The ray looks like a thin, straight flame, with heat distortion above it. A steady shot will poke a hole about five centimeters deep and two centimeters wide — in anything. Of course, when fired at a living target you're almost guaranteed not to get a steady shot. ("Hell, Earl, you tryin' to sign your name on his chest or what?")

The problem with an energy that works like a universal solvent is — what do you



keep it in? The Buro gunsmiths haven't quite figured that one out yet, which is why disintegrator rays cannot be reloaded. When the last shot has been fired, the weapon simply **crumbles** into its component elements. Poof! You get a green black smudge of carbon, copper and zinc all over your hands. This is annoying, but less annoying than worrying about it falling into the hands of Jammers, who would love to know how to make matter fall apart.

A disintegrator ray also comes equipped with a camera mounted on the barrel, so the boys back at Buro HQ can keep track of who's on the business end of these guns. The grunts who carry them don't usually know it, but that monitoring someone can make them hold their fire — or discharge or destroy the gun via remote control. On a couple occasions the Buro has deliberately let shipments of a few disintegrators fall into the hands of dissidents, only to start firing them as soon as they're examined.

Game Notes: (13**/3/10) It's concealable, it's deadly and it takes out unnamed characters on an Outcome of 3 or more. Any armor that is hit by a Disintegrator Ray gives its Toughness bonus, but is destroyed afterwards. (Armor produced by shticks works normally.) Handle with care. Technical types can disable the remote control and self-destruct mechanisms (if they know what to look for) by rolling against a Difficulty of 15. From a game balance standpoint, disintegrator rays aren't too dangerous, because of their built-in time limit.

The major drawback to the disintegrator ray is that if you get a botch, all the remaining shots go off at once in random directions. (Oops.) For each shot remaining, start with the character holding the gun. Make a Fortune check; if it fails he gets hit. For the next shot, pick a character that the gun's holder is **fighting**, and check his Fortune. Continue **alternating** between sides until the gun is empty and self-destructs.

The only gun shticks that can be used with disintegrator rays are Both Guns Blazing, Eagle Eye and Fast Draw. Starting characters cannot have a disintegrator ray in their possession.

Editor's Note: The disintegrator ray was originally written up in the Daedalus supplement *Back for Seconds*. There it was mistakenly labeled as an arcanowave device. It's not.

EARDRUMMER AND NOSEY

The Buro is nothing if not sneaky. Well, that's not true — they'd still be violent and cruel and arrogant if they weren't sneaky. But they're sneaky too, all right? In fact, the Buro is so sneaky that it bugs people. Not in the sense of irritating them (though that happens, too) and not in the sense of putting listening devices in their homes, cars and offices. The idea is still remote surveillance, but the Architects like to put their spying devices right in their victims' bodies, so they can't get lost.

There are several types of monitors commonly used by the Architects. The simplest is called the "eardrummer," and as you might expect, it goes in the ear. They don't need anesthesia or special instruments; they just stick this compressed air gun in your ear and — **BLAM!** — there's a painfully loud noise and it's in. (In one playtest, characters from the 1990s who were recruited by the Buro were told that the airgun-in-the-ear routine was to inoculate them against airborne AIDS. They never suspected the truth.)

The eardrummer uses the host's own eardrum as a sounding surface. Anything the host hears can be **heard by the eardrummer**. Additionally, should the Buro operator choose, he can broadcast sounds to the host. Only the host can hear them.

The eardrummer does not have to be **injected** as described above. That's just the easiest way. There is a slightly larger variant of the eardrummer, about the size of a tick, that has its own legs. It can crawl right into an ear and seat itself with only a momentary sting and a ear-popping feeling. Gemng these in is tricky because they can't mount cameras or other **guidance gear**. Sometimes they're piggybacked on loyalty roaches to get close.



Standard eardrummers are often voluntarily accepted by Buro operatives. Not only is it patriotic to show that you've got nothing to hide, it's also nice to know that you can call for backup any *time* at all.

A more elaborate surveillance device – commonly called the nose – is installed in the sinus cavity under the eye. (This causes nasal congestion and headaches, but that's the price of a stable world government.) One plug goes to the eardrum and works like an eardrummer. Another plug leads to a fiber optic camera sticking out the victim's tear duct; the Buro sees what he sees. (The tear duct is removed; crybabies are not tolerated as Buro operatives.)

Traitor bombs (p. 63) can make surly Innerwalkers into subservient Buro lackeys. This strategy can be adopted without the arcanowave traitor bomb, though. The Buro has other biotech goodies that can kill instantly when set off by remote control, and they'll fit on any type of eardrummer or nose. For Innerwalkers the arcanowave version is preferred, but it's nice to have a deep bag of tricks.

Game Notes: A few things to know about these devices:

- They don't set off metal detectors in the 1990s juncture.
- They don't run out of power (they run comfortably off the host's body heat).
- They cannot broadcast across junctures. If Johnny Tso gets bugged and escapes into the Netherworld he can only be spied on by Architects in the Netherworld. If he later goes to Θ AD, he can only be spied on by Architects there, and so on. arcanowave versions of eardrummers and noseys would be able to broadcast across junctures, but they'd only work on abominations since they'd have to be plugged in all the time to work and they'd cause mutation really quickly.
- Eardrummers can be knocked loose. If an eardrummed character takes five or more Wound Points from a blow (or gunshot) to the head, assume the eardrummer is

knocked out. You may want to let Luck modify this, depending on whether the character wants to be monitored.

FIPOD

"Fipod is a contraction of "Firing Tripod," but even that isn't accurate because it doesn't have three legs. A fipod is a gut-high column with a base that's maybe 30 centimeters square. The base has treads for moving along even surfaces and a kick button that activates an anti-gravity unit. Its purpose is to allow huge, ungainly weapons to be used by normal people. You can stick a Hellharrower (for example) on a fipod and walk around with it. Instead of having to bear its immense weight with one arm or over your shoulder, you can let the fipod do the grunt work. Same thing goes for microwave laser cannons and dozens of other **BuroMil** heavy hitters.

There are a few drawbacks to using a fipod. When you mount a weapon on it, you need some way to steer it around. This is accomplished by a little steering wheel on the back. When you push on the wheel the whole contraption goes forward. Turning the wheel makes it go left or right, and so on. Since you also use these controls to fire, it's a little tricky to get used to. Furthermore, because the trigger is on the back of the gun (guns have to be modified to be placed on a fipod – you can't just duct tape one on and be good to go) you can't fire the gun normally if the fipod gets busted. (All right, I suppose a creature with sufficient strength and a long tentacle could do it.)

Incidentally, since the fipod negates the weight of anything a couple meters above it and basically glides across the ground, more than one creative-butcowardly soldier has pulled the gun off the top, climbed aboard, and used it like a frictionless, all-terrain skateboard to get away from trouble.

Game Notes: A fipod removes the Strength restriction from any weapon mounted on it.

Using a fipod gives a -1 Guns AV unless you've been trained to use one. (Any human

BuroMil character would be trained with a fipod. Cops and abominations would not.)

The only gun shticks that can be used with fipod-mounted weapons are Carnival of Carnage, Eagle Eye, Lightning Reload and Signature Weapon.

FLYING VICTORY AMMUNITION

When the Buro remembered that the 20th century was still relying on metal detectors to sniff out hidden firearms (the Buro uses

microwave radar that can pinpoint a thumbtack stuck in your shoe) they decided it would be nice to have guns and ammo that could easily be carried on airplanes. Every little bit helps.

Flying Victory is that ammo, and it can readily be produced in any caliber.

Flying Victories are expensive, though, so characters requesting them officially need good reason. ("I'm doing a hit at an inner city high school" might work.)

Since the production of Flying Victory began, the Buro has taken a decided liking to airport murders. They've even begun packaging Reliants (see below) on cardboard placards that make them look just like cheap toy ray guns.

Game Notes: Self-explanatory, I hope. If your characters are from the 20th and don't know about future dudes, getting shot at on an airplane might throw them for a loop.

GRAV/ANTIGRAV OSCILLATING BEAM SYSTEM

The Grav/Antigrav Oscillating Beam System ("GOBS" to its friends) is an industrial-sized deathsaber. It can be used to push or pull things, but that's rare. More frequently, it's used to agitate matter until it breaks into flaming shards — just like the deathsaber. Unlike its junior cousin, a GOBS beam is 10 centimeters wide and up to half a mile long.

Luckily for everyone who doesn't like being set on fire, a GOBS is big — 3

meters long and 1 meter thick — and that's without the power pack. Needless to say, these are only mounted on buildings or on vehicles that might as well be buildings.

Game Notes: A GOBS can push or pull with the equivalent of Strength 20. It does 50 Damage to living things, ignoring Toughness. (Just assume it vaporizes any unnamed character on contact.) Luckily, it's slow, so individuals get +5 to their base dodge AV when avoiding the GOBS.

LIE DETECTOR

Interrogation rooms in Buro police stations are all equipped with monitors that detect various telltale physical signs of guilt or duplicity in the people being interrogated. These lie detectors are hidden, and there's no way of shielding yourself from them. Portable sets are also available, though they're not particularly handy. The monitoring equipment can't conveniently be made small enough to fit into anything smaller than a large trunk when stowed, and they're certainly not covert — they have to be set up (somewhatlike a 1990s photographer's big shiny flash umbrellas) which makes it pretty obvious when someone's using one on you.

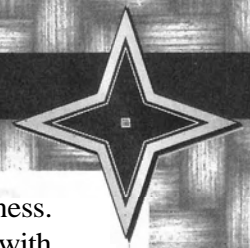
At the high end of the lie detector food chain are *ArcanoEncephalograph* sets. These allow trained users to directly monitor the brain waves of people being questioned. These are never portable — get over it — and are only found in real hotspots like Denmark and the Texas DMZ.

Game Notes: The lie detectors in standard Public Order stations add +5 to the Difficulty of Deceive attempts. *ArcanoEncephalograph* sets, normally only found in BuroMil and CDCA HQs, add +10.

MADAME CURIE MICROWAVE LASER CANNON

A normal laser works by synchronizing light waves. Visible light is not the only





waveform that can be phased, however. It's also possible to build microwave lasers, which have much better penetration than those which use visible light.

Thus, the Madame Curie Microwave Laser Cannon. This is a big heavy, complicated rifle that usually comes mounted on vehicles or (rarely) on a fipod. Cops only use these when they've got heavy duty cleanup work to do — large scale Jammer incursions, multiple abominations off the leash, and so forth.

Game Notes: (15/8/-) Most police stations only have one of these, if that. The laser never runs out of ammo and it ignores any and all types of armor. Unless it's on a fipod or vehicle, it can only be carried if you have Strength 11. There's no way a starting character can get one of these.

Furthermore, "the Madame" is notoriously frail in the field. If it malfunctions, it cannot be repaired in combat. Instead, it takes a Fix-It roll of 15 or higher — and any failed roll wrecks it for good and permanent.

The only gun shticks that can be used with this weapon are Eagle Eye and Signature Weapon.

MICROWAVE RADAR

A paranoid gang like the BTM needs a lot of different sorts of detection devices, and they've got 'em. One of the most common is the microwave radar — a unit the size of a portable CD player that can scan an area the size of a human body and show the different densities of matter contained therein. This makes it a snap for cops to spot guns and knives, no matter how well-concealed. Even eardrummers (p. 52) show up pretty clearly on "micradar." It's also a snazzy diagnostic tool for doctors: one look and they can see which bones are broken, and where.

Game Notes: Some cops have helmets that have microwave radar scanners built right in. In addition reducing the difficulty of spotting hidden weapons by 10, they also provide

topographical vision in complete darkness. (This means that while you can't read with them, you can see the shapes of everything around you.) These helmets are also bulletproof (Armoring of 4 for called skull shots) and have radios built in. TacOps in the 90s juncture are often given micradar sets disguised as Walkmans and sunglasses.

BURO RELIANT

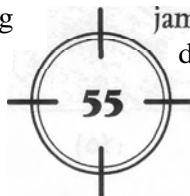
After thousands of carefully phrased complaints were registered with the Buro by cops who'd had weapons jam on them in tight spots, the Department of Firearm Design formed a committee to study the problem. After Buro president Bonengel called them in a rage because he'd seen a police officer killed on the Cop Channel while trying to unjam his shotgun, they got to work on it.

Their solution was a shockingly well-made piece of ordinance: the Buro Reliant. The Reliant is compact and ugly, of course, but it never jams. Never. You can freeze it in a block of ice, chop it out, and start shooting. You can boil it, drive a tank over it, leave it lying in the mud for a week, and then use it to blow somebody away. The design boys, on a bet, fed one to an alligator and fired it afterwards.

The secret is that the gun has very few moving parts (it fires with an electric charge from crystal electrodes) and the barrel opens a microsecond before the bullet leaves and closes after every shot, forming a water-tight seal. The drawback is that it takes fifteen minutes to reload. There's no clip; you need a special reload kit that unseals the base so that bullets can be loaded in.

Like all other Gonvex guns except the Hellharrover, the Reliant floats in water. Unlike other Buro guns, the Reliant has no metal parts. When loaded with Flying Victory bullets (p. 54) you can carry it onto an airplane in the 20th century with no one the wiser.

Game Notes: (9/1/6) The Reliant never jams, even on a fumble, but can't be reloaded during combat. Simple, huh?



SINGLE PILOT URBAN DEFENSE UNIT

The SPUD-U is an anti-gravity motorcycle for cops. They're electric, can cruise for about 10 hours, or can punch it — at 260 kph — for about 4 hours. They turn on a dime, stop like a ground car with **antilock** brakes, take off and land vertically, and make a *bitchin' whirrrrrr* sound.

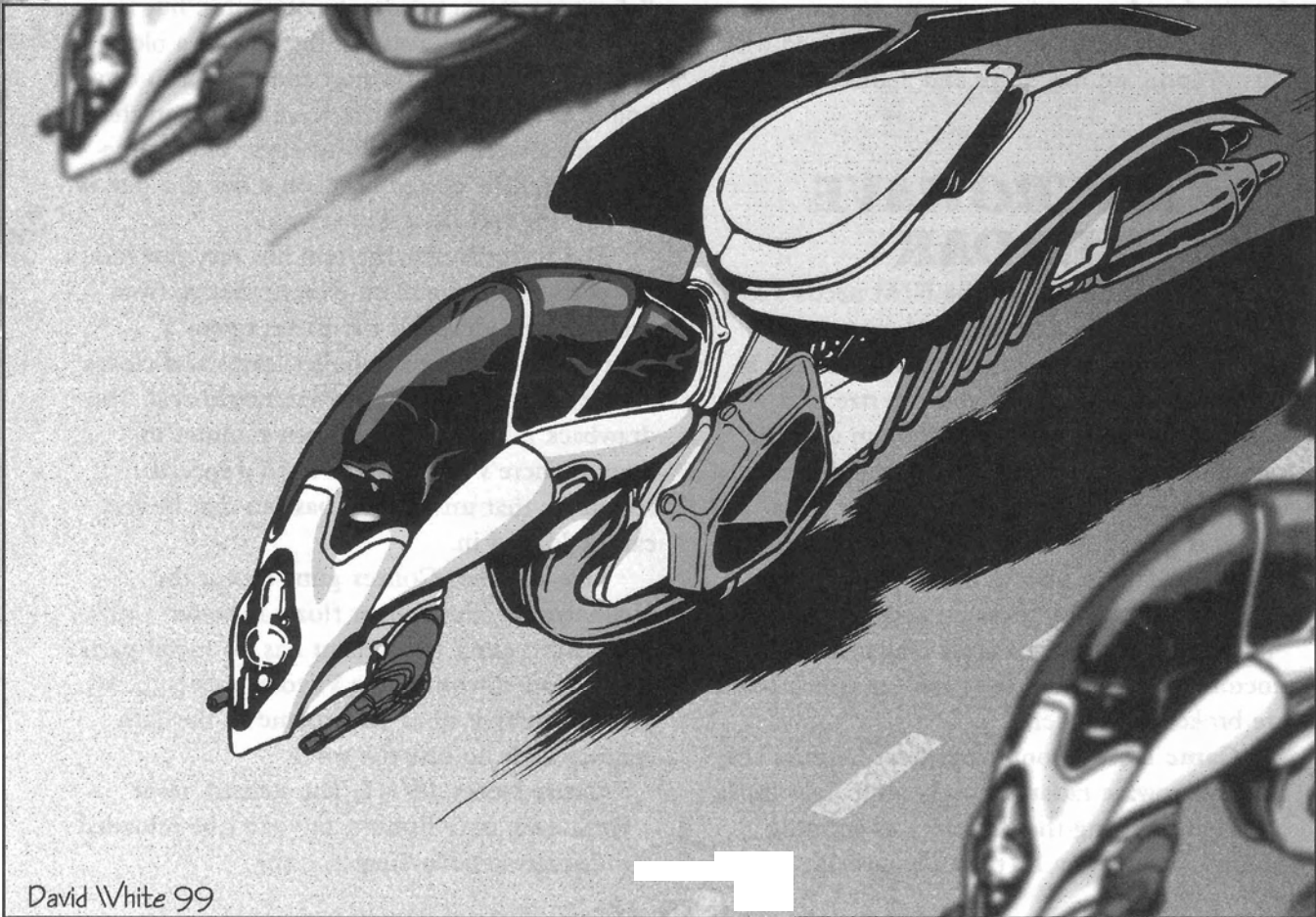
For curious techies, they operate by creating a zero gravity field below them and gravitational suction in front of them; it's sort of like surfing a gravity wave.

Large cities have "flying squads" of ten or so SPUD-U's. They're usually staffed by the smartest, most skilled, most arrogant and best looking people PubOrd can find — after all, these things are a publicity gold mine.

SPUD-U's are armed (this is the Buro we're talking about). What they've got depends on the make and model.

The standard SPUD-U is armed with two Blue Spears in turrets — one on the right and one on the left. They're **synched** to a computer in the pilot's helmet; they point at whatever he's looking at. The standard SPUD-U also has a net weapon, which fires a 3m diameter polymer net covered with a disgusting sticky goo that leaves a nasty stain. Anyone "netted" is glued to the ground (or whatever) until they can break free. The net flinger holds three nets. Finally, most officers carry a Crimestopper or two in the cockpit.

The SPUD-U-H — nicknamed the **Hellzapopper** — is equipped with a forward mounted Hellharrower. This can only be fired on a strafing run, since pointing it to the side would produce enough recoil to send the SPUD into a barrel roll. (Like a 20th century helicopter, SPUD-U's are not built for barrel rolls;



David White 99



they would be sucked to the ground and crash.) The SPUD-U-H is mostly deployed in trouble spots like the Texas DMZ. The net shooter was removed to provide extra ammo for the Hellharrower.

The SPUD-U-A – the arcanowave variant – is the most restricted piece of equipment issued to Innerwalkers. It looks considerably . . . well . . . ickier than the usual SPUD. For one thing, it breathes even when it's turned off. This puppy is equipped with an AI/O port that allows the user to interface directly with the vehicle, using it as an extension of his body. Furthermore, the SPUD-U-A has a weapon mount on the bottom to which a single Helix Rethreader, Helix Ripper, Helix Activator (p. 61), Tracer Resin Projector or Wave Suppressor can be attached. Naturally, the SPUD-U-A has interior "extension cords" that allow the weapon to be plugged into one of the pilot's available AI/O ports. (You'll note that there's no option for mounting a Temporal Perception Suppressor. Think about it.) Not every SPUD-U-A is equipped with an arcanowave weapon; they can be gotten with the standard machine guns as well. The SPUD-U-AH (Hellharrower) version is also popular (nicknamed the "Hellbound"). There are rumors about field tests of a SPUD-U-AD – a variant equipped with disintegrator rays – but these are highly apocryphal.

Game Notes: The SPUD-U has a Move of 75. When the pilot has floored it, the Difficulty added to hitting it is 12. When any SPUD-U takes 35 Wound Points, it blows up. A called shot that hits the front gravity unit does double damage.

Breaking the net from the net thrower requires a Strength test, Difficulty 10.

The standard SPUD-U has two machine guns mounted in turrets. They have a Damage rating of 13 and take out unnamed characters on an Outcome of 3 or more. They're unlikely to run out of ammo, but just in case you're really compulsive, each turret holds 150 shells.

If the pilot of the SPUD-U is firing at someone right below, directly in front, or directly behind him, both guns fire at once. The

pilot gets to roll once for each gun even though firing both is a single action.

SPUD Hellharrowers have a Damage rating of 14 and take out unnamed characters on an Outcome of 3 or more. They can only shoot straight ahead, and never run out of ammo. (OK, not never – but not in your game. That net compartment is plenty big.)

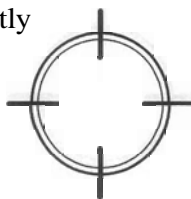
SPUD-U-A pilots must pick "SPUD-U-A" as an arcanowave shtick. If a player wants to play an elite SPUD-U-A pilot, don't let him own one of the damn things; it's loaned by the Buro for missions and that's it. He doesn't get to tool around on it to wow dates. SPUD-U-A pilots use their Arcanowave skill instead of their Driving skill while flying it. Non-arcanowave weapons mounted a SPUD-U-A are fired with the Guns skill, as usual. Even though the SPUD-U-A is not (technically) a weapon, it may be taken as a signature weapon.

The SPUD-U-AD is not a myth; it's got ten (count 'em one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten) disintegrator rays set up in its belly. When one is used up it's replaced automatically. If you botch when shooting one, the whole SPUD-U blows up and the pilot only gets a Death Check if the GM is feeling merciful. The Buro built six of these and has the remaining five in cold storage. The project leader got a reprimand from the Bureau of Happiness and Productivity and is currently one of the most cheerful vat workers in Liberty City. His chief engineer got demoted as well, and is in charge of changing the project leader's diapers.

WOODCHUCK 70MM MISSILE

This is a your garden-variety multi-purpose missile, 70 millimeters wide and 20 centimeters long. It blows things up, so the PCs might be able to find a use for it. The same Woodchucks are used in shoulder-fired bazookas, vehicle-mounted systems, grounddefense installations and in enormous batteries on flying fortresses

5). It's cheaper to mass produce them at way.





Games Notes: (25/3/1) Note that the Conceal rating of 3 applies to the missile itself. The smallest launcher (the shoulder-fired bazooka) has a Conceal of 6 and takes 6 shots to reload. Don't even think about firing one of these unless your Strength is 8 or you've got some friends to help brace the weapon. Woodchuck launchers can also be found on fipod mounts, but overwhelmingly they're used on vehicles. When firing a Woodchuck, use Guns as normal. In addition to those hit directly, anyone within 10 meters of the impact takes 12 points of Damage.

The standard Woodchuck doesn't have any kind of funky guidance system (like heat-seeking or laser-guided) but those can easily be added with a Fix-It roll of 10 or higher. Heat-seeking Woodchucks are fired as if they had a Guns skill of 10. Laser-guided Woodchucks give a +1 to the shooter's Guns skill, but take an extra shot to fire.

YUUZIK

Up in the player section of the catalogue, I said that Yuuzik has no effect on the character. I lied. Every Yuuzik unit delivers subliminal messages.

The traditional problem with a subliminal message is that if it's too blatant it gets noticed, but if it's too quiet it can be missed even by the subconscious. The gap between "noticed and "completely missed is not only narrow, it constantly fluctuates. The only way to reliably program someone with subliminals is to have feedback on the subject's alertness — the sort of feedback that Yuuzik also requires.

There are three messages on Yuuzik rigs. "Love Buro" is programmed to play whenever the subject is relaxed and happy. "Fear PubOrd" is played when the subject is tense and anxious. "Bonengel" plays in conjunction with whatever sound has produced the most consistently positive reaction.

The messages don't play very often — maybe only once or twice in a couple hours of use. But people who listen to Yuuzik an average

of four hours a day or more are gradually indoctrinated.

Game Notes: Habitual Yuuzik users suffer a -1 to all actions taken against Public Order officers, and must make Will checks (Difficulty 3) to do anything which might harm Buropresident Bonengel.

NEW ARCANOWAVE DEVICES

This stuff is Ultra Uber Umbra Top Secret. That means this is GM territory, consumer.

CHI WAVE MONITOR/MAPPER

This device looks like a clamshell the size of a small dinner plate. If you pry it open, a spongy, sticky sort of keyboard inflates out of it while the top half is filled with a smeary goo which works like a cross between a crystal ball and a computer screen.

The monitor is a sophisticated chi detector. It can map the chi flow of a single floor in a building, or of open ground for a radius of about a mile. (Why does it stop mapping at walls, floors, and ceilings? Same reason chi stops flowing at them, consumer.) It not only stores these maps (which reveal concentrations of good and bad feng shui, along with concentrations of magical energy) it can print them out. Just fold up a piece of paper, close it up in the shell and name the map you want from its memory. When you pry open the shell, there it is, printed in full color and slightly smelly.

Front line troops rarely get these, not only because they rarely want them (the Wave Scanner is more immediately useful) but because they're more expensive to produce. For once, the decision reached by Buro HQ dovetails with the desires of the field troops. The Buro mainly issues these to mission coordinators and geomancers, as they have no effect on combat.



Game Notes: You could hide an important clue in one of these babies. Alternately, the Architects could be using them to map out Hong Kong (or any area you wish) and your players would need to destroy the device in order to prevent their secret feng shui site from being discovered.

EMERGENCY JUMPSTART ARCANOWAVE SYSTEM

Pronounced "Ee-jas" (or "Edge-Ass" in the Tex) the EJAS allows someone without an AI/O port to use an arcanowave device. An EJAS is a bulky, meaty smelling greenish glove with black, chitinous warts at the joints and little pores here and there that exude goo. The back of the glove has an AI/O port.

To understand the drawback to using an EJAS, you have to understand that arcanowave devices are, in a primitive and alien fashion, alive. Not what you'd call intelligent, but alive enough to be very, very angry. They usually want to be used. That's why they mutate people who use them; the gear wants a better platform from which to operate. But since they're angry, they want to kill anyone they can't mutate. This process is called "unraveling" and is discussed in greater detail in the entry on traitor bombs (p. 63). Since abominations are already pretty well suited to wreaking havoc, the arcanowave devices accept them. People with the Arcanowave skill may be mutated, but they won't be unraveled because they've made an attempt to meet the technology half way.

Someone who knows nothing about arcanowave gear but who slaps on an EJAS and uses some anyway will suffer. The device will want to kill him, but will also want to work; it will compromise by doing both. The device functions (somewhat) and the EJAS user gets terrible wounds. The type of injury varies widely depending on the device: exploding arteries, fan burns on internal organs, wracking

joint pains and bleeding from the eyes have all been reported.

Game Notes: Those with the Arcanowave skill can basically use an EJAS as an extra AI/O port. They don't need to pick it as a shtick, they don't take damage from it and the only additions to their mutation check come from devices used through the EJAS.

People without the Arcanowave skill can put on an EJAS and use any arcanowave device plugged into it as if they had an Arcanowave skill of +3. Every time they roll their "borrowed Arcanowave skill, they take 5 Wound Points. A snake-eyes roll has the same malfunction results as other arcanowave devices (Feng Shui, p. 119-120). A person wearing an EJAS who has taken 10 points of Damage from it and who fails a Death Check (even if it's just the -1 "eventual lingering death kind of failure) doesn't just die, he unravels on the spot (see p. 64). If this happens, the EJAS can be found, unharmed, in the center of the blast radius.

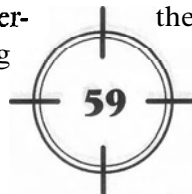
GATEMAKER

This looks something like a cross between a telescope and a giant slug. When it's activated, it creates a temporary portal, about 3 meters across, into the Netherworld.

On one hand, this is great. If you get cornered in a firefight, there's always an escape hatch. There's little chance that an enemy faction can stage an ambush at one of your frequently used gates if you're perpetually creating short term new ones.

That said, there are a few risks associated with using a GateMaker. For one thing, it's hard to predict where in the Netherworld a particular hole is going to end up. There doesn't seem to be any discernible parallel between the geography of the surface and the Netherworld. A gate that takes you straight into the Prof's secret hideout might have delivered you countless kilometers away if you'd opened it a nanosecond later — or a nanometer farther to the right.

Face it; it's a crapshoot. That's why this



device is more popular with psychotic Jammers than anal retentive Buro stiffs.

Another limitation to the GateMaker is that it can only bring you *into* the Netherworld; it won't burrow you out again. A normal gate must be reached for that.

The Buro's GateMaker 2.1 has a built-in beacon that activates when the device is turned on and continues broadcasting until manually deactivated. This alerts the Netherworld's Biomass Reprocessing Center to send a retrieval squad to pick up TacOps in need of assistance. Alternately, it allows them to send a hit squad to eradicate anyone using a stolen GateMaker.

A final irritating GateMaker fact: there's no way to know how long the gate is going to stay open, except in the rough sense of "not very long." Getting caught in a gate when it slams shut is messy, as many Buro operatives who are now equipped with robot limbs can attest.

Game Notes: To get the damn thing to work at all, a character must roll Arcanowave Device, Difficulty 10. Once that's done, the gate pops open immediately and the GM starts counting time. The gate stays open for a number of sequences equal to the number rolled on the positive die. *Do not tell your players this.* If they figure it out, they will feel extra cool and walk tall for a month.

If the characters are using the GateMaker to bug out from an ugly situation, make them run through it as a combat action, and keep careful track. Splimng up a party on opposite sides of the gate can be lots of fun — for you. Also, there's nothing stopping a guy with a GateMaker from creating a second gate, or more, while the first is still open. Keep in mind that this will probably split the party up, so be prepared.

Don't be shy about having enemies follow your characters through the gate. If nothing else, it's fun to listen to the reaction when the gate shuts on a bad guy and cuts him in half.

The GateMaker has a Concealment rating of 2, and tends to leave stains on clothing.

GRAVITY DISTORTION SPHERE

The deathsaber is pretty cool — a straight shaft that can shatter and ignite just about everything it's likely to touch. But the hammer-heads down at BuroMil R&D are rarely content with something that's just *pretty* cool. After all, if they were the type to leave well enough alone, they'd be in a different line of work.

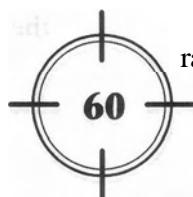
So they started wondering how gravity technology could be adapted defensively. One promising possibility was a bubble of spinning, high speed gravity distortion. Being in the center would be kind of like like sitting right in the center of a fan blade (only stationary instead of spinning real fast, of course). Any projectile aimed at you would get knocked off course when passing through.

So far so good, except for two things. One, a near-miss shot might be knocked into the target instead of away from it. Two, getting gravity to make a nice sphere instead of a straight line was tougher than it sounded.

The problem of getting the gravity field to form a bubble proved insurmountable until the CDCA was called in. Once you hooked the whole system into a living organism, it was fairly simple to borrow an unused section of subconscious mind to sculpt the gravity form. Of course, this meant that these *bitchin'* force fields were only going to be available to arcanowave troops, but that (in the opinion of the CDCA chiefs) was just tough chuckles for BuroMil.

The solution to the near miss problem was to layer additional bubbles inside the first, *spinning* in different directions. Six onion-skins of distortion was enough to take the punch out of nearly any bullet. Even those that went on to hit their targets were so chewed they usually crumbled to dust on impact.

However, six fields moving at incredible rates of speed in different directions causes





intense heat — enough that loose oxygen in the air combusts when the field is turned on. So instead of getting shot, you get fried. Not only that, the area bounded by the sphere runs out of oxygen pretty darn quick. The eggheads added a fire-proof suit and oxygen tank, but at this point the prototype was becoming more and more delicate. When someone realized that someone wearing this couldn't fire a rifle out of it and even if he could, the wall of flames would make any gunshot a crapshoot, the CDCA wrote the project off. A few working models were constructed with the oxygen tank incorporated, but the fire-proof suit was just too expensive. Only fire-proof creatures are issued these devices, and even they have trouble attacking with them.

There are a few other problems associated with the Distortion Sphere. Sure, they're minor compared to being smothered, burned and effectively blind, but for the record:

- The Sphere is really loud, making it impossible to sneak up on anyone, hear anyone sneaking up on you, or hear anything anyone tells you unless they bellow at the top of their lungs.
- The Sphere's tendency to leave a burning, molten and broken trail wherever you walk makes users easy to track. You never want to use one of these on a flimsy catwalk over a deadly abyss, and you never ever want to turn it on if there's even a chance that there's a gas main under your feet.

Game Notes: When the field goes up, a lot of things happen. Most obviously, a sphere of fire appears around the user. The sphere is 2-3m in diameter, centered on the device (which is usually worn on the belt, for obvious reasons). Anyone who wants to punch or kick the user has to reach through the field and take 10 Wound Points in the process. The difficulty of shooting someone inside this field is increased by 10, since the target can't be seen and the bullet is **getting** pulled every which way in the course

of its trajectory. Any hand-to-hand weapon that goes through the field is shattered, burned or melted, unless it's magical or being used with a fu shtick (in which case it is unaffected).

The person inside the field suffers 10 Damage per sequence from the heat. Furthermore, after the first sequence, all the air in the field is used up. No problem if you've got an oxygen tank. Otherwise, you start drowning (Feng *Shui*, p. 139). If you punch or kick outside the field, you take 10 Damage and your hand to hand weapon might be ruined. Finally, the Difficulty of firing guns or arcanowave devices outside the field is increased by 10.

If a player wants to equip his character with one of these, it's okay — but only if he can come up with a real good reason. Feel free to wreck the oxygen tanks if the player finds some way to make this into an unbeatable super-weapon. Or sic a savvy crew from the CDCA's elite Arcanowave Repossession Division on him.

HELIX ACTIVATOR

"Look out! He's got one of them Ebola guns!"
Last words of Drake Wilton, Silver Dragon

This large revolver is about the color of uncooked liver. Its front looks like an upside-down human face that was grabbed by the nose and pulled through a knothole; the barrel of the gun is an elongated nostril, with the other nostril off on the right side. The hinge where the gun opens to reload is the jaw; bullets are loaded in sockets where the upper teeth would be. There are vestigial, blind eyes in front of the trigger guard. When it's plugged in, the eyes open. Some shooters find it slightly eerie that the bullets they grow have their own faces (**twisted** into various grimaces or scowls) on the tip. Others kind of like it.

A person struck by a bullet from a Helix Activator temporarily mutates, growing demonic tentacles, mouths, horns, claws, etc., out of the body part struck. While the projectile

itself does no harm, the demonic limbs which sprout immediately being clawing, chewing and swatting their host. This is disconcerting and unpleasant.

Game Notes: (Special/3/10) Helix Activator bullets are grown by plugging the empty ARB shell casings into an AI/O port, which excretes in about ten minutes, loaded. Add 1 to your mutation check's Difficulty for each bullet grown. The gun must be plugged into an AI/O port to fire, but this does not add to the mutation check.

The patch of demonic limbs that sprouts from a target is considered an unnamed character. Its Martial Arts rating starts at 10 and drops by 1 every shot. The limbs can attack their host

every shot, until their Martial Arts rating reaches 0. When this happens, they are re-absorbed into the host's body. (It's really easy to keep track of this with a single d10. You're welcome.) They get to act the shot after they are created, starting at the 10 rating. The person who's been shot suffers a point of Impairment for each patch of mutant limbs sprouting from his body. If an unnamed character is hit by a Helix Activator, don't bother with the math. If the Outcome is 5 or more, she's immediately ripped apart by mutation. It's as gory as you want.

Keep track of how much damage the target does to his demon limbs; when they are absorbed back into his body, he takes that damage. Also, the target of a Helix Activator must make a mutation check at the end of the session; the Difficulty is increased by 1 for each shot he took from an Activator.

A Helix Activator may be taken as a signature weapon, in which case the tentacles start with a Martial Arts skill of 13.

23:55 BURO STANDARDIZED TIME

Channel Banal: *World Erotic Ice Dancing Championships.*

The Bux Network: *I'll Eat That For A Dollar!* The special year-end "bloopers" episode. (Rerun)

CBS: *Star Trek: Distant Shores.* Ensign Wallaby saves the galaxy. Orgo sheds his skin and is irritable. (Rerun)

CBS3: *As the World Turns.* Dirk reappears after being assumed dead, and is enraged to find Jack in Monica's arms. Lauren confesses to Blake that the baby isn't his.

The Cop Channel: *Heartbreakers: The L.A. Flying Squad.* The men and women of Los Angeles' elite flying cop team are interviewed and shown in action. (Rerun)

GPS: *Guiding Light.* Reverend Blaine condemns Jill and Theresa for their forbidden, racist love. Alynnya's new job at the CDCA is threatened by Gene's knowledge of her previous bad citizenship.

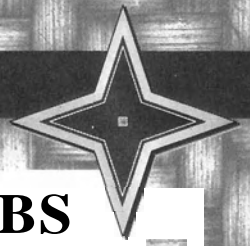
KIDS: *Citizen 5.* Citizen B shows kids how to tell if mommy or daddy are illegally using alcohol, and where to turn them in if they are.

TEMPORAL PERCEPTION SUPPRESSOR

This is a small, ugly handgun; imagine a barrel and handle made out of tarantula legs, with a hairy snarl of mucus-laden cartilage at the juncture. The trigger finger must be put into the cartilage wad to fire it.

The Temporal Perception Suppressor fires a ray of invisible energy. Anyone struck by this beam closes his eyes and remains perfectly still for as long as the beam is on him. When the beam is interrupted (turned off or blocked by a foreign object) he opens his eyes, but has no innate sense of the time that passed while his eyes were closed. If what he sees when he opens his eyes is the same as when he closed them, he will think he blinked — even though minutes, hours, or days may have passed. If things are different (he was peacefully waiting for the bus and is now about to become abomination-chow) it's noticeable, and while the victim will be startled, he won't be too disoriented to

Excerpted from *What's On?*
"The All-the-Time TV Ticker-Tape"
 February 8, 2056



react. While these are especially fun to use on flying targets, they tend to fall right out of the beam.

The Architects love this gadget. It's fun for them to sneak up to someone's bedroom window, shoot him with a Temporal Perception Suppressor (which, despite many prissy memos, are frequently called "fazers" in the field) open the window, drug him, and search his house without him suspecting a thing. These devices are frequently used to implant traitor bombs.

The one glitch the archanotechnicians haven't ironed out is that the person using the weapon is affected just like the target: he freezes, eyes shut and gun pointed. That's right — in order to make an opponent an immobile target, one must become an immobile target oneself. Buro Suppressor operators obviously travel with partners or in packs. The fazer has a timer on the back (no, not little red LED lights — it's a clock with little bone hands that counts down the remaining time). The timer is set before the gun is fired, by mental command. If no command is given before firing, a default setting (which the user can change at his leisure) applies. Fazer shooters remain frozen until the timer runs out or the gun is unplugged.

Game Notes: A fazer has a Concealment of 1. Changing the setting on the timer takes 1 shot. (To save yourself appalling headaches, set the timer in shots, not seconds. Sure, a shot isn't a precise measurement of time, but arcanowaves work on perception more than fact anyway, right?)

This is a dangerous device to give to characters, because one character can freeze a big opponent and then wait for his pals to wreck it while it's standing still. The fun way to play this is to have the character using the gun step out of the room while his character is temporally suppressed. Missing out on the fun of combat will prevent most abuses. Furthermore, the dynamics of inter-character trust involved with this piece can be disturbing (if entertaining) to observe. The Temporal Perception Suppressor may not be taken as a signature weapon.

TRAITOR BOMBS

Sometimes, to the great regret of the Buro, trusted agents turn traitor. While the humane, decent thing to do would be to put a nice, gentle bullet in the skull, no one has ever accused the Buro of being humane and decent. Woe betide the traitor caught alive; if the Bureau of Happiness and Productivity doesn't get him, he may get a traitor bomb instead.

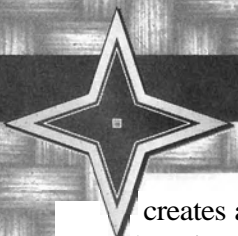
The traitor bomb is an arcanowave device about the size and shape of a house key. It doesn't take up an AI/O port because it's implanted inside the traitor, usually in the space reserved for the appendix.

Once the traitor bomb has been implanted, the Buro can play it a number of ways.

- "You're dead now, but I'll rent you some more time." The prisoner wakes up to a smiling archanotechnician holding a remote control that's ticking down: **23.59.59, 23.59.58, 23.59.57 . . .** The prisoner is informed that the countdown is his **lifespan**. The technician demonstrates that he can stop the countdown, add time to it — or cut hours off. The prisoner is cordially invited to do exactly what he's told, on pain of instant death. These victims are also usually implanted with noseys as well (p. 52).
- "Everything is just fine. Why don't you take a few days off?" In this version of the game, the traitor doesn't even know the bomb — and, usually, a nosey — has been implanted. (A Temporal Perception Suppressor is often used to accomplish this unwitting implant.) A metal detector won't reveal the bomb or the monitor; they have no metal parts. The Divination shtick certainly would. An x-ray might reveal the implants, but the bombs are often set to detonate if x-rayed. (Damn shame about that hospital.) In any case, the Buro watches. When the traitor is in the presence of his traitorous confederates, or is at a secure feng shui site, they detonate him.

When a traitor bomb detonates, it doesn't just kill the unfortunate carrier, it





creates an effect called "unraveling." Here's how it works: arcanowaves have to be handled with extreme care, because otherwise they'll mutate the user's DNA. However, some particularly violent and mindless spirits don't just want to distort their users, they want to wipe them out. These spirits are turned into traitor bombs, and they don't just wound, they release all of their human host's chi in an explosion of fire, light and bad mojo. The carrier not only blows up, he permanently sours the feng shui of place he's standing.

Game Notes: Unraveling is a bad way to go. Right off the bat, a big explosion does 27 Wound Points to the character. If he dies, the souring of the chi automatically occurs. Otherwise, the victim can try to fight off the unraveling by rolling his Arcanowave skill (or Constitution, if he doesn't have it), Difficulty 10. If the victim doesn't feel lucky, he may choose to burn Chi or Body points, permanently sacrificing them to get a +5 bonus on the roll to fight off the unraveling. This represents her willingness to destroy his own body and soul before the arcanowave bomb can — a sort "scorched flesh" policy. If he's successful, he's suppressed a complete unraveling. Otherwise, he takes another 13 points of damage and makes an immediate Death Check. (Big Bruiser characters are lucky here, in that they may not have hit their Death Check threshold.) If he survives, he's one tough cookie and can be rushed to the hospital to put his insides back inside. The site is ruined, however.

Someone with the Fertility shtick might be able to restore the chi flow to a traitor-bombed area, but the difficulty of the attempt is the Arcanowave Action Value of the guy who blew up, plus his Chi score. If he burned off Chi points and still croaked, it's the decreased score. (See, I'm not a complete ogre.)

Use these sparingly, unless your characters are particularly advanced or tolerant. Being manipulated in this fashion will tax any but the most forgiving gamer, so make sure they get vengeance a-plenty.

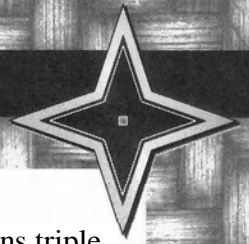
TRANSTEMPORAL VOCAL COMMUNICATION DEVICE

This object looks like a pair of bat wings with computer chips punched through them and connected by thin traces of silver metal. When the wings are unfolded, there's a numeric keypad in the middle. In addition to the numbers 0-9 and the ubiquitous "#" and "*" keys, there are five keys labeled "20" "19" "18" "00" and "N" (which stand for the 2056, 1996, 1850, 09, and Netherworld junctures, respectively). It is, essentially, an arcanowave cell phone that operates across time barriers, which allows (for example) someone from 2056 to converse with someone in 1850 in "real time," if that phrase has any meaning here. Due to its appearance, Buro officials are no longer even trying to get operatives to call it anything other than the batphone.

So far, a batphone can only call another batphone. You hit a juncture button and then you dial the appropriate number. If you try with the wrong juncture, it just rings and rings. To receive a batphone call, the phone does not need to be plugged in. It rings (well... "chitters" is probably a better word) and you can talk to the guy on the other end once you open it and plug it into an AI/O port.

Batphone connections are notoriously weak and staticky. The longer the temporal gap, the worse the static. Calling the same juncture is fairly clear, as is calling the Netherworld. Also, at least one agent claims that once someone (probably a ghost or supernatural creature) "intercepted his call to a fellow agent and gave him dangerously misleading instructions.

Game Notes: Every time someone plugs in a batphone, add 1 to the difficulty of the end-of-session Mutation Check. (This makes wrong numbers really annoying.) The batphone has a Concealment rating of 1, but it's super-fun to have one of these start ringing (chittering, remember) when the last thing the character wants is someone seeing him pull out a



grotesque piece of biotech. Naturally, there is no way to turn the ringer off; the Buro could not conceive of a situation in which it was not in their interests to be able to call an agent.

If the Transtemporal Communications Cable (p.30) is completed, not only will the static vanish, but batphones will be able to call *normal* phones in the Netherworld and in the 1996 juncture (and any other juncture in which they occur). However, they will probably be phased out since the TTCC will enable the Architects to call each other on normal phones.

VARIABLE MASS WEAPONRY

One fine day, a CDCA technician in the Netherworld got really drunk and started wondering why Helix Rippers weigh over three times as much when they're unplugged as when they're plugged in. When he recovered from his hangover, he had an inspiration. He invented variable mass weapons, carefully shepherding their development from beginning to end. He was cautious, **making** sure that no one else could claim credit for them. They were a tremendous success, but unfortunately their development exposed him to so much arcanowave radiation he mutated into an abomination. He did score a cushy guard post.

His big inspiration was something like this: the force of inertia is equal to mass times speed. Most weapons do damage as a function of inertia. Being hit by a brick hurts more than being hit by a pebble, even if they're moving at the same speed; that's because the brick is heavier. But if two bricks of equal weight are thrown, the faster brick hurts more. That's inertia.

This technician found himself imagining a Helix Ripper being used as a club. If swung when plugged in, it would go faster. If swung unplugged, it would hit harder. However, if swung plugged in and then unplugged just as it hit, it would triple its inertia (and thus, its damage). You'd get the best of both worlds — or the worst, depending on which end of the club you stood — the speed of a light weapon

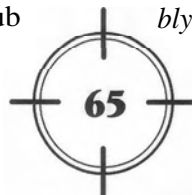
and the punch of a heavy one.

Variable mass hand to hand weapons triple their weight when they strike, increasing their damage significantly. Variable mass bullets increase their mass after they leave the gun's barrel. (No, the increased weight doesn't slow them down or pull them off course. Trust me; it's real science.)

The hand to hand weapons are available as clubs, daggers and swords. They are all greenish steel with a slimy feel, and they have warped faces screaming in torment worked into their blades. Variable mass bullets are grown in AI/O ports, just like ammo for Helix Activators. The actual "device" is the ARB shell casing. Casings come in a variety of calibers: .22, .38 and 9 mm are the most common. They're distributed in groups of 6. Requests for more are unlikely to be granted, so don't lose them. The bullets are fired from normal guns, and can be fired by people without the Arcanowave Device shtick.

Game Notes: Variable mass hand to hand weapons do additional damage and don't change anything else. A variable mass dagger gets a +1 bonus (for a total damage rating of Strength + 4). Variable mass clubs and swords get a +2 bonus (club: Str + 5, sword: Str +6). For every sequence one of these weapons is plugged in, one point of difficulty is added to the session's Mutation Check.

Bullets are a little different. Their mass can be increased dramatically; for every bullet grown, the growing character can choose how much extra damage it will do, from +1 to +4. For each point of extra damage, the character adds one to the difficulty of the session's Mutation Check. Keep in mind that *each bullet grown* is counted. If you make six +1 bullets, that's a +6 on your check. If you make three at +1 and three at +3, that's +12 on the check. If you make six +4 bullets . . . well, you can do the math. That's the real reason the Buro only issues six shells. It's not because they're stingy, it's because they want to keep their personnel from turning into blood-starved ogres (well, from turning into *visibly* blood-starved ogres.)



Jef

I had one shell left, Chang had just gone down, and Shiny had dropped his guns and had his hands in the air. I was thinking about the woman with pink fingernails and all the things she'd done to me. I wasn't going back. I couldn't. Luckily, PubOrd isn't careful about taking prisoners alive.

I'd resolved to kill the first officer through the door, but he said the one thing that could have saved his Life.

"Martinique sent me."

Was it a trick? Did they know? But if they didn't, how had she . . . ?

I was stunned. I didn't shoot him, and he bagged me. "Don't worry," he said as he did jerked the sack over my head. Why would he say that if she hadn't really sent him?

Later, when the sack came off, he was saying something. "Right this second the central office is getting a garbled message that you three overpowered your guards and escaped. By the time they get to the scene, all they'll find is a wrecked paddy wagon."

I didn't really pay attention, because Martinique was there. As soon as my head was free of the bag, she was in my arms, covering my face with kisses.

"Oh Jef, I'm so sorry. I couldn't stand the thought of you in jail for my sake. When I found out you hadn't turned me in I felt horrible – just horrible, Jef. It was then that I really, truly knew I loved you. And when everyone else in the militia heard how you'd sacrificed yourself for me, we agreed that we had to save you."

"Militia?" asked Shiny I hadn't even noticed he'd been rescued.

"The Free Sex Militia, correct?" said Chang. Hadn't noticed him, either.

"That's right," said the cop. "Jef here was supposed to get blamed for the theft but admit he was with Martinique. Instead of a couple capital crimes, the two of them would have been in on misde-

meanors. We didn't like it, but we needed those guns . . ."

"You stole the Reliants?" I asked incredulously.

"We did," said Martinique.

"We never thought you'd play the hero."

"Martinique . . . I'd do anything for you."

"Dude, are you deaf?" Shiny demanded. "She just admitted that she set you up. She played you for a sucker, and – ow!"

"This is not the best time to foster dissent," Chang said to him. Then he bowed to the PubOrd militant. "Sir, I honor your struggle. The laws which force miscegenation on an unwilling population are abhorrent to me."

My head was swimming. Martinique . . . a rebel? Chang seemed to support them solely out of racism, and Shiny was, well, basically just being himself.

I looked into Martinique's eyes and saw only questions and tears.

Chang

My superiors had spoken to me of these Free Sex Militants. They are those who feel a proper shame at being required to marry into different races. My mission in this juncture had nothing to do with them, but an alliance with the rebels would be advantageous. Their ignorance of feng shui sites made their cause a hopeless one, but every general recognizes the utility of expendable troops.

Like Shiny, I was suspicious of a woman who would exchange the man she claimed to love for weapons, but Jef believed her heart to be true. Shiny did not wish to be part of the Militia until the police officers made it clear they would have to "arrest" him should he depart, and that his knowledge of the Free Sex Militia would make it necessary for him to be killed while resisting arrest. Jef was not present for this conversation, and Shiny kept his own counsel about it.

I fared somewhat better, since I treated them with courtesy and respect. In their service, Jef,



Shiny, and I performed several missions. We primarily acquired weapons, but also participated in a few ineffectual attempts to take over something called an "Omnet station." Apparently something inside the station would allow us to send a message to thousands of people at once. I went along primarily in hope of contacting my brethren of the Hand – I knew well that any attempt at persuasion would be hopeless without the power of feng shui on our side. I searched diligently for a site to attune myself to during my three months with them, but to no avail. Thus, it was inevitable that we should be found.

Public Order must have known or suspected that I was with them, otherwise they would not have equipped their warriors with weapons to suppress my chi. Their tactics were clever. The first wave of Public Order officers fell back before us, luring me into pursuing them. Then the jaws of the trap closed. They shot me with the purple light and I felt the pain and weakness I had known in the underground chamber. Many shot at me, but I dodged them until I saw one man with a gold tooth and two pistols. He had powerful kung fu; I could not dodge his gunshots.

The militants fled. Jef protested: "We can't leave him!" but I paid little attention because I was composing my spirit. I planned to meet my ancestors in a tranquil state. The gold-toothed man was closing in on me.

Then Jef was there. He shot the gold-toothed man and grabbed me by the collar of my shirt.

*"You're gonna make it, Chang," he said.
"You're gonna be OK."*

"Jef . . . you came back for me?"

"You thought I'd leave you?"

I was very weak, but his words gave me the strength to stand. Together we tried to flee, but Jef was shot in the leg.

"Go on without me," he said. I did.

I know it was for the best. One wounded man might escape where two could not. My first loyalty is to the Guiding Hand, and Jef is but one man to

match against the legions of my brothers. To achieve our great cause, sacrifices are necessary.

Nonetheless, I find the sacrifice of Jeffrey Moor deeply regrettable.

Jef

They finally caught me and beat me up and shot my friends, but I survived. Maybe I was the only one who did. I didn't feel bad about that for long, because I soon lost the ability to feel bad about anything. They handed me over to the Bureau of Happiness and Productivity, who made me a test subject for new productivity drugs.

I tried to fight it. I concentrated on my memories of Martinique as that warty thing trampled her head like a melon. I tried to remember her screams.

No use. Nothing. I felt warm and secure and restful – like I'd just had a good meal and wanted a nap to digest it.

The woman with the pink fingernails had tortured me, but the BHP was even worse. When I was being tortured, I knew what was being done to me was unjust. I knew who my enemies were. I knew I was miserable. But at the BHP they made me happy, and when you're happy all the time, distinctions like right and wrong lose their meaning. It's easier just to go along and get along.

Giving in to Pink Fingernails would have brought a respite from pain, but I always would have known, in my heart, that I was weak. A traitor. A coward. At BHP, I didn't care. Couldn't care.

Other dictators have robbed people of their rights, their freedoms, their property, and their lives. But the Buro has gone farther. They have taken our indignation, robbing us of our outrage and replacing it with a calm, warm daze.

How can anyone resist that?

Casting Call

A NUMBER OF BEASTS

BURO WHO'S WHO DR. CURTIS BOATMAN

Like Buroresident Bonengel, Dr. Curtis Boatman is attuned to most of the powerful feng shui sites in the world. And not only does the chi of the world protect him, it reflects him, so in many subtle ways the world of 2056 is a reflection of his prejudices and neuroses.

With the **power** of the world's chi on his side, things have gone easy for Curtis Boatman for all of his life. He's always been smarter, richer and luckier than those around him. Not surprisingly, he's become a selfish, arrogant prick. Worse, it has rendered him able to completely ignore the feelings (specifically, the suffering) of those around him.

Boatman's big motivation is pleasure. He may be the only person on the planet who never eats vat food. He has an extensive greenhouse of rare and exotic blooms, and an almost-as-extensive list of mistresses. His wife suspects, but unfortunately for her she's married to a cruel scum pie who has all the chi in the world. He wants her to feel guilty for even suspecting him, and to suffer from suspecting it —

Dr. Curtis Boatman

Sample Dialog: "Why yes, darling — many, many women are attracted by my enormous . . . mind."

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 10, Mnd 10, Ref 7

Skills: Arcanowave Device 20, Info/CDCA 20, Medicine 18, Seduce 11, Guns 10, Martial Arts 10

Arcanowave Shticks: Curtis can use all **arcanowave shticks**. Furthermore, since he **is** (in many ways) the center of **arcanowave** energy, he **is** immune to fumbles and Mutation Checks. Finally, he does **not** need to **plug** in a device to use it; it's like the entire **surface** of his body is one big **AI/O** port.

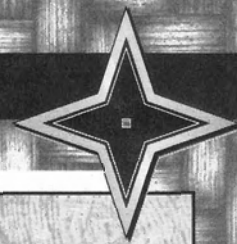
Uniaue Shticks:

Superseduce: Being one of the rulers of the **world** gives one a **certain** amount of sex **appeal**. In 2056 (and in no other **junctures**) Boatman's Seduce score is 21.

so, of course, she does. He wants her to be miserably devoted to him — so she is.

Left to his own devices, Boatman would be living an anonymous life of pleasure and indulgence; he's not ambitious at all. He sees the feng shui sites and the elaborate political structures they've built for him as means to an end — his own enjoyment.

Boatman has come to really loathe Bonengel. To Boatman, their work is done. They've won. They rule the world and can do whatever they want. Bonengel, however, insists on **rocking** the boat. Boatman sees his co-ruler as a dingdong whose pathetic need for **challenge** will lead him to wreck everything he's



built. Luckily, an open juncture to conquer hap-
pened along. Boatman realizes he may have to
replace Bonengel if the secret war turns into a
losing proposition. To prepare for this eventual-
ity, he is doing three things: brewing clones (see
sidebar), ensuring that the loyalty of the CDCA
is primarily to his person and making sure that
the CDCA maintains control over the abomina-
tions.

JOHANN BONENGEL

Johann Bonengel is a very different sort
from Curtis Boatman. For one thing, he has a
conscience. He likes to see himself as the good
guy. In fact, he *needs* to see himself as the good
guy. No, the *best* guy. "Messiah" is probably not
too strong a word.

Most dictators start out being adored and
work towards being obeyed. Chi ensures that
Bonengel will be obeyed, but he wants everyone
to *agree* with him *as* well. That's why Bonengel
is so obsessed with destroying the Jammers. It
is intolerable to him that someone could look
upon his utopia and reject it.

Bonengel's warped psychology (predictably)
has its roots in his warped personal history. The
great love of his life, a Sri Lankan woman
named Danusha, was beaten to death in front
of his eyes by skinheads in his native Berlin:
they disapproved of her association with a nice
Aryan boy like Johann. This tragedy spurred
Bonengel into politics. He wanted to create a
world where wars, ethnic crimes and personal
violence were forbidden. He's getting close —
and the only cost has been most of his citizens'
rights.

The event which catapulted him to world
wide prominence was the destruction of Haiti.
A virus called the Melter had been around for
several years, killing victims with pain as *gru-*
esome as it was swift. When an airborne strain
was discovered in Haiti, Bonengel took the
responsibility for cordoning off the country —
and destroying it with missiles, incendiaries
and a weather control satellite called the

Clones

Boatman brewed these *babies* (literally) up in his *rats*. He *hasn't* told
Bonengel about them, nor *do* any but a very few trusted *assistants*
know of their existence. *This* is because the first *clone* Boatman made
was of *Johann Bonengel*. Boatman thinks Bonengel is going to crack
up *some* day — probably sooner, rather than later — and when that
day *comes*, *Curtis* plans to put him down like a dog in the street. The
Bonengel clone *is* to *prevent* widespread riots.

The early experiments weren't successful, and most *had* to be
put out of their misery. Those that followed, however, steadily
improved, and Boatman's most recent *Bonengel* is the real *one's* *spit-*
ting image. At this point, *Boatman* has cloned *General Olivet and sev-*
eral of the Buropresident's *other prominent cronies*. They'll *do* *Brutus*
duty when it's time to put the real Bonengel against the wall.

Being a bright guy, Boatman has lots of plans for his *clones* —
but he's run into a hitch. The *problem* with clones is that they have no
souls.

At least, that's *Boatman's* explanation for the Jammer-like *prop-*
erties of his *clones*. Like *many Jammers*, they are unable to use chi
and *magic* energy, *which makes* them resistant to such *energies* as
well. In fact, Boatman has started to wonder if the Jammers aren't
mainly composed of soulless people (including *his ex-lover*, Laura
Villaverde). It doesn't make much difference to him, *but he's* amused
by the thought.

Boatman's clones don't seem to have a *very* highly evolved
moral sense, but *that may just* be a consequence of *their environment*.
Their bodies appear *to* be aged between eight and sixty-seven years,
but not one is actually older than ten. While their brains have been
boosted to the level of a bright adult, their emotional maturity lags
far behind. They find *it* almost impossible to defer gratification, see
emotional issues *objectively* or forgive insults. They are, *however*,
sneaky and clever, and can hide dislikes and *grudges very well*.

If Bonengel finds out that Boatman has cloned him, it could cause
an open rift between the two, which would substantially diminish their
ability to fight outside threats. *If* a clone *escaped*, there'd be plenty
of exciting *chase* scenes, gunfights and intrigues before it wound up
dead, back with Boatman, or in the hands of your characters. *If* the
characters got a *hold* of *any* one of the clones, it could be their *key*
into *high level Architect* installations — if they can convince it to
cooperate.

Fist of Shiva. The year after Haiti was destroyed,
massive weather disruptions ruined most of the
world's crops. This created even more civic *dis-*
order, and once again it was Bonengel to the
rescue. Johann Bonengel put down the wars,
Johann Bonengel built the vat-food factories
and when the dust cleared Johann *Bonengel*
was Buropresident.

Johann Bonengel

Sample Dialog: "What's my great crime? **Creating a world** where no one's free to starve to death?"

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 10, Mnd 9 (Cha 11), Ref 9

Skills: **Info/Buro** Polifits 20, **Leadership** 20, Guns 10, **Martial Arts** 10

Unique **Shiticks:**

Being master of the world's feng shui sites has given **Johann** some tasty **perks**. Bonengel only **gets** these **advantages** when he is in the 2056 juncture.

- Anyone who tries to hurt **Johann** must **make** a Willpower check against Bonengel's Charisma. This **must** be done for each attack; if it fails, the shots of the **attack** are spent, but the would-be attacker spends the time **dithering**.
- Johann rolls an extra positive die. On **everything**.
- Anyone Johann tries to convince of **something** must make a **Will** roll, Difficulty **6**, or believe **that statement** for as long as he is in Johann's presence. This **cannot be done in combat**.

A few years later, Boatman explained to Johann that his powerful chi had probably caused the wars, the Melter and even his lover's

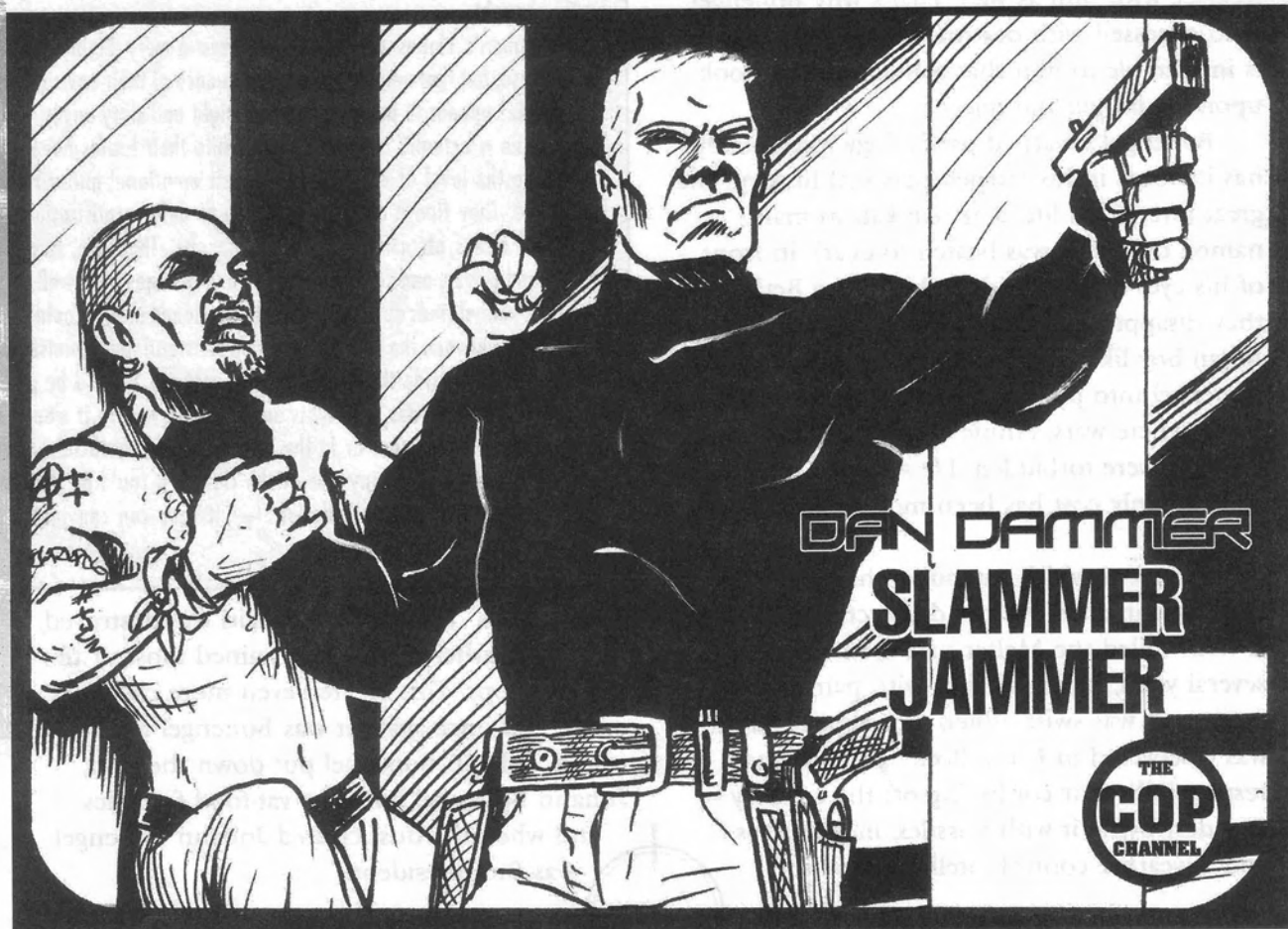
demise, **all** in order to fulfill Johann's self-image as a noble, martyred savior. Bonengel didn't take the news very well, and it was the beginning of a deep split between him and Boatman.

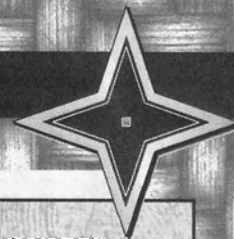
Everything the Buro has accomplished seems like a hollow sham to him now. He feels that he's just a puppet, directed by his unconscious urges and feng shui strings. The secret war has become everything to him. For the first time in his life, he has opponents whose feng shui matches his own. For the first time he is facing real opposition, not just straw men set up for him to knock down.

Others are in the secret war for power. Bonengel has his sanity and his soul at stake.

DAN DAMMER

Dan grew up in one of the earliest and **ugli-**est of the micro wars the BTM built its power on. He remembers very little of this traumatic childhood, but after years of therapy, he's able





"Run Danny! Don't look Back!"

—The dying words of Cynthia Dammer

to lead a highly public, lucrative life of what many would consider public service. He's a cop, but more than that, he's got his own show on the Cop Channel: "Dan Dammer, Jammer Slammer."

Dan is over 230 centimeters tall, a blonde Adonis with the body of a steroid abuser. While many beat cops have nothing but contempt for "posing pretty boys" with syndicated cop shows, they make an exception for Dan. They've seen him get stabbed, defenestrated and (on one highly rated episode) shot in the face.

If Dan acts like he has something to **prove**, well . . . maybe he does.

See, Dan has a recurring nightmare. It's blurry and indistinct, but he and his sister Cindy are running from something. Something horrible. It gets her, and he runs away. He doesn't help her, and she dies.

Few know that Dan's parents were **resistance** fighters, though Dan's been told. It only fuels his hot hatred for those he **pursues**. To his way of thinking, his parents were led astray by deceitful Jammers. What Dan hasn't been told is that the pursuers in his dream were one of the first cyborg squads, sent to take down Dan's parents. If he ever finds out, it might destroy one of the Buro's brightest propaganda stars.

DESDEMONA DEATHANGEL

A public relations coup for the Buro, Desdemona is in some ways their living emblem. The average consumer loves and admires Bonengel, while viewing the BTM with abject, pants-soiling fear. The mysterious Desdemona is a combination of both. She's seen on TV in only her striking human form, but a few news shows have aired blurry glimpses of her transformed shape. It's common knowledge that no one survives seeing her dark side.

Dan Dammer, Jammer Slammer

Sample Dialog: "Hold it, punk!" BLAM BLAM BLAM! "I'm authorized for deadly force!"

Attributes: Bod 12, Chi 0, **Mud** 5 (ha 81, Ref 7)

Skills: Guns 15, Martial Arts 16, Info/Jammers 10, Intimidation 15 (10 to those who haven't seen him on TV)

Shticks: Big Bruiser Shtick (*Feng Shui*, p. 21)

Gun Shticks: Carnival of Carnage x2, Lightning Reload x3, Signature Weapon (Godhammer)

Weapons: Depending on the situation (and the ratings) he'll carry a wide variety of ordnance, but he always has his signature Buro Godhammer (15/4/5, full autofire). His other faves include the fearsome Buro Blue Spear (13**/6/30, full autofire) and trusty Buro Crimestopper (13/5/7).

The networks are constantly pushing for a lengthy Desdemona interview, but the CDCA is adamant. They'll have to settle for brief **sound-bites** between missions and cheesecake pinups. There's a reason for this: Desdemona really is absolutely, purely, blatantly evil and cannot hide it. She is incapable of guile (not that she's ever needed it) and would turn from marketing dream to political nightmare if she started answering press questions.

For example, Desdemona eats people. Often. One a week at least; she has to in order to survive. She likes babies best (they leave her less bloated) but the CDCA has kept her on a steady diet of convicts.

Desdemona is primarily a terror weapon. She cannot be trusted to show discretion in any operation, so it's only safe to unleash her in an area where total destruction is desired. Now that the world is pacified, she's largely obsolete, but she remains handy for the Netherworld and those punitive expeditions to 69.

A Desdemona Deathangel trivia fact: The only man to have sex with her and survive is Curtis Boatman. It's one of the fringe benefits of having all the world's chi working on your behalf.

Another, final trivia fact: She has no Neural Grepper. The only thing compelling her to obey the Architects is her own fancy. They keep her happy, so she works for them. The CDCA knows she'll happily desert them in an eye-



Desdemona Deathangel

Sample Dialog: "Ooooh, children. I love children."

Monstrous Form Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0 (Mag 10), Mnd 3 (Cha 1), Ref 10

Human Form Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (Mag 10), Mind 3 (Cha 12), Ref 10

Skills: Arcanowave Device 19, Creature Powers 19, Guns 16. Martial Arts 16

Arcanowave Shticks: Variable Mass Sword (p. 65), Helix Rethreader, Pulser, Feedback Enhancer

Creature Shticks: Transformation, regeneration x3, Inevitable Comeback x3, Flight

Gun Shticks: Carnival of Carnage x2

Weapons: VM Sword (16), Punch (11), Kick (12), Buro Blue Spear (13**/6/30, full autofire)

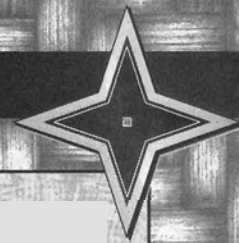
blink, but they haven't clued in BuroMil just yet.

SONJA MACCARRELLI

After surviving Operation Tent Pole (see the "Sonja's Story" insert) Sonja was offered a position on the Buroresidential bodyguard team. She turned it down, afraid her abomination half would fail Bonengel in a time of need. Instead, she became an independent Tactical Operative, reporting directly to the Buroresident.

Sonja Maccarrelli hates her abomination form and avoids transforming if at all possible. She always returns from Inevitable Comeback in her nonhuman shape, and she has to make a Will check to become human again. This transformation takes about half an hour, and it is excruciatingly painful.

Sonja the abomination looks a steel hawk with a lot of internal organs stuck inside it. With every movement, guts get pinched or torn. Blood runs down the shiny struts and fibers of her bones and feathers, but the wounds immediately heal. She cannot speak in this form, and if threatened is likely to lash out at random or flee. She cannot use any of her arcanowave shticks except Feedback Enhancer and Spirit Shield Generator in this form, and can't (of course) fire guns.



Sonia's Story

There are two ways to fail in the BTM military. The first is to be pessimistic when you're just starting out. The second is to be optimistic when you're experienced. The first keeps you from getting promoted; the second keeps you from staying alive.

My name is **Sonja** Maccarelli, and this is the story of how I went from being an optimist to a pessimist to a realist.

I was an optimist when I **joined** the military. I had good reason. I was bright, strong, young, and my mother was a colonel. I joined at a time when a bright, strong colonel's daughter who was indifferent to suffering (both my own and others') could do very well. I performed feats of outstanding bravery in what is now the Texas Demilitarized Zone. I was promoted and shown on television. Mom was proud. Some Jammers tried to assassinate me, but I killed them all instead.

The military told me they had a special division called "Tactical Operations" where I could be with like-minded young, strong people. Our friends over at the CDCA would make us even stronger, and we would travel back in time to fight the enemies of the Buro and Buroresident Bonengel.

When the CDCA put their bits and pieces in me, they warned me there might be side effects. "Soreness, bleeding gums . . . maybe a rash," they said. Having every organ in my body rearranged from within while my skin split and my bones turned into bleeding steel was not, as I recall, in their brochure. Neither **was** the dumbing — they never mentioned I was gambling my brains.

So there I was in the field, bleeding and gnashing and **find**-ing it harder to think and easier to rage, and then they said "You're an abomination now. We're going to have to stick a machine in your brain to kill you if you disobey us."

I never disobeyed an order in my life.

I was still an optimist, and my mom was a general by that time. She got the attention of Johann Bonengel — the Buroresident himself — and he said "Let me talk to her."

I met Johann Bonengel. I was pretty wrecked, still bleeding and changing and stupid. He looked me in the eye and said "Tell me the truth; are you going to rebel? Do we need to put that device in you?"

Best I could, I said "Sir, no sir,"

He nodded.

He saved me.

So in the months **that** followed, when the CDCA ran their experiments on me, I thought about him. When they cut me open to watch how I put myself back together, I thought about the Buroresident. When I learned how to turn myself back human,

and **make** my brain right again — and it was hard, and it hurt more than you can imagine — I did it for him.

By this point I was a pretty tough shit. **TacOps** loved me. They'd say "Dangerous? Send in **Sonja**; she's been through so much hell, it'll look like home!"

They sent me to this little get-together called Operation Tent Pole. It was hosted by god-knows-who at a charming Netherworld site known simply as "**The Meathole**." Featured entertainment was the Mother of Corruption and a gal called Ting Ting who didn't know when to quit. Things got hairy and Ting Ting surprised me pretty badly, and once again I was **Sonja** the Living Mass of Pain. That's when I called in for backup and heard my HQ say, "Write her off. Damn shame, but we can't risk it for **just** one abomination."

Just one abomination. Forget the medals, forget the wounds, forget the pain I suffer every minute I hold my humanity **together**. When it really hits hard, I'm just one abomination to **BuroMil**.

That's when I became a realist, 'cause after all that, I **came** back. Guess I'm even harder to kill than they figured.

BuroMil can kiss my ass, and I'd gladly watch the CDCA burn in one of the hells they've devised. I'm in this for Bonengel, and I'm in it for me.

Sure, sacrifices have to be made, but I'm not going to be one of them ever again.

Sonja Maccarelli

Sample Dialog: "Yes, sir. For you, Buroresident."

Normal Appearance

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 5, Mnd 5, Ref 9

Skills: Guns 14, Martial Arts 13, Arcanowave Device 14, Creature Powers 12, Intimidation 10

Arcanowave **Schticks**: Helix Rethreader, Feedback Enhancer, Spirit Shield Generator, Helix Activator

Creature Powers: Inevitable Comeback

Gun Shticks: Lightning Reload, Fast Draw, Carnival of **Carnage**

Weapons: Punch (8), Kick (9), Buro Avenger (11/2/6), Buro Blade of Truth (10/3/30, full autofire)

Abomination

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 3 (Mag 8), Mnd 1, Ref 9

Skills: Martial Arts 13, Arcanowave Device 17, Creature Powers 15, Intimidation 12

Arcanowave Shticks: Feedback Enhancer, Spirit Shield

Creature Powers: Inevitable Comeback, Flight, Armor, Abysmal Spines

Weapons: Claws, Beak, and Razor Wings (13)

LEGIONS OF UNEARTHLY HORROR

BONECHILLS

Some criminals who have demonstrated a high degree of resourcefulness or ability are handed over to the Bureau of Happiness and Productivity. When the BHP is done with them, these former rebels against the social order have become some of the **Buro's** most feared and loyal minions: Bonechills.

Bonechills resemble what a 20th century psychologist would call a sociopath; they have no remorse and no empathy for the pain of others. Sociopaths, however, are incapable of loyalty, while Bonechills are incapable of treachery — at least, they're incapable of betraying the Buro. The BHP has somehow made service of the Buro the only motivating factor for these people. Self interest, ethics, love — even pleasure

and pain are meaningless to Bonechills. Only the Buro matters.

The Lotus has zombies in its employ and the Ascended have brainwashed servants, but Bonechills are different. They plan. They innovate. They are capable of self-direction and intuition. Bonechills are not volatile, but they are not squeamish either. They are neither sadists nor pacifists; violence is a neutral concept to them. Murder is as significant to a Bonechill as closing a car door: it's a casual action, requiring no thought at all.

Bonechills are creepy. The streetwise in New Des Moines can spot them a block away. Up close, they're worse. Their eyes are dead and they rarely change expression. When the occasion calls for it they can be skillful deceivers, but otherwise they're cool, blank and expressionless.

Outside the 2056 juncture, a Bonechill might be rehabilitated. Pu Ti could certainly do it, as could Quan Lo or Gao Zhang. The Ascended's shrinks and chi doctors might be able to, as might a scrappy, caring psychiatrist (if it was dramatically appropriate, anyway).

Bonechills should usually be named characters. They make superb villains if played right — chillingly logical yet capable of any atrocity which will give them an advantage.

Bonechill Stats

To create a Bonechill, choose **any** character type except Abomination, Ghost, Scrappy Kid, Supernatural Creature, or Transformed Animal. Remove all Unique shticks. If there's no Guns skill, give them Guns 10. If they have no gun shticks, give them two. Add +2 to Deceit and +3 to Intimidation. Deduct 2 from Charisma.

Jef Moor, Bonechill

Having betrayed everything that ever meant anything to him, Jef is a complete slave to the Buro. After his punitive expedition against the Guiding Hand, the BTM took him back for more tinkering. Now he lacks even the will to kill himself. Jef had already been introduced to the secret war when he became a bonechill, so the BHP decided to assign him as a special liaison to TacOps. He could show up in any juncture.

Attributes: Bod 7 (Tgh 9), Chi 2, Mnd 6, Ref 7

Skills: Driving 8, Guns 16, Martial Arts 8, Fir-it 16

Shticks: Both Guns Blazing x3, Carnival of Carnage x4

Weapons: 3 Buro 9s (10/1/17+1), 2 Buro Reliants (9/1/6), Landridge Cutter (11, p. 45)

BOUNCING BENJIS

"Give them guns? Are you nuts? For one thing, you'd need to write 'aim away from face' en the barrels to preient accidents. For another thing, they'd still be too dumb to read it."

—Akira Jones, CDCA

The Biomass Reprocessing Center has nabbed so many hopping vampires that they have an assembly line to turn out abominations based on them. (This is doubtless due to the Corruption factor. The rumors that the CDCA deliberately allows prisoners to be infected by non-abominated jiangshi in order to get more jiangshi to abominate? That's Jammer propaganda. Back to your vat, Consumer!) The BRC's



hopping vampire variant is officially called the Close Combat Demoralization Unit, but they're more commonly known as Bouncing **Benjis** (or **Berthas**, if female).

Bouncing **Benjis** are modestly smarter than the average **jiangshi** (the CDCA boosts their intelligence so they can grasp concepts like "do what I say or you'll die in great agony") but they lose several of their powers during the conversion to abominations. Though the CDCA still hasn't been able to eliminate "that hopping glitch," the inability to cross sticky rice and vulnerability to rice paper are gone from the **Benjis** and **Berthas**. The main drawback to your off-the-rack Bouncing **Benjis** is that they can't shoot guns. Not only are they not quite bright enough to train, their big fingernails get in the way. The BTM makes up for this deficiency by using them as point-blank terror troops.

There are a few variations on the basic model. The CCDU-SS (Sorcery Suppression) has a Feedback Enhancer instead of the Spirit Shield Generator, and the CCDU-M (Medic) the Spirit Shield is replaced by a Slap Patch. (No, they're not much in the way of bedside manner.)

Bouncing Benji

Sample Dialog: "Rrrawwrrr . . . schtlang . . ."

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 1, Ref 5

Skills: Creature Powers 10, Arcanowave Device 10, Martial Arts 8

Creature Shticks: Abysmal Spines (claws) x3, Damage Immunity: Blast

Arcanowave Shticks: Juicer, Neural Stimulator, Spirit Shield Generator

Weapons: Claws (11)

The Name Game

The Bouncing **Benji** is one of the few "mass market" abominations produced; most abominations are one-of-a-kind — like works of art, only they aren't beautiful and they kill people. When the CDCA creates a unique abomination, they usually give it a series of numbers and letter indicating its capabilities. Once it's assigned to a unit, that unit usually gives the abomination a name. The abomination's input is rarely solicited. These names are usually colorful and memorable, like "Guthead," "Meaty Boy" or "Skunky."

BUROMIL

The Buro's military establishment is a puzzling hodge-podge of commands, divisions, departments and specialties. They all take orders from Bonengel and General Olivet, but other than that they're a confusing mess, so don't worry about the chain of command. That aside, they're all fairly effective. Need a particular unit, sub-command or directorate? Make one up and move along. Some well-known examples are described here.

High Mobility Combat Union

These are the Buro's answer to special forces. They're experts in infiltration, terror tac-

BuroMil Grunt

Sample Dialog: "What now, Sarge?"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 6, Intimidation 10 (8 when out of uniform, or for characters who weren't raised in the 2056 juncture)

Weapons: Fist (7), Kick (8), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Blue Spear (13**/6/30, full autofire)

High Mobility Combat Union Trooper

Sample Dialog: "So no shit, there we were . . ."

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 7, Sabotage 8, Intimidation 10, Intrusion 6

Weapons: Fist (7), Kick (8), Buro Blade of Truth (10/3/30, full autofire), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1), and one of the following: landridge Cutter (10, p. 45), Suckerlight (10, p. 43), or Deathsaber (5, damage not reduced by Toughness or armor, see - 51)

Unnamed Tactics

Sample Dialog: "Out of our way, flosers. Let the real men handle thii."

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ket 1

Skills: Driving 8, Guns 9, Martial Arts 8, Fix-it 6

Weapons: Buro Avenger (11/2/6), 2 Buro Reliants (9/1/6), Buro Blade of Truth (10/3/30, full autofire), and one of the following: Buro Blue Flag (13*/4/30), Landridge Cutter (11, see p. 45), or Deathsaber (5, damage not reduced by Toughness or armor, see p. 51)

tics and the suppression of civilian unrest. Most of the Tactical Operatives (see below) are promoted from the Combat Union.

Tactical Operations

Two words: hard core. Tactical Operations is a special operations branch personally overseen by Johann Bonengel himself. They are the best armed, best trained and most indoctrinated branch of BuroMil. Only Innerwalkers are allowed to become Tactical Operatives (TacOps for short) and once they do, the training regimen is grueling. If an Innerwalking candidate isn't quite up to snuff, well . . . the CDCA can fix most deficiencies.

Most TacOps don't have arcanowave devices; reserve those for named characters. These grunts are pretty damn nasty, though. Just because they don't have Arcanotech doesn't mean they haven't been augmented in slightly less sinister ways.

COPS

The standard Buro Public Order ("PubOrd") goons come in pairs. That's right: the "pammers" system for cops is still in place in 2056. But when you're dealing with PubOrd, you're never dealing with just two. PubOrd likes to brag that they can get every cop in a given city to any spot in that city within 20 minutes. That's a bit of hyperbole; it usually takes at least 23 minutes — closer to 34 in a big town like Capital — but it's more like 17 in a trouble spot like Branson.

Buddy Flicks

Movies in 2056 in the "cop/buddy flick" genre have largely been replaced by "cop/buddy flick/romances" in which unlikely partners hate each other at first but eventually fall in love. A little more than half of these are heterosexual. Over 98% are interracial, and in those that confront the controversial "same race love" topic either depict the protagonists denying their attraction because it's wrong, or giving in and suffering for it.

People from the 1990s are usually shocked by cop flicks in 2056. They go in expecting to see male bonding and usually see more male bonding than they expected. Try this out on your characters and see how they react! It's fun!

What this means is that if your characters start trouble in town, make an open roll every other sequence and add 2. The result is the number of unnamed backup cops who show up. Keep in mind that they show up where the PCs are, not where they were. If they go somewhere where there are fewer surveillance devices (into the sewers, up into the sky, underneath moving trains) you can forgo this "monkey pile" effect; they'll just be waiting for them when they pop back up.

A typical cop is equipped with a Buro Beat Patroller, Buro Backup Arm, blackout sack (p. 44), suckerlight (p. 43) and a spare clip for each gun. A typical squad car contains one Buro Crimestopper with five extra shells, two gas

Public Order Cop

Sample Dialog: "Present your identification. consumer!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 5

Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 8, Driving 6, Intimidation 10 (8 when out of uniform, or for characters who weren't raised in the 2056 juncture)

Weapons: Punch (6), Kick (7), suckerlight (8, see p. 43), Buro Beat Patroller (9/1/7+1), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1), and one of the following: Buro Crimestopper (13/5/7) or Buro Phallusaurus (8/8/200, full autofire, -1 to hit if not Braced on the floor, does not get "free" shots without penalty on full autofire, -1 to hit as melee weapon unless empty, 9 damage as melee weapon)

SPUD-U Pilot

Sample Dialog: "Out of my way, groundhog."

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 9, Martial Arts 9, Driving 14, Intimidation 10 (8 when out of uniform, or for characters who weren't raised in 2056)

Weapons: Punch (6), Kick (7), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1), Buro Crimestopper (13/5/7), vehicle mounted Buro Blue Spears (13**/-/150, see p. 56)

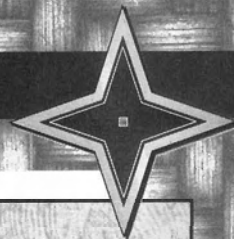
PubOrd SWAT Trooper

Sample Dialog: "noia . . . hold . . . hold . . . now! Take them out!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 9, Martial Arts 9, Driving 7, Intimidation 10 (8 when out of uniform, or for characters who weren't raised in 2056)

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Buro Beat Patroller (9/1/7+1), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1), and one of the following: Buro Crimestopper (13/5/7) or Buro 16 (13*/5/32, full autofire)



masks and five tear gas grenades. Some hyperthyroid types opt to replace the Crimestopper with a Phallusaurus (see p. 48). Buro tear gas gives two points of Impairment to everyone in it. One point is from pain and one in from blindness, so characters who are immune to one or the other can decrease their penalties accordingly.

SPUD-U pilots are generally a cut above, and they're usually less laden with gadgets. A typical SPUD-U pilot has a superior Buro 9 in the cockpit with her, along with a Crimestopper and a Backup Arm.

SWAT teams are still around in 2056, and they mean business. They come equipped with all the gear of the normal beat cop, plus each carries either a Crimestopper or a Buro 16 (though thankfully not both). Additionally, a squad of these will have whatever other equipment is appropriate for the job they've been called to do. Surveillance equipment, vehicles, tear gas, explosives – you name it, and it's in the SWAT equipment locker.

HELL'S POSTMEN

In official Buro documents it's the Arcanoengineered Messenger Division, but everyone else calls it Hell's Post Office.

Hell's Postmen are funny looking, there's no two ways about it. Picture a typical demon face – horns, glowing red eyes, wispy fu manchu moustache – with enormous wings growing out of the top of the skull. Where the ears should be, they've got a pair of spindly, wiry legs with opposable thumbs. Now stick an arcanowave device that looks like a cross between a giant slug and a telescope on top of its head, a Spirit Shield Generator underneath its jaw, and hang an awkward-looking backpack from the wings. You've got one of Hell's Postmen. (That's right, no torso; they're all head.)

Excuse me; I meant to say "Hell's Postal Carriers." While these creatures (scientifically named "wingey bastards" by the monster hunter who discovered them) are male

Hell's Postmen

Sample Dialog: "Beep-beep. Mailman coming through."

Attributes: Bod 3 (Mov 10), Chi 0 (Mag 5), Mnd 5, Ref 5 (Spd 10)

Skills: Arcanowave Devices 9, Creature Powers 10, Martial Arts 5

Arcanowave Shticks: Spirit Shield Generator, GateMaker (see p. 59)

Creature Schticks: Flight, Insubstantial, Foul Spew (nauseating chunks)

Unique Schticks:

Navigation: This shtick allows the Mailman to track down any living creature whose blood the Mailman has tasted. No rolls are required; the Mailman simply makes a beeline for its target and gets there eventually. The Buro keeps blood samples of all its operatives (and many of its enemies) on file for this purpose.

Weapons: Kick (5)

when the Buro catches them, they are definitely sexless by the time they make it into service. The Buro removes their "equipment" (it used to go where the Spirit Shield Generator hangs) and tells them they'll get it back after ten years of service. The reason for this "deal" (and, just between you and me, it's a big fat lie; after ten years they'll get sacrificed and stuck in some other poor sap's Spirit Shield Generator) is that Hell's Postmen are highly resistant to Cerebral Greppers. Apparently it interferes with their Navigation shtick.

Hell's Postmen are not used in combat. Instead, they're the Buro's messengers. That arcanowave doodad on the top of each Mailman's head is a GateMaker. When the Buro has lost track of an operative, they send in one of Hell's Postmen. Unerringly, the Postman tracks the operative through the Netherworld to the correct juncture, and then delivers its message.

Sometimes the message is a simple "good-bye." Unwitting Postmen have been loaded with bombs and sent on suicide missions to take out treacherous underlings – or anyone else the Buro can get a blood sample from. (Fortunately their Navigation ability is also baffled by traitor bombs.)

If the Transtemporal Communications Cable (p.30) is completed, a whole lot of these critters will be sacrificed as redundant. Knowledge of this beforehand might tempt a lot of them to help the enemies of the Buro.



Jef

When Chang opened the door, I could see the astonishment and joy on his face. I don't think I'd ever seen him with an expression before. Even when wounded, his face stayed calm. He'd just blink more often.

"Jef! You escaped!"

I smiled. "Iron bars do not a prison make."

"Come in! How did you get away?"

"I was at BHP and they were keeping me on happy drugs all the time. For a while I was a good little zombie – long enough for them to let down their guard. One day it occurred to me that I'd be just as happy blowing them all away – or dying in a blaze of glory. When you're that happy it doesn't really matter to you what you do or what happens to you.

"What happened to you, Chang?" I asked. "Last I saw you were running away from the Free Sex hideout."

He didn't even flush; he'd regained his composure completely.

"I've finally reached my colleagues here. Jef, I believe it is destiny that has brought you here to us. We resist the Buro, as you must know, but we have a real chance of beating them . . ." He sat me down for a bowl of buckwheat noodles and told me about feng shui sites. How the house I was at was one, and that I'd probably found them because the winds of chi were starting to blow favorably for the Guiding Hand.

His "brothers" may have been less pleased that I was in their midst, but like Chang, they were expressionless. Who could tell? They were still expressionless in their sleep that night as I walked from bed to bed, slitting throats.

I must have been clumsy. One had time to twitch and the spatter of his blood awoke the man in the next cot. At some level I was glad. Now he had a chance to kill me or to die on his feet. I caught him in the face with a shot from my Buro 9, then I dropped my knife to draw a second 9.

The shot awakened the others, but it was still dark. They were confused. They didn't know where the bullets were coming from. I knew they were

coming from me, and I knew where they were going.

I think I killed them all. Maybe a few got away, I don't know I soon had my hands full with Chang.

He came from nowhere, flying through the air. He kicked the gun out of my right hand and it spun off into the darkness. I shot at him with my left, but he had rolled under a cot and vanished into the darkness.

"Chang? You can't escape, Chang. This place is surrounded by now."

Then there was a bright flash of light, but only in my head. Chang had struck me on the back of the neck. My world went black for a second and my other 9 spun into the darkness. I drew a Reliant, the gun I'd designed, and fired blindly

I was on my knees. I felt nauseous, but I knew that if Chang had meant to kill me I'd be dead. I fired again, to keep him back.

"Why, Jef? Why did you betray us?"

"I had to. They got me on productives. They own me now" My vision was starting to clear.

"How could they break so virtuous a man?" Chang almost wailed. Over to the left? Is that where I heard him? I turned.

"Chang, it doesn't matter. Virtue? It's nothing. All the people they killed? That's nothing to me either. It's like they opened my skull and scooped out the part that gives a damn."

"I cannot believe you are so fully converted, Jef. Come with me. We can heal your wounds." He kept talking.

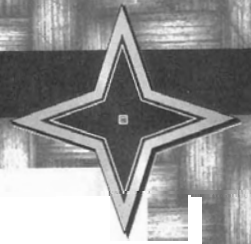
There! BLAM!, and shattering glass. Only his reflection in a full length mirror.

"Chang?"

He didn't reply, and I felt a breeze. He must have gone through a window when I'd fired. . . or something . . .

As I was fumbling towards the door I stumbled on one of my 9s. I picked it up.

"We've got a visual," said the voice in my head they had put there. "He's gone out a back window and is proceeding west." I started running. They'd made me memorize a map. I knew where to cut him off.



Chang ran around the corner and I was waiting. I opened fire with both guns, but he was gone. It was the first trick I'd ever seen him use: jumping over the line of fire. I tried to pull my pistols up and fire - and I hit him once - but his feet caught my face and I was down.

I rolled over hoping for another shot and a wasp-shaped aircar swung out of the sky. It jerked, one end stationary, the other swinging like a giant baseball bat. The aircar caught Chang and propelled him backwards. My guns came up and I fired.

BLAM-BLAM!

"The productivity drugs, always asking 'would you'?"

He was still on his feet, somehow. I let him have it again.

BLAM-BLAM!

"And the answer's always 'yes'."

BLAM-BLAM!

"Would you rat out your friends? 'Yes'."

BLAM-BLAM!

"Would you kill anyone at all? 'Yes,' For no reason at all except we told you to? 'Yes!'"

BLAM-BLAM!

The aircar was setting down.

"I'm dead Chang. Dead like you. But the drugs at least make me feel half-way alive."

BLAM-BLAM!

Chang's corpse twitched as the bullets slammed home again and again. The pilot stepped down and took off his helmet, revealing a shock of luminous fiberoptic hair.

"You know Jef," Shiny said conversationally, "I think you can stop shooting him. Or at least stop talking to him." He smirked at Chang's dead body.

"You little bastard," I said. His eyes got wide as I pointed the guns at him. "They tortured me and drugged me and brainwashed me, but you went willingly. All it took was a fast new toy."

BLAM-BLAM! BLAM-BLAM! BLAM-BLAM!

Then I put a gun in my mouth.

CLICK.

I threw the gun away, tried the other.

CLICK.

I must have miscounted. There was supposed to be one left for me

BIOMASS REPROCESSING CENTER -- PAPER COPY ONLY

Interrogation #6629 -- Subject 'Joan Lincoln' -- Page 4/4

is not what you said the year 2055 is like. I entered this place, this, what, Netherworld, in 2055, and I know 2055. Everything's completely, totally ruled by the switch-backs. Totally. I've told you about everything. It's the Cult of the Jackal. It's the Wild Hunt. I've never heard of anyone named Bonengel or Boatman, or of any Bureau of Tactical Management. Won't you please let me go?

ASSESSMENT: Subject is clearly deranged; her delusions of persecution at the hands of "animals in human form" are classic paranoid delusions. Recommend termination, with the caveat that brain and spinal material not be salvaged.



Blowing Up 2056

THE TEN BEST PLACES TO KICK BUTT IN 2056

Now that you've got an idea of what 2056 is like, you've probably decided it's time to start blowing up spacious chunks of it. To aid in this endeavor, here's a list of ten settings guaranteed to provide maximum mayhem to any group of Feng *Shui* characters.

SUN FARM Mesa, North America

Arizona is still a state, even though the United States of America has been relegated to history's attic. Being (primarily) a vast stretch of sun-baked soil relieved by the occasional lizard or bleached cow skull, Arizona and the surrounding states were long used by governments as good places to stick toxic waste and perform questionable experiments. Now, however, the Buro has found a new use for all those wide open spaces. They've constructed sun farms — acres and acres of mirrors, all turning in unison to focus the sun on a central gathering tower. At the tower, the sunlight is used to generate electricity for Buro citizens. (The military, police, and government have power sources that aren't endangered by the rare cloudy day.)

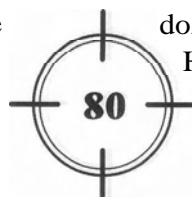
Sounds pretty benign, right? Everyone loves non-polluting solar power. The

CDCA, however, realized that sun farms could also serve as chi amplifiers. After all, the eight-sided tangram mirror is essential to the practice of feng shui. Even though soullessly and deliberately twisting the chi of a barren desert doesn't exactly yield rich pickings, it is possible to take ten square miles of nowhere and pattern the mirrors in an auspicious shape in order to create a very minor feng shui site.

Building these makes the Buro more powerful, so they like 'em. But, they're distant, non-critical, and not well-guarded, so they've become one of the Jammers' favorite targets. To be perfectly honest, the Buro doesn't mind having the Jammers blow sun farms up too much, since any lost chi is minor compared to the PR value ("Jammers have once again caused brownouts for you, consumer!" and so forth).

Though the Jammers realize that hit and run raids on sun farms aren't going to bring the Buro to its knees, they do provide a burn rush — if the Buro can be prevented from rebuilding the site. The Jammers like to prevent reconstruction by dumping radioactive waste in the area, but moving a large volume of earth into (or out of) the farm's locale would work. So would diverting a river through it, but they're hard to come by in Arizona.

Sun farms are typically guarded by several dozen unnamed characters and a few Hellharrower emplacements. Realize, how-





ever, that guarding a solar plant in the middle of a hellish, barren desert is not really a plum assignment, so these soldiers are generally screw-ups, nicotine addicts, petty thieves, rat finks and others who fell from favor with the Powers That Be. Every once in a while a dangerous "maverick" type gets sent out to learn a lesson in the desert, but mostly these people are losers. There are lots of 'em and they're allowed to attune to the site, but they're losers nonetheless.

Here are some neat things that could happen while torching one of these sites:

- The central tower is surrounded on all sides by mirrors, so you can have loads of fun playing with reflections. Think of Bruce Lee fighting in the maze of mirrors and you've got the idea.
- The whole idea of these installations is to reflect sunlight. A cunning technician might take control of one of the big mirrors and use reflected light to blind an enemy.
- Broken mirrors are a staple of action flicks for a reason — they crash so nicely. This can be compounded by a domino effect as one mirror falls and knocks into the one behind it, and so on. (Build up to this — have it happen the third or fourth time a PC knocks over a mirror by throwing a mook into it.)
- The central tower has a big mirror at the top where all the surrounding mirrors focus their light. If someone can get inside the tower and take control of that mirror (by spending nine shots and making a Fix-It check, Difficulty 8) it can be used as a giant laser. (Ever seen a kid fry ants with a magnifying glass? Like that.) This heat beam does 15-25 Damage, depending on how many mirrors have already been knocked out.
- It's unlikely, but possible, that the Jammers could show up. Then the PCs would not only be fighting the Buro's increasingly demoralized second string, but also racing against the Jammers to see who can blow up the site *first*.

MEGAMALL

New Sydney

The Megamall in New Sydney, Australia, is a monument to a fundamental value of Buro society: Consumerism. Like many of the so-called "new cities," New Sydney was built around a feng shui site, planned with chilling deliberation to drive the thick spike of a concept into the collective unconscious of humankind. In this case, the idea could be summed up as "you are what you own."

The Megamall itself is shaped like two huge, golden domes pointing at the sky. It's fancy in a way that few things are in 2056. It's got not one, but *two* roller coasters going around inside it. (Each one circles the perimeter of one dome, and they actually twist and spiral around each other. Personally, roller coasters scare the piss out of me, and I imagine swooping around at high speed would be even worse if you saw the carriage of *another* roller coaster shooting right at you at a similarly high speed.) There's a huge atrium at the center of each dome, centering on two of the world's largest zogeevators (see p. 50). There are stores of all descriptions, and in the center of the two domes, lightly covered by the aspirated saliva of screaming roller coaster victims, there's a perfectly preserved ranch house from the outback days of the 1970s.

Anyone who makes an Info/Geomancy roll against Difficulty 6, or who uses any kind of chi-monitoring or mapping shtick, realizes that this house is the center of the site. (If a player guesses it might be essential, given its central location and incongruous nature, don't even make her roll.) This charming house was *hand-built* by an incredibly self-reliant couple who grew all their own food, raised their own sheep for wool and meat and home-schooled their kids. Their house, being a reflection of their personalities, represents self-reliance and their *can-do* frontier spirit. The house has been encircled and caged by the Buro in order to pervert and cripple that spirit, *making* everyone on the planet just a little more desperate and *insecure*. (Or, as Bonengel likes to think of it,

making them all a little more social and civic-minded.)

The beautiful thing about it is that if the PCs destroy the house, it can't be rebuilt: The hand-hewn nature of the beams made the structure completely unique. Furthermore, given the major nature of this site, burning it yields a bonus of 7 experience points, not the usual 5.

Getting at the house isn't easy, of course. Every entrance to the mall has a discrete but functional arcanowave scanner built into it. Anyone who scans with high concentrations of Fu or Magic gets special attention in the form of a squad of four uniformed PubOrd cops. (Even the Buro knows that this won't seriously slow down a real **Innerwalker**. These poor goons are just stalking horses to make any potential attackers reveal themselves.) In addition to the arcanoscanners, there are also microwave radar rigs to reveal concealed weapons.

At any given time there are maybe forty or fifty cops in the mall, but the real protection for the site is **BuroMil**. They keep a platoon of two dozen Bouncing Benjis in suspended animation for emergencies. Holding the leashes of the Bouncing Benjis are three officers who are named characters. The officers may (or may not) be overly concerned with civilian casualties. The abominations don't give a fig.

Some other things that can happen include the following:

- The zogeevators are made for stunts. Jumping up in one of these gives a high field of fire — though the recoil from a gun will drive a shooter back or send him cartwheeling out of control.
- The roller coasters keep going throughout the first two sequences of the fight, with the passengers getting increasingly hysterical. A stray bullet or blast might snap a girder, threatening the innocent passengers with high speed death unless some **heroically**-strong PC holds the girder in place (Strength check, Difficulty 8) or uses some other shtick to save them. (See? I knew those things were dangerous.) Alternately, a

PC might jump into the roller coaster and use it as a fire platform. (If someone tries this, make sure a **Benji** or three bounces in as well.) Finally, in the third sequence, a PC might start the roller coaster up again and divert both cars into the house. That would smash it up real good.

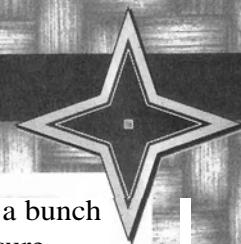
- One of the stores features the World's Biggest TV (currently tuned to the Bux Channel). It would be a shame if no way was found to smash it.
- There are wheeled food and beverage carts. They're electric. They can be used as indoor vehicles. They have Move 10 with the pedal to the metal.
- There's a four-tiered slidewalk going around the insides of the domes. Each step inward moves faster. This can also provide a moving fire platform.

THE LAIR OF DOCTOR DIABOLOS

Liberty City, Cuba

Some things never change. Cuba was a gambling haven in the **1950s**, it had a flourishing sex tourism business in the **1990s**, and now, a hundred years after gringos came to drop their cash on contraband cigars, you can still go to Cuba and get your illicit smokes. Of course, in **2056**, the nicotine pushers are also growing eyeballs in vats, but still — it's Cuba where you go to get 'em.

This is because Cuba is the home (or, as he would tell it, the "lair") of the **Buro's** most feared criminal mastermind: Doctor Diabolos. He's never been caught, despite his daring daylight robberies, his elaborate global smuggling schemes and his cocksure public mockery of the Buro and all it stands for. Cuba's PubOrd sector commander, Hector **Ramone**, has publicly sworn to capture Doctor Diabolos or die trying.



Diabolos isn't a Jammer, despite the claims of the Bureau of Truth and Ideological Hygiene (and the opinions of **BuroMil** intelligence, for that matter). The truth is stranger still (and **considering** that the Jammer hypothesis involves flying rhesus monkeys, that's pretty damn strange). Hector **Ramone** will never capture Diabolos because **Ramone is** Diabolos.

(Okay, fine, maybe the flying rhesus monkeys **are** stranger.)

Being highly placed in **PubOrd**, **Ramone** knows about the power of feng shui (though he still doesn't know jack about time travel). In fact, he's the owner of Fidel Castro's old residence — a powerful site. Its particular flavor is very helpful to those facing enemies of vastly superior power. (Whatever you think of the CIA, they didn't routinely come up with ideas like "Let's put itching powder in Castro's scuba suit and LSD on his mouthpiece so he'll go crazy and drown!" Oh no. They were led to that zany, sitcom-esque level of ineptitude by some pretty strong chi.)

Ramone/Diabolos is playing a dangerous game. As **Ramone**, he needs to appear competent enough that his superiors won't take away the site that makes the whole charade possible. But as Diabolos he wants — no, **needs** — to make the Buro look foolish.


In any event, Doctor Diabolos has a huge "sin complex" hidden under the ruins of the old city of Havana. Gambling is the least of it. It also contains his drug labs for synthesizing LSD and MDMA, the world's biggest eyeball farming operation and even an underwater submarine bay that forms the backbone of his world-wide network of tobacco smugglers. Gamblers from all over the world go there to compete against the Doctor and against each other. Fugitives know it's unmonitored, and a good place to get a reliable new identity. This also makes it popular with Innerwalkers of every stripe — especially the Jammers — and **they** are the main reason **Ramone** stays in power. As Diabolos, he's in a fine position to present Jammers and other dissidents with phony papers. As **Ramone**, he can then

swoop in, crack the case and hand up a bunch of dangerous rebels any time the pressure comes on from the Buro.

(If the truth ever came out, **Ramone/Diabolos** would be up shit creek without even a canoe. The Buro would hunt him down for betrayal and the Jammers would do exactly the same. Anyone who found out Diabolos' secret could blackmail the hell out of him — until he succeeded in having them discretely erased, or vice versa.)

Liberty City is a good place for **PCs** to hide out from the authorities, but there's all kinds of ways things can go wrong for them. Perhaps one of the Doctor's vicious sycophants decides to extort more money out of them with threats, or some other guest tries to bully them or a different group of undercover Innerwalkers has a bone to pick. (If you're stuck, try looking over the **PCs'** melodramatic hooks.) In any event, once the fight starts here, there's a number of cool things that could happen:

- Someone down by the docks could get knocked into the water, resulting in an underwater fight scene.
- The **décor** in the gambling rooms tends heavily towards caged parrots and songbirds. Not only are they attractive, they let the Doctor know if the air starts going bad. Any gunfight here is going to involve cards and feathers flying everywhere. (Check out **Hard Boiled** to see what this looks like.)
- Diabolos' drug labs are full of caustic, acidic, flammable and/or smashable things.
- The huge drying facilities for the tobacco involve hazardously hot surfaces, and the dried tobacco itself is just begging to be lit on fire.
- And, of course, the police might show up — sicced on this area not by **Ramone** (though he might do it if things were getting totally out of hand and he was going to lose it **anyway**) but by some brown-nosing off-island undercover cop who wants to leapfrog ahead of **Ramone** when promotion time rolls around.



THE BUREAU OF HAPPINESS AND PRODUCTIVITY New Des Moines, North America

If you've read the story about poor Jef Moor, you know that the BHP are the guys who can essentially rape your brain until there's nothing left but a sociopathic slave. (Note to GMs: Don't Bonechill your PCs. Kill them, that's fine. Turning them into conscienceless monsters and siccing them on their former buddies may engender some ill will.)

The headquarters for this sinister organization is New Des Moines, in the middle of a blasted wasteland that used to be called the "Heartland of America." Things have changed: There's no *America* anymore and the heartland gets ripped to tatters by a plague of tornadoes every single year.

The weather in that part of the world is so bad that no one bothers to **try** to build anything aboveground. (Well, that's not entirely true. They do build structures called TWiGs: Temporary Wind Generators. These are big windmills that generate electricity until they get ripped up, pulverized and scattered across a couple hundred miles of "heartland." Building a TWiG that could survive the tornadoes was prohibitively expensive, so they just replace 'em every year. The new ones are supposed to be biodegradable.)

So New Des Moines is underground. All the train lines that come into New Des Moines (or NDM, as the residents lovelessly call it) are underground. All the houses are underground. The factories, the playgrounds, the schools, the discount shoe stores — all subterranean. You get the idea. It's a sunless, weatherless, joyless city of countless layers, strung together with elevators and shafts and miles of uncharted ductwork. At the bottom of it, like Satan at the base of Dante's Inferno, is the Bureau of

Happiness and Productivity. The fountainhead of Bonechills. The people who invented Productivity Drugs. They're not as flashy as the CDCA or as intimidating as Public Order, but make no mistake: The BHP is crucial to the continued success of the Buro.

The BHP crushes souls. That's its function. Unlike the Buro, they do it without feng shui. Unlike the CDCA, they don't need help from demons or ogres. The evil of the BHP is **completely** human, completely organic, 100% home grown. And it's spreading.

NDM, like everywhere else, is theoretically controlled by a centrally-appointed Buro governor. However, Governor Poussain was in office less than a year before he was engaged to Dr. April Mucosa, the director of the BTM. After a courtship that can most kindly (or ironically) be described as "whirlwind" they were married. (It was seventeen days, if you want a description that is neither **kind** nor ironic.) Within three months, he'd taken her advice about turning criminals over to the BHP for "attitude re-adjustment." Within a year, those ex-cons were policing the streets — they were the first Bonechills. By that point, Poussain was rarely seen in public without Mucosa (she kept her maiden name) by his side. It's widely believed that he has become a figurehead, that she is the real power, and that New Des Moines is an experimental blueprint of the next generation of Buro cities.

Already citizens are encouraged to **participate** in "Joy Treatments" designed to "alleviate the stresses of sunless life." At first, the treatments seemed to work fine. The people who had them sure did seem happier. As time wore on, however, their neighbors noticed a **kind** of brittleness to their happiness. Their smiles were more like grins, and even those gradually developed into fierce, desperate grimaces. They seemed less happy than hysterical, giggling at anything and everything.

Lots of people decided they'd rather be glum, so April is thinking of making the **treatments** mandatory. Should some high-minded PCs decide this is unacceptable, here's



some juicy bits you can fling at them as they try to blow up the BHP:

- The ductwork might seem like an escape route, but the Buro has special pinging, spidery robots they can deploy through the ducts. Imagine being stuck in a sack with a few biting rats and you get the idea what fighting the duct-bots is like.
- * There's a central shaft that's shared by about forty big elevators arrayed in two rows. These are going up and down on cables all the time, but it's perfectly possible to jump from the roof of one elevator to another, or to leap from one (greasy)cable to another. This is a good place to fight, as long as you don't get pinched between an up elevator and a down one as they pass.
- Another place one might escape to is the surface. After all, no one goes up there. Unfortunately, that's because they're real likely to emerge in the middle of a tornado. (Anyone see Twister? Feel like crossbreeding that with Shaolin Heartbreak?)
- A Bonechill is perfectly capable of grabbing a bystander off the street and telling a fleeing PC, "Halt or I'll kill him." They'll do it, too. Of course, if it doesn't work the first time, they won't keep doing it, but your PCs needn't know that.
- The BHP lab itself is not only filled with the standard burnables and breakables, it also contains squads of prisoners waiting to be processed. This nameless rabble can be released to wreak havoc.
- Particularly inquisitive PCs might find airborne "happy gas" somewhere in the BHP labs. If they manage to haul the heavy, awkward canisters up five levels to the ventilation chamber without being seen, and if they have some kind of air filtration equipment, they can give everyone in the lab a serious giggle fit (-3 to all AVs).

FLYING FORTRESS


Anywhere

A flying fortress is shaped vaguely like a thick missile with stubby wings on the sides and a tail like a commercial jet from the 1990s. There's two sets of giant treads on the underside of the main body, but generally it travels by flying, which is pretty remarkable when you realize it's almost exactly as wide and long as a football field. Height-wise it's about five stories.

The Buro has less than twenty flying fortresses (which are officially known as Superconducting Antigravity Fire Platforms, or SCAF-PLATs) and that's plenty, since a dozen can take an area the size of Acapulco and rid it of all life in less than an hour. In the case of Acapulco, it took them forty-seven minutes to turn Mexico's Riviera into a black, lifeless scar. Microbes had blown back in within minutes, but for a while that area was as dead as the surface of the moon.

Needless to say, the Buro only takes these out of mothballs when there's serious harm to be done. If Tanbi Guiawu (Backfor Seconds, p. 30) got loose in 2056, or Kun Chau (FengShui, p. 225) became a menace, the Floating Fortresses would go into action. Otherwise, they're used to erase pesky towns (as in "The Cancer Factory") or to make a point about BuroMil's uncontested might (as in the reference to them in "Fist of Shiva").

There are five floors inside a SCAF-PLAT. The lowest is mostly armor and downward-facing weapons: three GOBS (p. 54), six Hellharrows in turrets, and six missile launchers each holding 72 Woodchucks (p. 57). It also has two hangars, each containing a grav-car. (Grav-cars are basically flying cars with a Hellharrower, a Blue Spear and eight Woodchuck missiles. They'll be covered in more detail in Golden Comeback.) This floor also has the controls for the iris portal that conceals or reveals the plasma vent (which I'll describe a bit later).



The second level up houses the vast superconducting circuitry needed to keep this behemoth aloft. Superconductors only work at zero degrees Celsius or below — so while the whole SCAF-PLAT is freezing cold, this floor is even colder, usually 10-15 degrees below zero. Keeping the floors and walls de-iced is quite a challenge.

The next level up, the core, is the command level, housing the cockpit and the radio shack, as well as the **kitchen**, tiny mess hall and cramped sleeping quarters.

The fourth level houses the fusion generator. This is the warmest level — most of it's a tolerable room temperature, and as you get close to the fusion core (which is towards the front) it actually gets very hot. This is also where one would find the fire controls for the plasma vent (I know, I know — I'll get to it soon).

The fifth (and top) level has two more GOBS, four more Hellharrows and six more missile launchers. It also has a four hangars, each of which contains a SPUD-U.

Reading through the armament countdown you're probably **thinking** "Yeah, that's a lot, but I don't see how they sterilized Acapulco." That's because there's one more weapon on a flying fortress: the dreaded plasma vent.

Here's how the plasma vent works. There's a big empty space in the middle of the SCAF-PLAT, about twenty feet across. It goes from the bottom level all the way through to the fourth, where it's hooked into the fusion reactor. This empty column is basically the barrel of a downward-facing plasma gun.

It takes about ten minutes to warm up the plasma vent. During that time, the portal at the bottom of the lowest level is opened up. When the vent is first fired it's set on its lowest level of power. Otherwise the heat could overcome the superconductor's cooling elements, causing the whole fortress to crash. As the power to the vent is increased, more energy is diverted from one set of cooling circuits to another: Instead of keeping superconductors cold, that power now serves to insulate the crew of the

fortress from the heat of its own weapon. As the plasma vent is being fired, the whole platform gradually gets hotter and hotter. Diverting this energy means that there isn't enough energy for the antigravity gear anymore, but when the plasma vent is being fired that's okay — like a rocket engine, it provides upward thrust against the vehicle's base. If the captain **skillfully** maintains equilibrium between the decreasing antigravity and the increasing plasma thrust, the fortress remains balanced on the top of the thrust, like a ballerina on one toe. This means that the plasma vent has to be powered down slowly as well, with the energy being gradually diverted back to the superconductors and gravity gear.

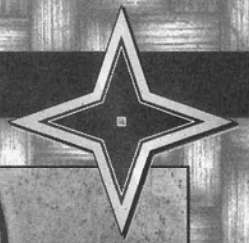
One plasma vent on full power can melt a skyscraper. Even worse, if you arrange twelve flying fortresses like a net above a city, they can ignite the atmosphere for miles around, creating a firestorm that sucks all the oxygen out of the area and burns it. If you're lucky, you smother before you fry. Happy day.

If your PCs learn one of these is making its way towards a town, make sure they realize that (unless they stop it) it's fiery death for every resident. Obviously, their only course of action is to somehow get into the flying fortress and sabotage it before it can wreak havoc.

Things That Can Go Wrong

Lucky for the PCs, a device as big and intricate as a SCAF-PLAT is plenty susceptible to tinkering. Since this is *Feng Shui* they have to work for it, but it can be done.

Disabling the cooling circuits on the second floor will cause the superconductors to heat up, **choking** off the power to the antigravity nodes and causing the flying fortress to drop like . . . well, like the many tons of dead metal it is. Players who get at the second floor and do 1,000 points of Damage to all the coils and wires and such can cause the SCAF-PLAT to splat. But that's quite a lot of carnage, even for PCs. Disabling the cooling circuits from



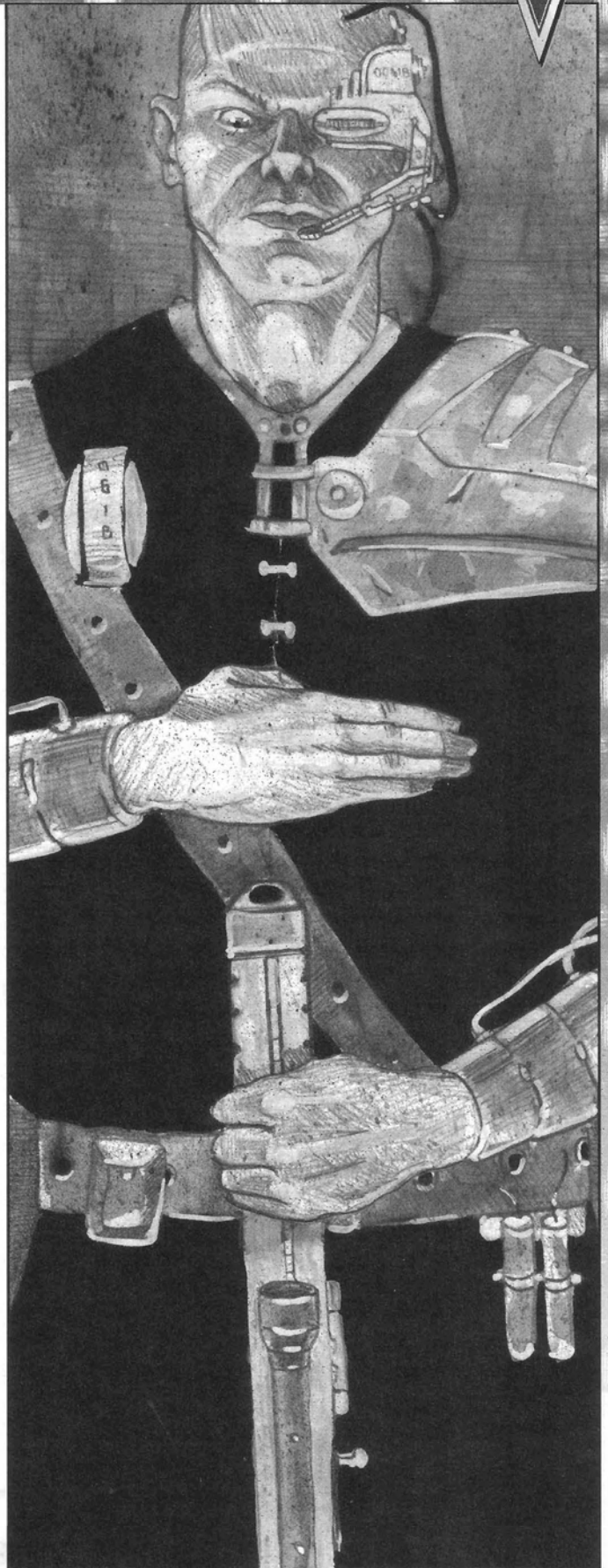
the central circuit junction can be done in one sequence with a successful Fix-It roll against Difficulty 12. Of course, this can only be done once the central circuit junction has been found. Finding it should involve plenty of running around and fighting mooks.

All this is done from the second floor, which means that the PCs have to deal with patches of icy floor, steam everywhere and possible AV penalties from the chill. When they get to the guts of the cooling system, there are hoses and pipes full of coolant that can cause flesh to shatter in seconds (16 Damage if it gets on you). Furthermore, if the supercooled metal in this area is suddenly heated up (by a fire blast or a deathsaber or anything else really hot) it snaps, doing 15 points of Damage to the PC with the lowest Fortune score.

The easier way to make the cooling system fail is to take it offline, but that can only be done from the cockpit on the third floor. Doing so requires a sequence and a Fix-It roll against Difficulty 6 from the commander's control panel. (Basically, you just tell the computer you're turning on the plasma vent – but you're not.) The third floor is the best guarded, of course.

Another way to blow up a SCAF-PLAT is to turn on the plasma vent and then either (1) prevent the cooling systems from switching over to plasma shielding, or (2) get the plasma vent **working** at full power and then shut it off suddenly while the antigravity is still offline and the ship is balanced on the plasma column, or (3) turn the vent on with the vent portal closed. *All* these can be done from the commander's chair, each taking two sequences and Fix-It rolls against Difficulty 6.

PCs can also do (1) from the second floor. This requires a Fix-It roll against Difficulty 10 to find the auxiliary control panel (which may be as inconveniently placed as the GM desires) and a sequence and Fix-It roll against Difficulty 10 to give the proper instructions. If the PCs do this when the vent is already preparing to fire, they're set: They have sixty seconds to get away from the flying fortress before it explodes.



(Most likely, they'll want to hijack a grav-car, since the SPUD-Us are farther away and only hold one person each.) If the fire sequence hasn't begun, they have to go up to the fourth floor and start the venting sequence by finding *that* control panel and jimmying it (same time requirements and Difficulties). Then they have the same thin minute to get the hell out of Dodge — and two more floors to get through.

If the PCs are doing (2), it probably means the Buro has already made ash out of its target, but if the PCs can find the fourth floor control panel and sabotage it (and no, just shooting it won't do) the SCAF-PLAT starts falling *immediately*. Start slowly counting down from twenty to one. That's how long they have to get to some kind of aircraft and get away before impact. Good luck: As soon as the platform lurches and starts to drop, anything that can fly on its own is at a premium.

Option (3) is the simplest. The PCs have to find a *different* auxiliary control panel and make a harder Fix-It roll on it (Difficulty 13) since the machine really wasn't built to do what the PCs are asking. Then they can go upstairs, find the plasma vent controls, and activate those as usual. The PCs have a fairly leisurely ninety seconds to get away if they *try* this option, because the platform doesn't crash until it's exploded in midair. Of course, it makes mincemeat out of anything in the mile underneath it, but war is hell.

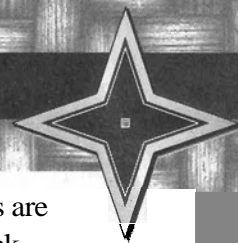
Many of these options require the PCs to do some screwing around on the fourth floor, which (like the second and third) has some unique hazards. It's incredibly hot, for one thing, so PCs who get flung against certain machines may take extra damage from light surface burns. The tubes and pipes up here automatically reseal because they're full of plasma. If holed, they repair themselves within a tiny fraction of a second. Nonetheless, some plasma escapes—enough to do 10 Damage to everyone in the room.

These are only a few of the ways PCs may try to blow up flying fortresses. If they come up with inventive (or not so inventive) ideas

of their own, let them go for it and succeed when it seems they've worked hard enough. If they decide to overload the fusion core, or shut the engine down completely, or destroy all the antigravity units on the left side of the ship so that it starts spinning in place and making everyone inside nauseous, that's *great*. Why should the GM do all the work? Let the PCs figure out how to sabotage one of these and just play along. As long as it's hard, they'll probably like it.

Some cool things that can happen while fighting on a flying fortress include:

- If the PCs (or anyone else) sets something ablaze, the fire control system starts pumping out foam that sticks to you and slips when it touches anything else that's been foamed. It also obscures vision quite a bit.
- The lights go out. This is far more likely to happen if the PCs have been promiscuously blowing things up — or if the Buro thugs have had enough time to go get their night-vision goggles. . .
- An explosion or other rupture on the bottom floor can leave the PCs fighting around a gaping hole, just begging to have someone tossed down it to the hard ground, hundreds of feet below. Fleeing PCs on any floor other than the fifth might open a door and find that they've discovered a maintenance hatch into the plasma vent. If the iris is closed, they can drop down and get into the first floor. If it's open, they have a short time to make a break for it before the plasma comes pouring down.
- Most of the corridors in a SCAF-PLAT are very narrow, meaning that smart PCs can set themselves up to fight one-on-one against their (almost certainly outclassed) opponents.
- A clever BuroMil technician might follow the PCs through the ship by tracking them with the intercom, the temperature monitors and all the cameras the Buro uses to make sure its soldiers aren't smoking on



duty. This technician (who should probably be named) can make life hell for them by locking doors, setting off fire alarms right next to their ears, turning off the lights, telling soldiers where they're hiding – use your imagination. While doing this, of course, he can taunt them with impunity over the loudspeakers.

CDCA RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT FACILITY #1 Ad Dammam, Saudi Arabia

This is where it all started for the CDCA: one small, secret lab where Dao and Boatman could pursue their research unencumbered by a lot of oversight. It's also a decent feng shui site, though nothing like what Boatman would attune to later. R&DFac1 doesn't see a lot of bleeding edge research these days: That's all done in the Netherworld, at the Biomass Reprocessing Facility. But Boatman still has a soft spot for this place in that hard little nubbin he uses as a heart. That's why he decided it would be perfect for the CDCA's Museum of Abomination Research. Although "Museum" is probably less accurate than "Zoo."

There's over a dozen examples of different early (unnamed, weak and obsolete) types of abominations here, kept in a variety of secure (and generally unpleasant) habitats that simulate the various Underworld regions they initially came from. (Examples include the *Skinned Alive Forest* and the *Ocean of Boiling Blood* – you should see the anticoagulant budget for that exhibit.) There are also some more impressive critters that, for one reason and another, can't be used in the secret war. More on them later.

R&DFac1 is out in the middle of the desert, so getting there is something of a pain. Getting back after blowing it up could be

even worse, unless careful preparations are made to supply water, salt and sunblock.

The good thing about blowing up R&DFac1 is that if you let the abominations out, one of two things is going to happen. Either they're going to do so much damage to the **surrounding** landscape that the building can't be rebuilt or the Buro will send in so much firepower to take them out that the building can't be rebuilt. The fact that Boatman is still attuned is just icing on the cake.

The facility itself is a big dome set in a picturesque valley. There's a turreted GOBS (p. 54) on either side of the canyon's lip. Once you get past that, there's a **twisty** road down the canyon wall. The road is carefully monitored, has no cover and can easily be sprayed with bullets by the turreted Hellharrower in front of the dome. Probably easier to rappel down the cliffs.

Inside the main part of the dome, you've got your basic zoo, but with abominations. Come see the fabulous Blood Squid, modified for anti-submarine operations! Behold the Earth Swimmer – so dangerous it's kept permanently sedated except at feeding time! Check out the ferocious Tengu – now retrained to use a VM sword instead of its ancient katana! Marvel at the Inside-Out Demon – the infiltrator so insidious that even its creators couldn't keep track of it! Gape in slack-jawed disgust at the Flying Bladder! These scary beasts are kept in the dome's big chamber, in their individual habitats. There are paths between the exhibits, just as in any zoo you're familiar with.

There's also your standard basement labs full of things that can snap, crackle and maim. Finally, you've got five or six dozen well-trained soldiers, along with their barracks, mess halls and recreation commons.

Some nifty things that could happen at R&DFac1 include:

- The Blood Squid is in a tank that has a glassed-in underground viewing chamber. If this glass is broken (requiring 50 points of Damage before it starts leaking and 75 before it completely implodes) the thou-

The Blood Squid

A huge squid demon with fifteen foot tentacles — only instead of normal suckers, its got little tooth-lined lamprey mouths. It's kept in a huge aquarium full of blood.

Attributes: Bod 20, Chi 0 (Mag 10), Mnd 3, Ref 5

Skills: Arcanowave Device 12, Creature Powers 15

Arcanowave Shticks: Feedback Enhancer, Juicer, Neural Stimulator, Pulser

Creature Shticks: Amphibian, Tentacles x2

Attacks: The Blood Squid attacks with its tentacles, using its Creature Powers skill. Damage is Outcome + 20.

Inside-Out Demon

The **Inside-Out** Demon usually looks like a moderately-attractive young woman. In this shape, she has the first set of stats listed below. However, she can split down the center of her chest and turn herself inside out — her ribs fold out like some kind of horrible blossoming flower, her legs and arms shrink and then re-extend with the red meat on the outside, encircled by a framework of bone. In this hideous form, she uses the second set of stats. It's only in this form that she can use the Brain Shredder and Blood Drain abilities.

If she drains blood from someone in her inside-out form, she can invert herself again, only this time she takes the shape of the person she drained. She looks **just** like him **and** has his memories **and** stats (except for Mind). This makes her a tremendous intelligence asset. Unfortunately for the Buro, her ability to turn herself inside-out made it easy for her body to reject the Neural Grepper that keeps most abominations servile. So now she's imprisoned and on display.

Human Appearance

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 5 (For 0), Mnd 7, Ref 7

Skills: Arcanowave Device 10, Creature Powers 15, Martial Arts 14, Seduction 12, Deceit 15

Arcanowave Shticks: Feedback Enhancer, Pulser

Creature Shticks: Transformation (special, see description), Insubstantial

Attacks: Punch (6), Kick (7)

Inside-Out Appearance

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 5 (For 0), Mnd 7, Ref 5

Skills: Arcanowave Device 10, Creature Powers 15, Martial Arts 14, Seduction 12, Deceit 15

Creature Shticks: Brain Shredder x2, Blood Drain (see above), Transformation (see above), Insubstantial

Arcanowave Shticks: Feedback Enhancer, Pulser

Attacks: Punch (8), Kick (9), Brain Shredder (10, reduced by Chi, For, or Mag instead of Tgh)

Cybertengu

The tengu is a Japanese mountain demon whose skill with the sword is (reputedly) unsurpassed. This is a squat, burly humanoid with bright red skin, a bulbous nose, and coarse hair the blue of old antifreeze. This particular specimen was machine-gunned during capture and slap-patched back together, so he's got nasty round scars **all** over his body.

All tengu have a unique mirroring ability: Their Martial Arts skill is exactly as high as that of the person they're attacking. The Buro thought that if they coupled this power with a high damage weapon (the VM sword) and a few other enhancements (notably the Neural Stimulator) it would be more than a match for any Guiding Hand fighter. This did not turn out to be the case, thanks to the Guiding Hand's kung fu trickery. The cybertengu was shelved as an oddity.

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 5, Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Arcanowave Device 10, Creature Powers 10

Creature Shticks: Martial Arts skill is always equal to that of current opponent.

Arcanowave Shticks: Variable Mass Sword, Neural Stimulator, Helix Rethreader

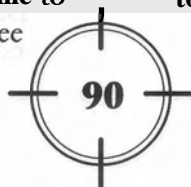
Attacks: Punch (9), Kick (10), VM sword (14)

Flying Bladder

The story of the disgusting and repugnant flying bladder goes back several years to an encounter between the Buro and a giant demon named Yang Luo. This was one of the earliest encounters the Buro had with a truly fierce demon in the Netherworld, and after it shredded two squads of monster hunters, they fell back on their standard **doctrine:** Overwhelming Force. They succeeded in **blowing** Yang Luo into shreds, but even **that** was insufficient to kill him. **So** powerful was the demon's malevolent personality that even the organs and shreds of its body were alive and **individually** sentient. The legs ran off back through the mouth of Guiyu Zui and into the Underworld, but in the process had to agree to **perform** one task for the Lotus at a later date. One **arm** was captured

sands of gallons of blood that form the squid's habitat pour out and flood the basement of the facility. Also, the Squid gets out and starts wrecking things. While it starts drowning the sequence the glass breaks, given its high Toughness, it takes a while to go down. It gets three sequences of free

ramp **its** Toughness **and** **it** **can** **soak** its drowning damage. In the fourth sequence the drowning damage has gone up to 40 points, so it takes 20 Wounds automatically. The next sequence, the damage goes to 80, giving it 60 mote Wounds. We'll just





by the Lotus in a similar fashion. The other arm made its way to the Hub where it was blasted into gravy by the Pledged. The intestines slithered into the Netherworld's Sunless Sea, where they've been a navigational menace ever since. The heart was captured by Ming I, who later used it to create the Molten Heart. The fate of Yang Luo's merciless head is a mystery to this day.

The architects got his bladder. (Kidneys too, but "The Flying Bladder" sounded better than "The Flying Bladder and Kidneys" or "The Flying Lower Urinary Tract.") It's about eight feet tall, four feet wide, and has developed its own eyes and mouth. Once they stuck wings on it the Flying Bladder would be ready for troop support operations — or so they thought. While the Neural Grepper worked as planned (that is, popping the creature's brain like a zit when it disobeyed orders) the Buro learned to their horror that the Bladder could somehow grow new brains. Since it was chronically disobedient, each new brain needed a new Grepper, **and they** were losing a few officers every time the Bladder decided to go off the leash, they eventually washed their hands of the whole problem **and** stuck the damn thing in the Museum of Abomination Research.

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 7 (For 0), Mnd 2, Ref 9
 Skills: Arcanowave Device 13, Creature Powers 13
 Creature Shticks: Regeneration x5, Inevitable Comeback x3, Foul Spew x3 (all three varieties).
 Arcanowave Shticks: Tracer Resin Projector, Aerial Mobility Unit
 Attacks: Bite (9)

Earth Swimmer

This beast resembles the blood squid in a way, but only in the way a Saint Bernard resembles a teacup Chihuahua. Its vaguely pyramidal body is about twenty feet tall, with an eye on each of the three triangular faces. The bottom face has a mouth which few people survive examining. It can slither along on its bottom face the way a snail moves on its one foot. Each point of the bottom face has a tentacle, too, tipped with a broad paddle of flesh. These fifty foot paddles have tremendous digging power — they can go through concrete as easily as soft clay. They can also grab people and shove them under the thing's body, where they will gradually be worked into the mouth and digested.

The Earth Swimmer's bulk takes up the majority of the display space in the Museum, and it's constantly kept in the numbing blue glow of an industrial-sized Wave Suppressor.

Initially, this thing was supposed to win the secret war for the

Architects. It's big, it's strong and it swims through the ground for Pete's sake — could you ask for a better way to eliminate feng shui sites? Unfortunately, the answer to that last question turned out to be "yes." Something better would be big, strong, capable of ground swimming — and with a brain small enough to be effectively killed by a Neural Grepper. The Earth Swimmer is so big that a charge large enough to kill it would weigh so much it would be unable to use its special movement abilities which are, after all, the point. They tried a few missions with a supersized Neural Grepper, but when the Earth Swimmer had to tote around half a ton of explosives it slowed down quite a bit (plus, no one wanted to stand too close to it). By the time it got to its objective, the Buro's enemies had either fled (burning the site behind them) or fortified themselves heavily. Either way, it wasn't worth it.

Now the Earth Swimmer sleeps in the museum. The Wave Suppressor is the only thing keeping the museum safe: The swimmer wouldn't fit into the facility until they'd removed the Grepper.

Attributes: Bod 20, Chi 7 (For 0), Mnd 2, Ref 5
 Skills: Arcanowave Device 13, Creature Powers 13
 Arcanowave Shticks: Feedback Enhancer
 Creature Shticks: Tentacles x3, Amphibious (only through ground, not water)

Attacks: Tentacular crush (21)

Unique Shtick:

Devour: The Earth Swimmer can grab someone with its tentacles and shove him under its body, attempting to suck him into its gullet. A victim of this takes no damage. . . initially. It takes a full sequence for the Earth Swimmer to move its prey to its mouth. During that sequence the hero may spend 3 shots to make a Strength check, Difficulty 15. If he succeeds even once, he gets a reprieve and temporarily fights his way away from the mouth. If he succeeds three times in one sequence, he actually manages to squirm out from under the Earth Swimmer. If the sequence goes by and he doesn't get at least one success — gulp. Instant death. Sorry. Go directly to the alimentary tract, do not pass Go, do not collect \$200. At least one success but less than three keeps the victim alive until the next round, when he can try again. To add insult to injury, those under the Earth Swimmer can't make Martial Arts or Guns attacks while being sucked in.

asst d it back : and can be trained on the Earth Swimmer or on other exhibits. This is an earlier model of the one used in "The Cancer Factory" (p.96) so every sequence spent plugged into it counts as two sequences for the tation however, s knocked

out for as long as it's trained on them. Just remember that it will only knock out one at a time.

- While the beasts here are nasty,, they're just as likely to fight each other and the guards as they are prone to munch on the PCs. Of course, the guards know this too.

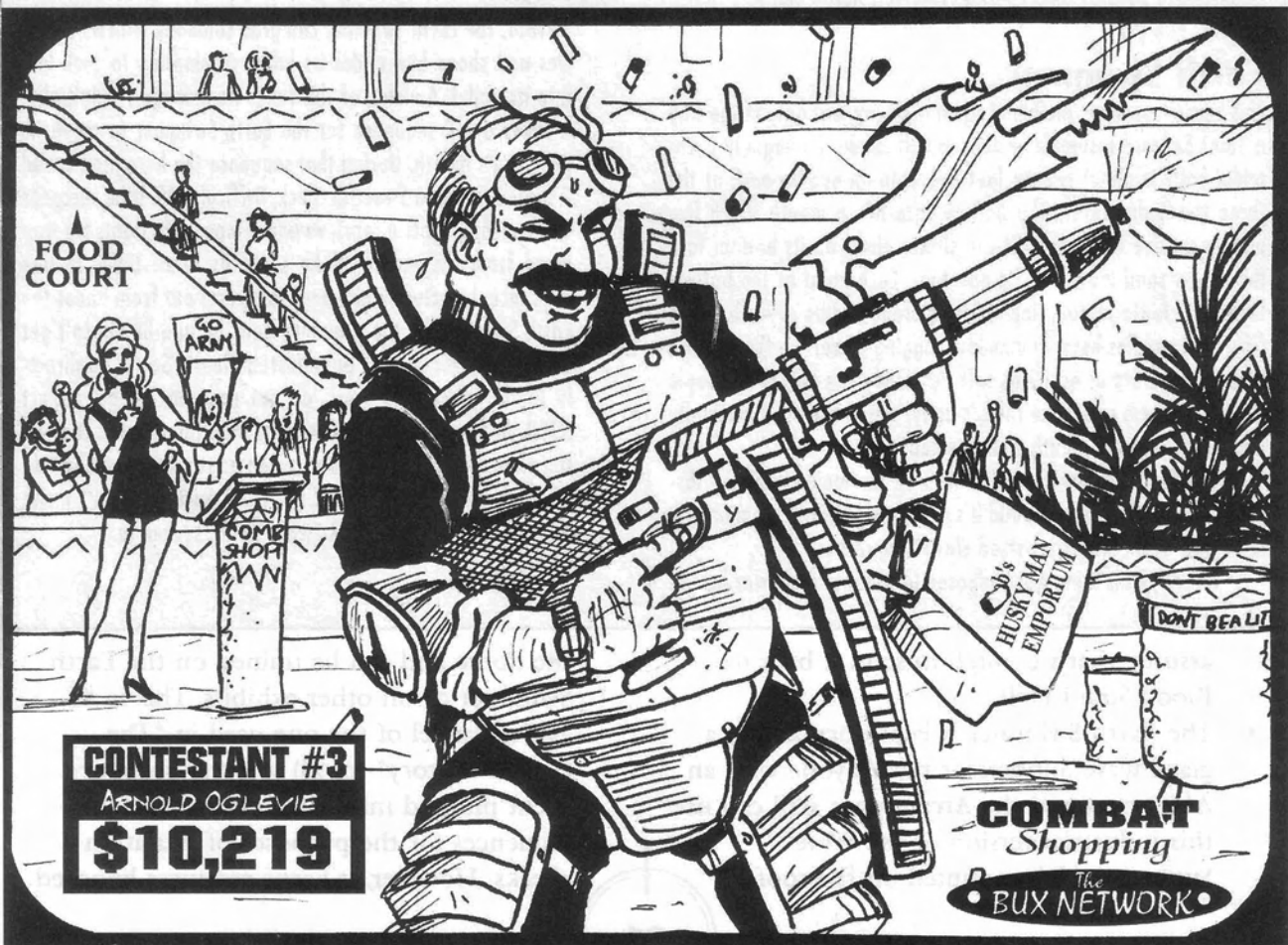
THE SET OF COMBAT SHOPPING

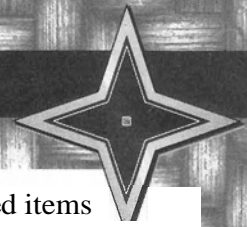
Hollywood, North America

Haven't you ever watched "The Price is Right" and thought "You know, this would be a lot more entertaining if the contestants were heavily armed and trying to kill each other"? Oh sure, blood sports are repugnant to many

people in the 1990s. (Well — they're repugnant to most people in the 1990s who have college degrees and who don't think that "Granta" is that little country Ronald Reagan invaded.) Nonetheless, the idea of **combat-as-entertainment-spectacle** is already present in the era's pro wrestling. Furthermore, the idea of spicing up game shows with a dash (or with two full cups) of sadism is well established in Japan by 1996. Within sixty years, those twin seeds have grown together into an entire sub-genre of **ultra-violent game shows**. The most popular is "Combat Shopping."

Here's how the show works. A number of contestants are given a starting sum of "seed money." They can use this to buy weapons and armor. Anything they don't spend, they get to keep (if they survive)so greedy contestants are often comically under-protected. Once they've got their gear, they're simultaneously released together into a big set (about which more will





be said soon) full of durable consumer goods — diamond rings, fancy clothes, sporting equipment, home electronics, etc. These all have big price tags on them. They're given a variable time span (usually about seven to ten minutes) to grab everything they can. Each item they nab increases their score by its dollar amount. If they destroy an item, their score decreases by half its dollar amount. Any item they take from another player not only decreases that player's score, it increases their own score by double the item's value. Obviously, the way to get a decisive advantage is to knock down the other competitors and steal their stuff.

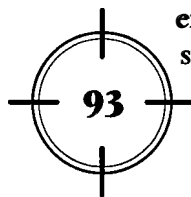
This is easier said than done, because there are dangers on the set beyond those posed by homicidally greedy dental assistants and telephone sales clerks. The set looks like a department store, but this department store was apparently designed by the architect who built those temples Indiana Jones was always running around in. One prize in a dozen is booby-trapped, and the best prizes are usually protected by hazards.

At the end of each round the players cash in their prizes and can re-invest in more weapons, so there tends to be a pretty nasty escalation between the first and last rounds. However, money spent on weapons isn't kept at the end of the show, so it's possible to win the first couple rounds, spend everything on guns and armor, get knocked silly first thing in the third round, and lose all the money you won.

After a couple years on the air, Combat Shopping became so popular that the network created a pro Combat Shopping league. The rules are a little different for professionals, but it's pretty much the same game. PCs may get entangled with the amateur version (which is still very popular, largely for the comic effect of watching accountants and vat stirrers hack at each other with flails) or a more serious professional tournament.

Either way, there are some cool things that can happen:

- Some of the most frequently placed items on the Combat Shopping set are TV sets. Naturally, these are all on and **all** tuned to Combat Shopping. Smart contestants use them to keep track of the competition. Dumb ones get distracted as they watch themselves getting pummeled live, nationwide.
- One set has a second floor (more like a large balcony) with all the really good prizes on the top. The easiest way up is an **escalator** — but once someone reaches the top, the escalator (there's only one, and it goes up) starts going faster and faster. As this happens, panels of the balcony floor start dropping out. So if you're at the top, you have to get down the escalator — **outrunning** its "up" velocity while you're a sitting duck for shooters at the bottom — before the entire floor collapses. If you're **underneath** the balcony, you also run the risk of having a ceiling panel drop on you.
- The "trapdoor in the floor" is an old gag, but Combat Shopping has spiced it up by putting a trampoline at the bottom. Since the trapdoor opens onto a ten foot drop, it's very important to bounce well — **otherwise** you're stuck.
- One of the cheapest weapons (and therefore one of the most popular) is the blackout bola. This is something like a deeply wimpeddown version of a blackout sack. Two weighted balls are connected by a meter of black cord. You spin it and throw it. When either of the balls hits something, the cord expands, sticky and opaque, going from a centimeter thick to ten times that size in an instant. It quickly starts to **harden**. It's not very strong, but anyone hit by one has all his shot costs increased by one. If it hits the head, it can blind as well.
- Another set is loaded exclusively with very heavy items, but every three meter square of floor has a big red button in the center. That's an **on/off** switch for a gravity **nullifier** under that floor panel. If you can get the switch turned on, it's a lot easier to carry



your loot. Naturally, it's very attractive to turn off your opponents' panels. Finally (just to keep contestants moving) any panel that's occupied for more than one sequence gets switched to *antigravity*, pinning the contestant to the ceiling until he (or someone else) hits the red button again to turn the antigravity off. Of course, the ceiling is fifteen feet up, so it's quite a drop — unless the contestant can shoot the button once to turn off the antigravity, then shoot it *again* while falling to turn on the *null* gravity. Incidentally, it takes 6 shots to fall from the ceiling to the floor.

CDCA SECURE FACILITY #112

Bonengel, Australia

Bonengel Australia is way out in the middle of nowhere, which is why the CDCA uses it to store captured Innerwalkers. (They used to keep them in the Biomass Reprocessing Center, until one prisoner too many used Shaping skills to escape.)

SecFac112 has all the normal elements of a 2056 prison, including Larsonite floors and zipperhead operations. However, it also serves as an experimental laboratory for the CDCA. They see this as their best chance to figure out chi powers, sorcery and all the other weirdness that makes the secret war so interesting. Sometimes they interrogate. Sometimes they vivisect. Sometimes they create fake opportunities for escape so that prisoners are tempted to reveal their powers. Other times they just get fed up, kill the prisoners and see what secrets they can recreate from the dead brain's memory structures. (Memory scoping isn't an exact science, but they've had some successes.)

This is where PCs eventually end up if they're captured and don't escape quickly. Some cool things that can happen while they're in SecFac112 are:

- A fight in the showers, complete with steam and slippery tile floors. This would make a great decoy before a jailbreak, since the showers are one of the few areas of the facility that don't have Larsonite floors. (Larsonite gets moldy when wet. Plus there's an electrocution hazard.)
- A sorcerer who can toss lightning bolts around can make those funky polymer floors sit up and do tricks.
- While the floors can turn sticky and trap you, most of the cells have your standard bars, with cross-braces to keep people from squeezing out between them. This makes it possible (though difficult) to move around without touching the floor. Since most of the corridors in SecFac112 are cramped and narrow, it's possible to travel through those without touching the floor, too — if you have superlative acrobatic skills.

Incidentally, the SecFac imprisons both men and women, but they're kept segregated.

ICE STATION YVES Antarctica

This is basically Paranoia Base. If there's ever any kind of serious shooting war in 2056, this is where Bonengel, Olivet and the rest of the Buro brass will come to hide out. (Boatman is supposed to be there too, but privately he plans to run to the Biomass Reprocessing Center if things get hairy. Incidentally, that'll come as no big surprise to Bonengel, who has a hidden part of his brain busy figuring out what to do if Boatman crosses him.)

The crackest of crack troops are stationed here, doing cold weather training and getting themselves ready for just about anything. Sometimes their officers requisition rogue abominations to hunt among the snow drifts and ice chasms, but they don't get to go on such hunts often: The CDCA is notoriously



stingy with even rogue abominations, who are regarded as valuable spare parts.

While Ice Station Yves serves as a **bolthole** if things go wrong, there's offensive training going on as well. Bonengel is well aware that Antarctica is the zone of death in most past junctures. He therefore sees it as the perfect place to build secure bases. (In the **1990s**, the Ascended have beaten him to the punch, but he doesn't know it yet.) His troops are training themselves to build bases and survive in the least hospitable place on Earth. ("Worse than Detroit?" "I'm afraid so.") When the logistics are in place, he plans to send them back to establish a polar base in the Θ juncture, where they can quietly step up monster hunting – not to mention exploring feng shui sites outside of mainland China.

If your PCs see some reason to mess with the Architects' invasion plans, here are some things that can happen during their assault:

- People outside without extensive protective gear take one Wound Point per shot. This damage ignores Toughness. Even a nice down coat from the '90s isn't going to cut the mustard in Antarctica. Characters also

need heavy boots, thick mittens (preferably battery powered ones) and something to keep their faces covered. Oh, and if it's a sunny day they go blind in one sequence if they don't have sunglasses.

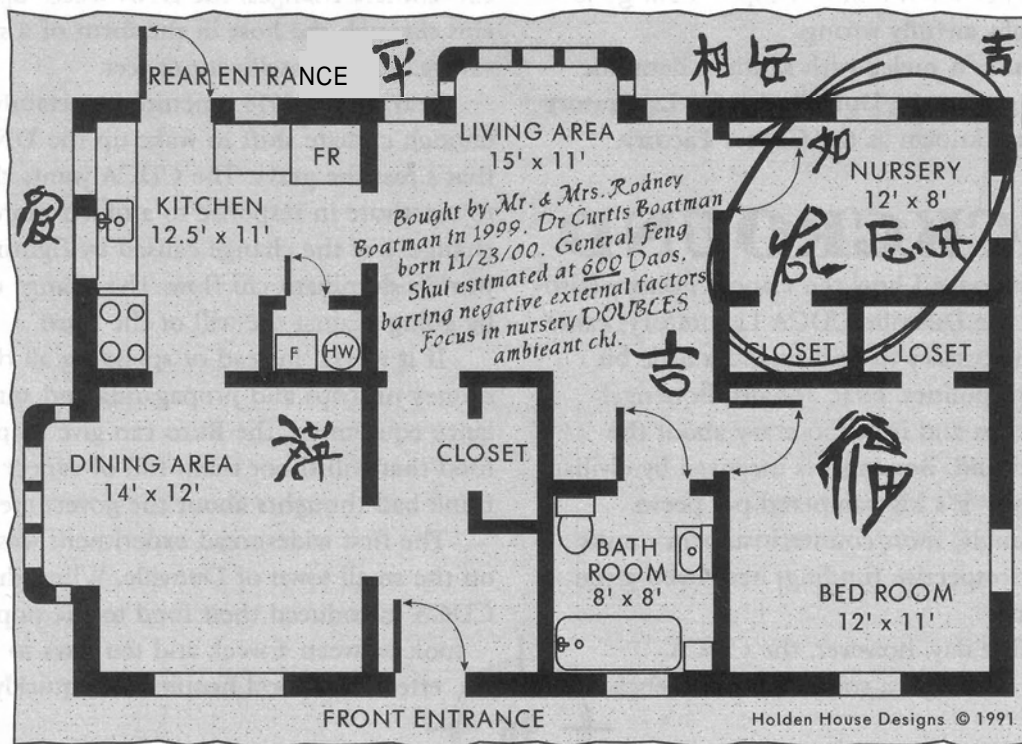
- If a storm whips up, they take the Wound Point per shot even **with** really good protection. Without, it goes up to two per shot.
- There are a lot of crevasses in Antarctic ice, often filled with light, billowy snow. You can be strolling along, la la la, and suddenly plunge off a hundred foot drop.

BTM HQ

Geneva, Europe

This is where the Bureau of Tactical Management's headquarters is located. Where the big brass are when they're not away on **jun-**kets. Where security forces patrol the streets in platoon force. Where they store three flying fortresses when they're not being used somewhere else. Where all manner of secret Buro plans dwell within miles of computer banks.

Have fun!



The Cancer Factory

MIND CONTROL, DEMON GOO, AND A MISSING MUNICIPALITY

If your characters haven't figured out the Architects of the Flesh are Evil-With-A-Big-E, this scenario will tip them off. "The Cancer Factory" is designed for fairly low-powered characters – those just starting out, or a small number of more powerful characters.

Premise: The small town of Dunville has gone missing.

The Twist: The citizens of Dunville were the victims of an evil CDCA experiment gone horribly, awfully wrong.

The Climax: A melee with sentient demonic DNA goo at the Dunville CDCA Laboratory – better known as the Cancer Factory.

BACKGROUND

To understand how the Cancer Factory (also known as the Dunville CDCA Laboratory) came to be it's necessary to understand a little bit about Buro politics. First, Johann Bonengel likes the cops and isn't too crazy about the CDCA. Second, Bonengel is incensed by civilian insurgency – it's his pampered pet peeve. Unsurprisingly, most counterinsurgency tasks (and their respective funding) have been given to PubOrd.

One fine day, however, the CDCA promised Bonengel a solution to the rebel-

lion problem that was cheaper, faster, more certain and less costly in Buro lives. Bonengel was dubious, but then they told him it would whack Innerwalkers too. That was just what Bonengel wanted to hear, so he funded the research and the Dunville CDCA Laboratory was built.

The theory is that demon DNA can be harvested, nuked into dormancy by specially tuned arcanowaves and added to food. As long as the "mystic climate" around the food stays the same, the DNA remains dormant. However, if this climate changes, the DNA wakes up and rips through the host in the form of a swift, savage, almost intelligent cancer.

Leaving the 2056 juncture is certainly enough climate shift to wake up the DNA, but that's just the gravy. The CDCA wants the DNA to reactivate in response to a much more subtle change, like the change caused by fighting the world's dominant chi flow: The change caused by going against the will of the Buro.

If it works, instead of spending all that money on cops and propaganda and surveillance equipment, the Buro can give its people food that will shoot them full of cancer if they think bad thoughts about the government.

The first widespread experiment was done on the small town of Dunville. When the CDCA introduced their food to the populace, it took between a week and ten days to take effect. The local hospital was quickly over-



whelmed. When it became apparent that their experiment had become an epidemic, the CDCA shunted the railroads around the town and called in PubOrd strike choppers to round up the citizens that were still mobile enough to consider **making** a run for it. The citizens tried to riot and invade the lab, but the PubOrd Floating Fortress that was assigned to the **situation** eradicated the rioters before they made it out of town. The next batch of PubOrd officers that were sent in didn't have guns, they had bulldozers and backhoes to bury the dead.

Once the magnitude of the catastrophe was obvious, the CDCA got the Buro's Bureau of Truth and Ideological Hygiene to delete Dunville. It's vanished from maps, trains don't stop there anymore and everyone who lived there disappeared from the phone lists overnight. Relatives were told a variety of stories — death reports were issued about train wrecks, an outbreak of the Melter and random Jammer violence.

THE ROAD TO DUNVILLE

GETTING INVOLVED

How do you get your characters to a site that does not officially exist? Here are some ideas.

- A confused and concerned relative wonders why Aunt May's body wasn't shipped out east to be buried like she wanted. When the relative investigates, she finds out that the whole **town** is gone. This relative could be a friend of any character who hails from 2056.
- One of the player characters inherits something from a relative who lived in Dunville, but there's a legal complication with claiming the valuable heirloom: The town it was in has vanished.
- The Ascended have found out about **Dunville**. They steer the characters in

its direction in the hopes that it will ignite hatred of the Architects in them (which it probably will, assuming they're largely decent folk).

- The CDCA lab is built on a minor feng shui site. Anyone who's seized it in an earlier juncture might want to pick it up in a later time frame as well. In the **1990s**, the site is an isolated family ranch outside of Dunville, Montana. Attunement (in any juncture) not only provides two extra experience points per session, it makes the characters totally invisible to income taxes. (They don't get the forms, and no one investigates. So much for "death and taxes," eh?)
- A small handful of people escaped Dunville before the CDCA shut down the rails. They told some people their whole town had been dosed with cancer. Despite the best efforts of the Bureau of Truth and Ideological Hygiene, rumors stubbornly persist. There might even be a survivor around.
- Though commercial lines no longer go to Dunville, freight trains to the CDCA lab still come through monthly. Characters who hijack a train to flee an undesirable situation may find themselves in a **stickier** situation than the one they left. Or, a commuter train might get sent on the wrong route by mistake. Bureaucratic screw-up, or Jammer trick? Your call.
- The divinations of the Lotus reveal a danger to Innerwalkers in Dunville. Rather than risk their own valuable troops, they give some irritating enemies nightly visions of great wealth (and some danger) awaiting in the Dunville of 2056. There is much tittering among the eunuchs if anyone takes the bait.
- Any faction might discover a Netherworld gateway close to Dunville and send an expendable (whoops! I mean "expert") team to investigate it.

GETTING THERE

Getting to Dunville isn't much of a treat; it's out in the middle of nowhere. Trains



rarely stop (unless hacked and reprogrammed) but there's an old road, almost overgrown, that runs in from a town about 100 km away. There's also a Netherworld gateway 9 km out from the town, in the woods. (The Architects missed this one. The Ascended, Lotus or anyone else may have discovered it.)

DUNVILLE

Once the characters reach **Dunville**, they pretty much have the run of it — it's a ghost town. It's obvious to player characters who spend an hour or so poking around that there was some sort of large scale battle (or slaughter) in the town square, complete with a fresh mass grave. Digging up the bodies reveals very little; the CDCA introduced decomposition-friendly microbes to the corpses that didn't get hauled up to the lab for autopsy. There's nothing left but bones, and characters may take a couple Wound Points from the microbes if they dig too deep.

All the charts and records from the hospital have been copied by the CDCA and deleted; no clues there. Detectives, cops and people with high Perception scores might be able to judge (from the grass growing on the mass grave, among other clues) that the slaughter happened maybe a month ago. Only one road has been used in that time, and that's the road from the train station to the lab.

YOUR BASIC SINISTER LABORATORY

There are two ways that your characters can get from the town to the lab: the smart way and the dumb way.

THE SMART WAY IN

If the characters watch carefully enough (or they have a sponsor whose intelligence

is good) they learn that boxcars of supplies are left in Dunville for the lab every month. There's usually about a fifteen minute gap between the time the boxcar is dropped off and the time the big truck comes and picks it up to haul it to the lab. (No one knows it, but the delay is because the only two people who met the Buro's strict safety standards for large vehicle operations are nicotine addicts who are having an extramarital affair. They usually drive down to the railroad tracks, have a brief "tryst," and then smoke cigarettes in the empty truck before loading up the boxcar with a zero gravity crane.)

If the characters can sneak into the boxcar, they're golden. Instead of a horde of jittery guards with guns, they just have to get past two post-coital guards who'd rather have a snack and a nap than a gunfight. They'll be **discovered** soon enough, but they'll have gotten inside the wall and maybe the courtyard, and no one in the factory will be ready for them.

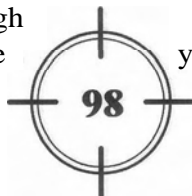
THE DUMB WAY IN

Although dumb, the most obvious way to get into the lab is to walk (or drive) up to the front gate and storm the place. This is also (unsurprisingly) the hard way. If the characters take this route, they have to deal with the walls, the towers, the gate and all the guards in the courtyard.

MELEE IN THE COURTYARD

The lab compound has a 3 meter wall around it, laced with cameras and motion detectors. The wall itself is not hard to climb, but it's equipped with retractable, electrified spikes. The spikes don't pop until a character is halfway up. When that happens, have the character roll Reflexes and beat a 7. If successful, he jumps off before the spikes do damage. If not, he takes damage equal to the Outcome + 5. (This can, of course, be soaked with Toughness.)

To get in or out, those with clearance use your standard **gate/security** checkpoint. The





characters do not have clearance, can't get clearance and won't be able to convince the guards that they do.

It takes 100 Wound Points to breach the wall or 60 Wounds Points to breach the gate. Alternately, the gate goes down if hit by a car (or larger vehicle) at cruising speed.

Once inside the wall, the characters can see that the lab is a big, imposing, **art-deco-meets-H.R.-Geiger** edifice. Other features of the courtyard include a turnaround driveway, complete with a fountain in the center, leading up to the front door, which is at the top of a short flight of stone steps.

There are a lot of guards in this area. If your characters are just starting out, there are three guards for each character. Slightly more advanced characters get more guards, but you may want to keep the number vague in order to give yourself room to not completely hose the characters. Any character who stops to count heads gets whacked. If the characters are more experienced or are doing exceptionally well, you might want to add a few Bouncing Benjis to the mix (p. 74). Your option.

If the characters were smart enough to approach at night, the guards are disorganized and a little scared. Otherwise, it's an ugly **toe-to-toe** until the characters get inside the lab.

(There are barracks for guards and small houses for the egghead bigwigs behind the lab building. This area is not important, so don't feel that you have to even mention it to your players. If they sneak in by going over the back wall or something – tricky, but doable – they pass by these buildings. If they look in or enter them, make them boring. *Real* boring. They'll get the message.)

Some things that might happen in the courtyard:

- Someone gets thrown up onto the wall and electrified.
- Some guards decide to run down the characters with a car or truck. A well-placed shot might cause the vehicle to flip.

Unnamed CDCA Security Flunkies

Sample Dialogue: "Surrender, intruder, or face the consequences!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnal 5, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 8, Martial Arts 6

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Buro Backup (8/1/5+1), Buro 16 (13*/5/32, full autofire)

- A flipping car (or explosion, or what have you) might tip the fountain. The spray might knock people over or short out the electrified wall.
- If the characters can seize the car (before it flips) they can drive it up the steps and through the front door.
- The automatic sprinkler system goes off, causing surprise and distraction. **Fashion-conscious** characters become wet.

Getting to the main building should be pretty quick. The characters are just passing through on their way to the interior of the lab and the bigger fights contained therein, so don't let things get bogged down out here.

CHAOS IN THE LAB

Once the characters are inside it's time to run around and fight guards. The lab has three floors. The characters enter on the first floor, which is mostly a **factory** floor for processing food, but also includes a big cafeteria. Upstairs are meeting rooms and offices for the **administrators**. Downstairs are the **hardcore** research areas.

The Factory Floor

The factory floor is a natural battle scene. It's got conveyor belts, forklifts, gravity cranes (p. 42) and other big machines around. It also has a high ceiling with catwalks. There are plenty of guards running around, and Warner Ng may be present, calling the shots. (If the guards seem to be taking it on the chin, Warner retreats downstairs to the lab.)

Interesting fight possibilities include:

Warner Na. Security Chief

Warner used to work for BuroMil as a counterinsurgency trooper until his unit had an unfortunate incident involving a group of Guicing Hand monks. By sheerest accident, Warner alone survived. This had a dual effect. People figured Warner for some kind of hotshot (and to be fair, he ain't bad) and Warner decided counterinsurgency wasn't such a great career choice. When the CDCA offered him a position, he jumped at it like a martial artist demonstrating Prodigious Leap for his eighth degree black belt.

The CDCA has been good for Warner: good perks, good pay, no bullets. Anyone messes with this, sweet deal has Warner to answer to. Sample Dialogue: "I don't care who they're from; shoot to kill."

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 12, Martial Arts 10, Arcanowave Device 13, Leadership 9, Info, His Own Military Career, With Some Exaggerations 10

Arcanowave Shticks: Variable Mass Sword (p. 65), Helix Activator (p. 61)

Weapons: VM sword (12), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), 2 Buro Backups (8/1/5+1)

- Being up on a catwalk is great! You've got a better field of fire, and you can jump down on guards.
- Thick tangles of machinery and conveyor belt provide excellent places for ambushers to hide.
- The factory is largely automated. Under normal circumstances, food goo comes out of a barrel, is poured into a big mold, microwaved (Damage 17), squashed into 3 meter wafers by a huge metal slab (Damage 30) and then chopped into biscuits by a huge metal chopping grid (Damage 30). Avoiding any given portion counts as a defensive action.
- Once food biscuits are chopped, they go on conveyor belts where they're packaged in see-through polymer. In fact, anything on a conveyor belt eventually winds up packaged in see-through polymer. You have my official permission to use this for grotesque comedy, if you feel that's the right thing to do.
- There are high pressure hoses for cleaning off the floor at the end of the day. They have Strength 6 for the purposes of knocking people over.
- There are convenient switches that

change the conveyor belts' speeds.

Cranking one up to max gives a great moving platform of fire — if you avoid the aforementioned microwaving, smashing and packaging.

- Big barrels of food goo are ready to be rolled, ducked behind or thrown. Throwing a full barrel takes Strength 7 or above. Flying barrels do 10 Damage. If the barrels tip or leak, the floor nearby gets slippery.
- Several machines have hoses that shoot out hot steam (Damage 8) if punctured.
- The cafeteria is full of knives, ovens, dishwashers, trays, silverware and (deadliest of all) Buro food. Check out "Rumble in the Restaurant" on page 233 of the *Feng Shui* rulebook.

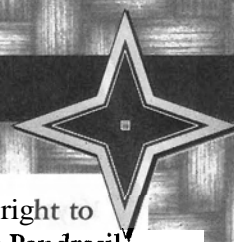
Upstairs

Upstairs are the rather pleasant offices of the administration of the Dunville CDCA Laboratory. If you feel like it, the CDCA may have installed an expensive lightweb system (p. 46). If you don't feel like it, it's simply tasteful, in a bland and totalitarian sort of way.

Fun things to stage here include:

- Framed motivational posters line the walls (or are projected there, if you're using the lightweb option). It would be a damn shame if no one wound up bloodied, unconscious and slumped in front of something like "Positive Thoughts Yield Positive Results!" or "Some People Dream Up Great Ideas, Others Wake Up And Make Them Real!"
- There are plenty of makeshift implements of mayhem around. Automatic staplers, nasty letter openers, hot coffee and the occasional performance award litter the desks and tables. (The CDCA awards are weighty crystals that fracture light to spell out "achievement," "quality," "progress" and "dedication" when hit by light at different angles. They're sometimes on lit zero-g platforms that slowly rotate them. These shatter nicely.)

The phone is a classic action-man tool



for swatting someone. ("It's for you!") Buro phones are very light and flimsy. Someone struck with the body takes no extra Damage. Someone struck with the headset takes no Damage at all — it just shatters — but becomes mightily annoyed.

- All of the chairs have wheels and all of the floors are made of hard plastic. Use your imagination.
- There's a big conference room. The conference table is littered with papers, just begging to have someone thrown face first across it. There's also a big plate glass window looking out over the fountain. However, if your characters try to throw anyone through it, they find out that it's another one of those tricky polymers. **PONK!** The hapless lackey bounces back — possibly into the character doing the throwing. Or (if the roll was really good) the guard catches the edge of the table with his spine.

DOWNSTAIRS: GOO FROM HELL

Eventually the characters are going to end up in the basement where the real trouble is. The basement contains a supply closet, an operating theater and some cold storage. Oh, and a huge processing laboratory full of demonic goo.

The whole basement is cold and damp, with funny smells. Everything seems to have an unwholesome texture if touched; tools are eerily fleshy and the pipes seem warm enough to be alive. Underneath it all there's a heart-like throbbing. This is caused by the pulsating of the goo, but character's won't know that at first.

There are two ways from the factory floor to the basement. One is a door labeled "Authorized Personnel Only Target Gold Beta Deciduous Clearance MANDATORY." The stairway behind the door leads to a corridor with doors labeled "Cold Storage," "Operating Theater," "Supplies" and "Bioprocessing Lab." The other is a big motorized ramp

from the factory area. The ramp leads right to the central processing area where Moy Pandrasil and the goo await.

Cold Storage

"Cold Storage," basically a big walk-in freezer, is the first door to the left off the stairs, so characters are likely to duck in there if they're being pursued down the steps. The cancer-riddled, naked corpses of six Dunville denizens of various ages and races and both genders are stacked on gurneys here.

In addition to the gurneys (on rollers, of course) there are big lights hanging on thick cords. There's another door in back which leads to the chilling machinery, which includes three tanks of a super-cold liquid. These can be removed with some effort. A Fix-It roll, Difficulty 10, takes a number of shots equal to the Outcome, minimum 2. A crowbar and Strength 7+ takes a sequence. Why yes, there is a big crowbar handy! Spilling the contents of one of these tanks on someone (or some-goo) does 18 Damage per tank.

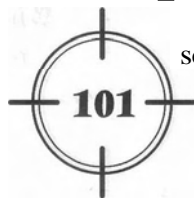
Supplies

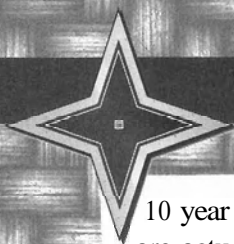
"Supplies" is to the right of the staircase and is full of timeless janitorial equipment: buckets, brooms, rags, pornographic pictures . . . and two plastic jugs of "EZ-Zterile! Kills Germs Ultra-Dead, Mega Fast!" One has a squirt bottle attachment.

EZ-Zterile doesn't do much to people except give them a nasty rash in about ten hours, but each squirt does Outcome + 3 Damage to the goo. Each gallon is worth about 1000 squirts, if you're really concerned. Ripping open a jug and splashing the whole gallon on the goo does Outcome + 10 Damage to it. Incidentally, EZ-Zterile has an attractive, honey-suckle scent. There is no ammonia aroma, no bleach smell — it's just *like* the flower. Gotta hand it to those clever CDCA technicians.

operating Theater

This room is pretty horrific; the CDCA scientists are in the middle of dissecting a





10 year old girl. You decide whether eggheads are actually present. (If the characters break in at night, there are **definitely** no scientists, and the girl is in cold storage.)

There are big, glaring lights on the ceiling and a huge array of hideous tools along one wall. Most of these are too specialized for even Techies to use, with two exceptions. There's a micromanipulator (see p. 123, only without the bionic arm) and a clearly labeled laser scalpel.

The laser scalpel does Outcome + 8 Damage and is fired with the Guns skill. Furthermore, characters shooting the laser scalpel get a **cumulative +1** bonus for every consecutive action they spend shooting it (up to a maximum of +3). This is because it has no recoil and shoots a nice, easily visible beam. Off to the right? Move it over. On the downside, this equipment is big and bulky, being built into a console that will have to be rolled around if it's going to be fired anywhere but in the operating theater. It can, however, hurt the goo.

Bioprocessing Lab

This is a huge chamber with a high ceiling. The very center of the room has an enormous bowl-shaped cavity filled with hideous, pulsing slime. The slime is grayish-greenish-yellowish, and as it seethes it seems to half-generate faces, muscles, the suggestion of claws and all manner of other unpleasantness.

The ceiling of the chamber is crossed with catwalks and curious tracks. The tracks support a transparent bubble containing a control room. The control room contains Dr. Moy Pandrasil. The catwalks are for maintenance, and also allow Moy to get in and out of the bubble. Projecting off one catwalk is a ladder for getting into the bubble; it looks kind of like a **diving board** over the goo. Hanging from the bottom of the bubble is a contraption which shines blue light down on the slime cauldron. This is an oversized Wave Suppressor, which keeps the goo in the cauldron, well, suppressed.

Big banks of control panels surround the slime cauldron, as do ugly, organic-looking instruments. There's also a sluice gate from

the goo container to a downward-slanted trough about 2 meters long. On each side of the trough is a ray projector that looks like **Anson Maddocks** doing the Flash Gordon visual ethic. Each is connected to big horizontal cabinet roughly the size of a coffin. The gate lets the goo into the trough where the ray projectors nuke it into dormancy, at which point it's taken upstairs on a conveyor belt. Effectively, each ray projector does 10 Damage to the goo. This doesn't **kill** the goo, it just stuns it. (You may want to keep track of this if the characters decide to take some "dead goo" away for study.) The projectors are firmly fixed in place; they can only fire at goo in the trough.

BUBBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE

When the fight breaks out here, Moy stays in the bubble, talking to the characters through a loudspeaker, demanding their surrender. From the control room, Dr. Pandrasil can move his **control/bubble** assembly around the chamber, suspended from the ceiling on tracks. In fact, the hanging control bubble includes **controls** for all the equipment in the chamber. Naturally, Moy uses this to be a pain in the ass. The only weapon attached to the bubble is the Wave Suppressor – which does nothing to humans – but Moy knows the goo will avoid its beam, and uses it to encourage the goo to attack the characters and avoid Warner Ng.

The Goo

This slop is what happens after you've **dissolved** numerous demons and charged them with energies to make them capable of **rewriting** DNA, but before you've packed them in cookies and sold them to an unwitting **population**.

The goo is very much alive. It would like to be active. That's why the Architects have that industrial-sized Wave Suppressor trained on it.

When the light goes off, the goo goes looking for freedom, vengeance and snacks.



The Big Climactic Fight

One break goes the characters' way in here: As soon as the goo gets out of the Wave Suppressor field and starts attacking, the guards chase it right quick. So long, cowards.

Characters who come down the conveyor belt are in for a nasty surprise, as Moy opens the sluice gate, letting the goo flow down the trough at them. As it gets out of the suppressor field, it comes to life and attacks. Turning on the ray projectors is a good idea in this case — so don't suggest it to your characters, who shouldn't have any idea what any of this equipment does unless they make a successful Arcanowave roll, Difficulty of 13.

Stunt possibilities abound:

- The catwalks and bubble tracks fairly beg to be leaped around on. The goo can't stretch up as high as the bubble, so anyone on the tracks is safe from it. Moy tries to run over anyone clinging to the tracks with the bubble, though.
- Moy's bubble is bulletproof (20 armor) but there are spots on it that are less solid. For example, the edges of the door only have 8 points of armor (but are a called shot). If someone gets a bullet through the crack, describe it ricocheting around inside the bubble while Moy lets out a brief, shrill shriek. The bullet could (GM's option) hurt or even kill Moy, leave the Wave Suppressor stuck on, leave the Wave Suppressor stuck off, trap the bubble in place or leave it moving randomly around the ceiling, out of control.
- If a control panel takes 10 Damage, it breaks in a shower of sparks, revealing a tangle of wires. The juice in these wires does 8 Damage; Martial Arts is used to attack with the wires. As a six shot action, however, Moy can cut the power to any given console. There are twelve consoles, but if the characters seem to be using them for weapons, Moy can cut the power to all of them in six shots.
- The surface of the bubble is smooth,



Dr. Moy Pandrasil

Moy is practically the CDCA attitude-goal **incarnate**: coldly professional, logical, and so detached as to be asexual. When things get hot, Moy runs off to the control bubble and **attempts to make** things difficult for the intruders from there.

Moy can explain everything about Dunville station, but will **only do so if** severely intimidated (at which point, the cold scientist becomes the blubbery puddle of jelly). Try to get a **Palp Fiction style "I dare you to say 'what' one more time!"** gun-toting monologue of your players.

Sample Dialogue: "Do as you say? No. But I will make a deal. I won't turn off the Wave Suppressor on a **thousand gallons** of hungry demon slime if you do what I say."

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 0 (Mag 5), Mnd 9 (Cha 4), Ref 7

Skills: Arcanowave Device 14 (this knowledge is theoretical only, but Moy does own an **EJAS**), Guns 8 (Basic CDCA training), Info/Dunville Experiment 15, Medicine 10

Weapons: Punch (5), Kick (6), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1)

Goo

Sample Dialog: Don't be absurd.

Attributes: Bod 4 (Str 10, Con 0), Chi 0 (Mag 10), Mnd 2 (Cha 0), Ref 7
Skills: Creature Powers 15, Martial Arts 15

Creature Shticks: **Damage Immunity:** Bullets (except for magical or silver bullets), **Damage Immunity:** Unarmed Attacks (except for powers), **Damage Immunity:** Hand to Hand weapons (except silver or magic weapons), Soul Twist

Weapons: Grasp And Crush While Dissolving DNA Structure (10), Soul Twist (7, Fu is used instead of Toughness to reduce damage)

Unique **Schtick:**

Divisibility: Like an amoeba, the goo can be divided without harm. If it **spatters** and **pours** out over the floor, it will simply be a number of **sub-goos**. To handle this, the goo has a large number of Wound Points. If it gets separated into two smaller goos, each has 25 Wound Points. If it gets separated into five sub-goos, each has 10, and so on. To compensate for its divisibility, the goo has no Constitution. Once you damage a given **blob of goo** enough to force a Death Check, it dies.

so clinging to it is tricky. There are handholds on the Wave Suppressor, but Moy can rotate it and smash it into the wall. This ruins the device, but Moy doesn't care.

- If 40 Damage is done to the joint where the bubble attaches to the tracks, the bubble is frozen in place, though Moy can still maneuver the Wave Suppressor around.

If 80 Damage is done to the joint, the bubble comes loose and crashes down in a shower of sparks, doing 10 Damage to everyone in the room, **knocking** Moy unconscious and **cracking** the bubble open.

CREDITS

Once the goo has been mopped up and the two named characters killed or immobilized, it's time to figure out what the hell was going on. The easiest way is to interrogate Moy, but there's a real chance the scientist won't survive. Warner only has a vague idea what the total goal of the experiment is. He knows they were putting the goo to sleep and putting it in food, but he doesn't know the larger purpose of the lab.

A clue might be found in the ray projectors. Inside each coffin-like tube there is a barely-alive human being. They're emaciated, kept alive in comas by intravenous feeding. The ray projectors seem to be powered by their brains, which are exposed.

The computer files reveal it all. You can require a Fix-It roll, Difficulty 13 if you want your characters to gamble for information. Or you can just let them find out. Or you can not tell them at all and leave it very mysterious. It's your call. What the files reveal (if you so desire) is the purpose of the lab: Developing ideologically-activated carcinogens. The poor saps in the tubes are (or were) extremely loyal servants of the Buro. Their brain waves were harnessed to break the goo's will, crushing it beneath the dominant paradigm.

Really clever characters will adulterate the files, making it look like the whole experiment was a failure, and a dangerous one because the **goo got loose**. Make them think of this themselves.

APPENDIX B

The Fist of Shiva

BLOWING UP THE VATICAN

Premise: The Architects are planning to augment a feng shui site that is already hugely powerful. Naturally, they're guarding it closely.

The Twist: A weather control satellite called the Fist of Shiva could destroy the site from orbit – if the characters can get there.

The Climax: Kung fu butt-kicking – in space.

The Fist of Shiva is an experimental weather control satellite. Johann Bonengel used it to ensure the destruction of Haiti when an airborne version of a disease called the Melter was discovered there. It has been blamed for widespread weather changes that ruined large areas in North and South America, as well as part of China. The satellite remains in orbit in 2056, and is occasionally used to make small changes to weather systems as the Architects try to repair the damage they've already done with it, but nothing drastic has been done with it since Haiti was depopulated.

Cut to the Architects, on the verge of constructing a feng shui pattern that will encompass the entire world. The final link in their plan, a specific European leg in the Transworld Maglev Network, is nearing completion. With it in place, Boatman and Bonengel will be able to warp the world's chi to an unprecedented degree.

All the other factions in the secret war

want to prevent this catastrophe, but none are up to the task alone. Cooperation is essentially impossible, as none will permit their veteran operatives – the only ones that would stand a chance, really – to take orders from any of the other factions. The only chance is for a gang of independent meddlers (or Silver Dragons not known for duplicity) to lead a raid to steal a space shuttle, take over the Fist of Shiva and use it to destroy the world site once and forever.

The Fist of Shiva is a scenario for very powerful characters.

DANGERS ON A TRAIN

Cut to a train station in the 2056 juncture: Public Maglev Transit Station A2653, to be precise. It's a busy station, situated near any city you find convenient. If you'd like, make your players come up with reasons their characters are at a train station. Otherwise, here are some ideas:

- Kids, Gamblers, Techies or other thrill seekers may be trying out their newest power siphon.
- Cops from 2056 may have been assigned train station duty because an important military shipment is coming through.

- The characters have heard that some kind of military shipment is coming through, and have decided to **highjack** some guns and ammo.
- The group could be picking someone up or dropping someone off.
- Crowded train platforms are a great place to meet untrustworthy contacts, so neither side gets whacked.
- Two characters are settling a bet about whether ticker taker A2653-B29 is really cuter than Brad Pitt.

For our purposes, there are two reasons the characters are here. First, they're going to fight some abominations. Second, they're going to see where the abominations were going (Rome) and wonder why the Architects are sending heavy troops there.

The Military Shipment

Word from the grapevine is that a **BuroMil** shipment is heading through **A2653**. Everyone assumes that means guns. Everyone assumes wrong. Instead of firearms, the shipment consists of a bunch of slumbering abominations.

The abominations are in suspended animation on a car marked **BTM 31365**. If the characters are planning a hijack, they've heard this number. Likewise, cops have been told to keep an eye on it.

Characters who don't know about the **shipment** *will* find out soon enough. **BTM 31365** is going to Platform 23, right where the characters are. If they're **picking** someone up, their train has been delayed so a government car can go through on those tracks. Ditto if they're leaving.

KERBLAM!

BTM 31365 crashes on its way past Platform 23. If the characters were planning to blow up the train already, their plan works. Otherwise, the crash can be blamed on the actions of a rogue velocity addict, Buro mismanagement, drunken engineers or whatever. It's not **important**. It gets sent to the wrong track and its engine hits a wall at **60 kph**.

Car **BTM 31365** is about 20 meters long and 5 meters wide. After the crash, it has a 120 degree kink near the center, raising the car's middle off the tracks. This bend has opened a rip about 3 meters across and 1 meter long in the ceiling of the car.

If the characters blew up the train and were planning to steal some weapons, they're in for a surprise when they open the door and are met by twelve Bouncing Benjis. If the characters are just as surprised as everyone else on the platform, they're treated to the spectacle of abominations lunging out of the train.

In The Car

The car can be entered through the rear door (but not the front one — it's smashed up against the engine) or through the hole in the roof.

There are twelve suspension pods inside, six on each wall. All contain Reprocessed Hopping Vampires: "Bouncing Benjis" (p. 74). Six are standard issue Benjis, six are the sorcery suppression model. All twelve abominations are under the supervision of Lieutenant Chip Chang. There's a small, uncomfortable chair that folds out of the wall near the back door. That's where Chip was when the car crashed. If you decide Chip is unconscious, he's sprawled by the back door. Otherwise, he could be anywhere in the car.

These abominations are Chip's first major command since his promotion. He's nervous, and the minute anything goes wrong, he assumes it's a Jammer attack. He pops on his Neural Stimulator and wakes his Benjis. Chip is a gung-ho, brown-nosing go-getter. If he isn't stopped now, in a few years he'll be an obnoxious, by-the-books authority figure, trampling the combat rights of countless Maverick Cops or Special Forces studs. In combat, he stays back and pegs people with the Tracer Resin Projector from cover, in order to give the Bouncing Benjis an edge. (Yeah, he's a cowardly weenie on top of it all.)

Carnage potential includes (but is of course not limited to):

- The slope of the floor enables some



stunts. Popping in through the hole in the ceiling and rolling down the floor to attack is always fun. The slant also makes it possible to jump up, grab a light fixture and kick someone downhill from you right in the face, hurting them real bad and knocking them down the slope. Furthermore, it's hard to see what's on the other side of the slope until it's practically on you. (Remember, the Bouncing Benjis have deceptive speed.)

- The suspension pods have glass fronts. Some may be intact, begging to have someone thrown through them.
- Some glass is surely shattered all over the floor, waiting to be thrown, landed on or grabbed as a makeshift weapon when wrestling about.
- Each pod has a supply of liquid nitrogen. If the hoses are cut they send out spurts of liquid that can make your skin crack like an eggshell. It also produces truly awesome amounts of steam, making everything hazy. Even Chip is cool enough to realize he can shoot out the pipes of liquid nitrogen behind someone as a stunt.
- The folding chair can be used as a springboard for big jumps.
- The hole in the ceiling has a sharp, jagged edge that could cut someone right in half. (Warn your characters about this before they jump in.) A Bouncing Benji would love to jump up and pin a guy against that edge as he was dropping into the car.

It's a good idea to get the abominations out of the boxcar as soon as possible, because fighting in the cramped train car is not as much fun as fighting on the platform.

On the Platform

The platform is a big slab of concrete with two sets of Maglev tracks running on each side of it. The tracks are set about 1 meter below platform level. Past each set of tracks is another platform (just like this one), another set of two tracks, and so on. Call Platform 23 the

Bouncing Benjis

Sample Dialog: "Hrrrrmm...Blood GOOD!" (slaver, slaver)

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0, Mnd 1, Ref 5

Skills: Creature Powers 10, Arcanowave Device 10, Martial Arts 8

Creature Shticks: Abysmal Spines (claws) x3, Damage Immunity: Blast
Arcanowave Shticks: Juicer, Neural Stimulator, Spirit Shield Generator
 (the Sorcery Suppression models replace the Spirit Shield Generator with a Feedback Enhancer)

Weapons: Claws (11)

Lieutenant Chip Chang

Sample Dialog: "You pathetic miscreants don't have a chance against the Bureau of Tactical Management!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 1 (For 3), Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 14, Martial Arts 14, Arcanowave Device 14, Leadership 6

Arcanowave Shtick: Neural Stimulator, Tracer Resin Projector, Wave Suppressor

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Buro 9A (10/1/17t1, full autofire, has laser sight that looks bitchin' in nitrogen-team haze), Buro 16 (13*/5/32, full autofire)

middle platform, with three more on each side of it.

The ceiling is about six meters above the platform's surface — a grungy recess of rusted steel and stained polymers. It's supported by huge I-beams, each nearly a meter tall. Flickering white bell-shaped lights hang from the ceiling and make everyone look washed-out and purplish.

In the center of the platform, two escalators go up to and come down from the main station terminal. There's also an automatic vending machine that doubles as a surveillance station. Characters who want a drink or a candy bar get their retinas scanned to pay for it. ("Hello Consumer [insert character name], enjoy your nutritious treat!")

There are perhaps a dozen bystanders on Platform 23, waiting for the Central Purchasing District Express, which is coming in on the other side.

Fight possibilities include:

- The light fixtures are bell-shaped, so if they're shot down they make a satisfying

Pusillanimity Alert

It's unlikely that characters who've made it this far in *Feng Shui* will see a bunch of abominations lumber out of a boxcar and decide not to get involved. If it happens anyway, remove Chip from the equation. He gets conked on the head, falls on the control panel and defrosts his goons. If your characters won't fight abominations for no reason at all, they ought to be willing to fight when they start sneering innocent bystanders.

CLANG. They also do 13 Damage to anyone unfortunate enough to be under one.

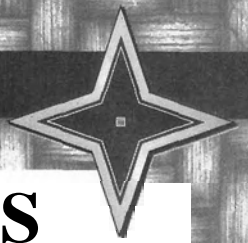
- Each train track is a single rail bearing a very powerful magnetic charge. Anyone in contact with it takes 20 Damage each shot. People flung onto it may get off it as a defensive action, which takes one shot.
- The Purchasing District Express might arrive at an auspicious time. Getting hit head-on causes 22 Damage. Getting run over causes 30 Damage, plus damage from the

tracks (see above). Said train, once stopped, disgorges about a hundred people. Those by the door get pushed out by the crowd behind them even if a full-scale battle is going on. After all, the people pushing can't see it.

- The ceiling sports all kinds of pipes. Spray from a water pipe looks neat and might create a deadly situation for anyone standing in a puddle if it hits one of the rails. Another pipe pumps unprocessed food goo to a restaurant upstairs in the main terminal, and that could spill out in a mealy brown mess. A sewer pipe might dump a different type of equally unpleasant brown mess.
- The I-beams are a swell place for a Benji to lurk, waiting to jump on someone. They're also a swell place for a character to get into a cramped, balance-beam battle with a lurking Benji.

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- If anyone is thrown into the vending machine, it solemnly warns "Vandalism is a serious crime, [insert character name]. This will be reported to Public Order." Then a bunch of candy bars shoot out the bottom slot.
- Bouncing **Benjis** are dumb enough to go the wrong way on an escalator and wonder why it's taking so long to get up.

TIME TO THINK

Interrogating Chip won't do much good, even assuming the characters somehow spirit him away from the extremely public platform for questioning. **All he knows is that his squad was picked to go to Rome to guard a construction site.**

Luckily, **finding out the train's destination isn't all that hard.** Chip was re-reading his **mission briefing before he got on the train, so the little hologram projector containing the briefing might be on his person or still in the train.** Just about any other reasonable plan for getting the information — divination, computer **hacking**, bribery of railroad officials (one has a nasty beer habit) — reveals that the train was bound for Rome. Specifically, it was bound for the construction site of the Transworld Maglev **Network Hub — a building formerly known as Saint Peter's Basilica.**

The Network Hub site's significance goes beyond the religious, historical and political. (The Catholic Church's influence has been waning for years, and Vatican City was seized by the UN in 2050). People with **Info/Netherworld** know that area used to be the Thunder Pagoda. Sorcerers, or people with **Info/Geomancy**, know Vatican City is widely regarded as the most powerful feng shui site outside China.

This information, in itself, may not prompt the characters to immediate action. That's fine. The fight at the train platform lays track (sorry) for developments later, so feel free to toss an unrelated scenario or encounter that links to some other element or elements in your **campaign** in here, if you want.

A FEW DAYS LATER

A few days after the train wreck there's a special on the Cop Channel about the Transworld Maglev Network Hub. In addition to talking about the historical significance of the site and the dramatic triumph this construction represents for the Buro, the special includes a tape that was "sent in by the Jammers" expressing their dedication to the destruction of the Hub. This is followed by a stirring speech from General **Olivet** declaring the Buro will **never be enslaved by the threats of madmen.** She **boasts** that the security around the Hub is **equal to the forces sent to pacify Branson, Missouri.** Although the words "so nyah nyah," **don't actually figure into the speech, that's the general subtext.** There's also **footage of Desdemona Deathangel's arrival at the site.** She smiles for the cameras, pouts and **poses for a while, says she hopes to get another shot at Battlechimp Potemkin, and is then whisked off by her ever-present assistants.**

The "Jammer Threat" sequence is **suspicious to anyone familiar with the Jammers. First and foremost, they never give warning before a major operation.** Second, the opinions vented are **suspiciously coherent.** The more they look at it, the more characters in the know **suspect the "Jammer Threat" tape was put together by the Buro to justify the presence of heavy duty firepower at the construction site.**

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

So Rome is now **BuroMil Central.** Now the question is . . . why? The Architects already **control the Vatican feng shui site. What's the big deal?**

If the characters start poking around for clues, allow a rough diagram of the planned Transworld Maglev Network to **fall into their hands.** (Enterprising **GMs** may improvise a scene where the characters break into the



home of a prominent scientist to steal them.) If a sorcerer, someone with **Info/Geomancy**, or someone in the Buro scientific community takes a gander at the plans, have them roll an appropriate skill against Difficulty 13. On a success, they realize that recent arcanowave research about the effect of roads and trade routes on chi flow indicates that when lots of living people travel along a certain path, their personal chi affects the chi flow of the area, like a current in an ocean. The rail paths planned by the Buro (if the recent research is correct, anyway) will **double** the potency of the Vatican site, making it the most powerful site in the world. Will it actually work? No way to know, but the Buro clearly thinks it will.

On the other hand, characters may just figure there's a big Netherworld gateway there and the Buro is finally going to fully invade another juncture. They're wrong, but it'll get them moving.

Let's Not Be Stupid

Make sure your characters realize the Transworld Maglev Network Hub is going to be guarded by six hundred Bouncing Benjis, three flying fortresses, and Desdemona Deathangel. That's what they know about, and the Buro isn't known for showing all its cards at once. Any reasonable person would write off a frontal attack, right?

Feng Shui characters aren't always reasonable. More than one **playtest** group figured this was going to be their chance to go *mano a mano* with Desdemona Deathangel. A frontal assault is beyond the purview of this adventure (because it doesn't get the characters into **zero-G**, baby) but there are a variety of ways you could handle it.

First, you could warn them off. Someone they trust — the ghost of Mad Dog McCrown or some other trusted dead character — comes back to warn them that rooms are being prepared for them in the Heaven of Doomed, Useless, but Flashy Heroes. "Don't make the mistake I did. You want the Heaven of Heroes Who Made a Difference!" Or you

could go with I Ching and burnt tortoise shells.

Second, you can let them attack the hub. Don't hold back. They know what they're getting into. Make it hellish and remember that the Buro's primary combat doctrine is "Overwhelming Force." If the PCs have made nuisances of themselves before, the Buro could detect them with just about any **kind** of high tech you want to imagine. If they've been judged Enemies of the State, a flying fortress might be dispatched to eradicate them when they arrive in Italy.

But suppose they're up to everything you throw at them and they don't retreat. They hijack a flying fortress, crash it into the hub and get away. Cool! They have a big sense of accomplishment, there's fanfare, etc. Go do something else for four or five sessions and let them forget about the whole business for a while.

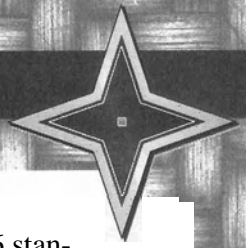
After five months of game time, the hub's halfway rebuilt, **working** stone by stone. All the characters' effort put the Buro a few months behind schedule. That's all. Played right, this can drive home just how hard it is to overcome the Buro's entrenched industrial power.

Now the PCs are ready to look for a more permanent solution.

ENTER THE FACTIONS

If the characters are really smart, they'll talk to their contacts. After all, this business — whatever it is — is a threat to everyone. If they don't have this idea, they're contacted by someone in another faction, probably the Ascended, or by their own superiors if they're Dragons. If you can't think of any other reason, the other faction was poking around, found out the characters whacked some Benjis *en route* to Rome, and want to know if the characters know anything about the **BuroMil** forces in Rome. Which they don't, but at least the characters are involved now.

And so a storm of inter-faction politicking begins. You can play it up or give it the soft



pedal, whichever you prefer. It does make a nice prelude to running around blowing things up.

The Jammers know a perfect way to destroy the site (using the Fist of Shiva) but won't tell anyone unless the Ascended, Lotus and Guiding Hand each give up a site in their respective junctures and agree not to hassle them. The Ascended agree to this, but the Hand won't. The Lotus threaten to take a site from the Hand in order to give it to the Jammers, but then Pui Ti gets involved and spooks both the Lotus and the Ascended . . . you get the idea. Go nuts. Just remember that everyone hates, fears and mistrusts everyone else but right now the Architects are on the verge of **becoming** the ones to beat.

The solution you're **working** toward is for all the factions to eventually agree that the PCs are the least of all possible evils, and that they should head up the operation to shanghai the Fist of Shiva and blow up the Vatican. **Do not** let the characters simply recruit by making Charisma, Leadership or Intimidation checks. These can all **help**, but using them this way is equivalent to saying "I shoot two mooks" in a combat scene. It's not enough to have the skills; make your players think about how to **apply** those skills. They'll thank you for it.

Once everything is settled, it's time to steal a space shuttle.

Allies

Unless the characters screw up, every faction (except the Architects and the late Dragons, of course) is willing to cough *somebody* up to help the cause. Ultimately, it's your call exactly just how many of the characters described below come along for the rest of the ride. Base your decision on how well the PCs did at negotiation and on how tough they are (that is, how much help they're likely to need).

The Ascended

The Ascended are particularly alarmed at the idea of the Architects completing the Transworld Maglev Network, and have **dis-**patched a husband and wife team of Lodge

fixers, Steve and Nayirah Chung.

Steve appears to be a short (by 1996 standards) stocky Chinese man. He answers **ques-**tions in monosyllables and never changes expression. Observers find him quiet, unassum-**ing**, taciturn — pretty much blank. Until he gets into combat, that is. Then he turns into a **torna-**do of bloodstained fury. His usual calm **compo-**sure makes it all the more **horrifying** when he rips someone's throat out with his teeth. Nayirah is the subtle one; Steve's along for when diplomacy fails. In a battle, he usually starts with mook-suppression duties to simplify things. Once they're out of the equation he closes for the **kill**. His signature stunt is to run at **opponent(s)** and suddenly leap over them, shooting down with both guns.

Steve is from the 69 juncture. Unlike most Ascended, Steve once admired humanity. That's why he worked so hard to become human. Once he traveled to other junctures (especially 2056) and saw what a botch humankind made of things, he decided that most people didn't deserve to be human. He's a disappointed **ideal-**ist, which makes him a bitter cynic. His battle frenzy is how he expresses his disappointment. He tends to show disdain towards pure humans, but one who gains his respect has it forever.

Steve is totally dedicated to Nayirah, and endures her flirtations stoically. When he arrives on the scene, he's wearing a stained and work-worn CDCA lab coat and carrying a **tool-**box. (The toolbox is, of course, full of guns — four Buro 9s and a Buro Blue Spear. In his pockets are two clips for the handguns and two for the rifle.)

Nayirah Chung is drop dead gorgeous in any time frame. An unlikely genetic combination of Sri **Lankan**, Norwegian and scorpion has left her with brilliant blue eyes, a dusky complexion, and long flowing black hair. She always makes eye contact, speaks slowly and **sex-**ily and makes everything sound like it has a double meaning.

Nayirah is the con woman of the pair. She talks her way in, Steve shoots their way out.

When she can't talk her way in, she uses



Steve Chung, Transformed Tiger

Sample Dialog: "Die by my hand, lowly insects!"

Attributes: Bod 6 (Str 7), Chi 8 (For 2), Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 14, Martial Arts 15, Deceit 8

Fu Shtick: Claw of the Tiger

Gun Shticks: Carnival of Carnage x2

Transformed Animal Shticks: Bite, Mark Prey, Pounce

Weapons: Punch (8, 10 with Claw of Tiger [1 chi cost]), Kick 9, Bite (7, Outcome uses Con instead of Dodge or Parry [7 chi cost], May add Damage equal to leap in meters with Pounce [chi cost is equal to damage added]). Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Blue Spear (13**/6/30).

Nayirah Chung, Transformed Scorpion

Sample Dialog: "Show 'em, Stevie!"

Attributes: Bod 5 (Move 8), Chi 7 (For 2), Mnd 5 (Cha 8), Ref 8

Skills: Guns 14, Martial Arts 13, Deceit 12, Seduction 15, Intrusion 14

Fu Shticks: Friend of Darkness, Dark's Soft Whisper

Transformed Animal Shticks: Sting, Surprise, Scuttle, Dance x2

Weapons: Punch (6), Kick (7), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Avenger (11/2/6), Sting (does 3 wound points per sequence for X sequences [costs X chi]), Surprise (add X to Action Value when attacking from surprise [costs X chi]).

her considerable Intrusion skills.

Nayirah's from the 1996 juncture, and is an incurable flirt. Despite this, she is dedicated to Steve and would never be unfaithful. She just likes jerking the chains of mere humans. She doesn't flirt with her fellow Lodge members. Like most Ascended from her time, she views humanity as a menace, short-sighted and irritating.

She shows up wearing the outfit of a captain in the Special Presidential Public Order Office — only on her it actually looks flattering. Her uniform has a Buro 9 at one hip, a Buro Backup on the other, and a Buro Avenger in the shoulder holster. She's also got two clips each for the 9 and the Backup. In combat, she usually lunges straight for the leader. When delivering her Sting shtick, she always does so as a strike with the back of her heel — at the end of an airborne somersault, as a spinning back heel kick, as a hook kick, etc.

Eaters of the Lotus

The Lotus are less alarmed by the situation than the Lodge, but the prospect of increased monster poaching is enough to get them to send a token (expendable) sorcerer: Chow Yen Li.

Chow Yen Li is a Lotus rarity A non-eunuch sorcerer. He learned magic from his granny, and was discovered and recruited by the Lotus. He's a tall, well-built man, but he's mostly memorable for his irritating behavior. He leers and speaks in a smarmy, lecherous fashion. Imagine a Chinese Peter Lorre, with bad teeth.

When he first visited 1996 he fell in love with cheeseburgers, colored condoms, MTV and really big guns. To him, the worst thing about 2056 is that you can't get a decent pizza anywhere. In short, Chow pursues his own pleasures first and the orders of the Lotus second. This hasn't entirely escaped the notice of his masters, but he's good at what he does. That makes him the perfect candidate for a suicidal attack on the Fist of Shiva.

Chow shows up in the suit John Travolta wore in *Pulp Fiction*. He's got an appallingly huge gun in a shoulder holster, one in an ankle holster, and a couple clips in the jacket pockets. Chow didn't want in on this mission, and he's surly and uncooperative — until he spies Nayirah.

In combat, Chow likes to write his name on people with lightning. He also likes to rise up into the air, surrounded by fire and lightning, and send a shower of Blasts downward while screaming "Cower before, heh, my sorcery, puny mortals!"

The Guiding Hand

The Guiding Hand are appalled at the notion of the Architects constructing a worldwide feng shui site. They know what will happen if the BHP gets hold of one of their high ranking members, though, so the Guiding Hand's contribution is thirty brothers of the Nameless Order of Boundless Contemplation.

These guys have meditated themselves into deliberate amnesia — not one of them



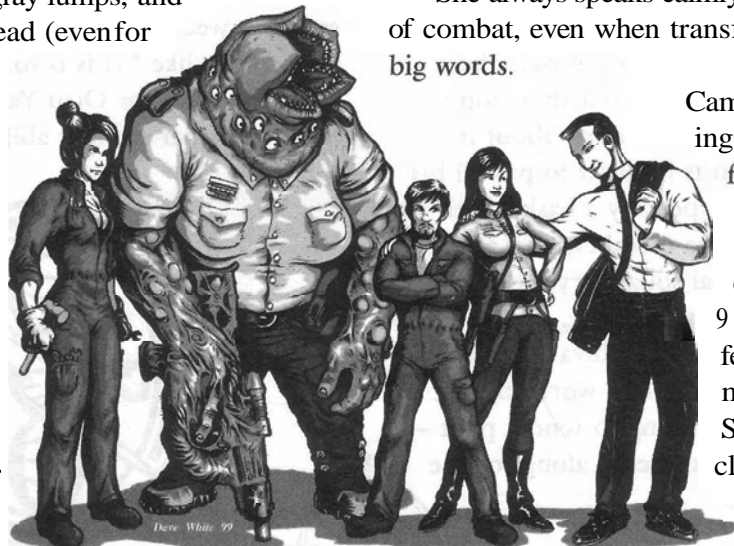
remembers his own name or past. They are selflessly devoted to the Guiding Hand, and will fight to the death rather than face capture. They've been dressed in the uniforms of BuroMil troopers and equipped with facsimile Crimestoppers. (No, they don't work, but the monks wouldn't know how to use them if they did work. Having an enemy pick up one of the fake shotguns and try to shoot it can be good for a laugh.) A pair of nunchaku are concealed inside the barrel of each gun.

The Queen of the Ice Pagoda

Pui Ti's motivations for contributing to this adventure are rather murky. Perhaps she feels that tremendously powerful Architects might be more likely to take advantage of Huan Ken, or be taken advantage of by Li Ting. Perhaps she simply thinks it would be wrong for two human beings to control so much of the world. It's more likely that she knows something she isn't telling.

Pui Ti's potential contribution is an abomination. Her human shape is Camilla, a prim woman who can cook up a mean meatloaf. Her abomination form is Lumpy McThumpy, who can cook up just about anything, no matter how mean it is.

This rogue abomination prefers its Transformed shape — that of a nondescript, dumpy middle aged woman. This is not surprising. In her normal shape she's eight feet tall, green, covered with gray lumps, and has a very unusual head (even for an abomination). It's vaguely shaped like a closed rosebud, only made of thick flesh slabs with teeth around the edges. The "mouth" on the top unfolds when she bites or extrudes her 13 meter tongue. The bottom of this "blossom" has a ring of



Chow Yen Li, Sorcerous Bon Vivant

Sample Dialog: "AH my power a, heh, insignificant compared to your, heh, beauty."

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 2 (Mag 10), Mnd 5 (Per 7), Ref 7

Skills: Sorcery 17, Guns Y

Sorcery Sticks: Blast (Fire, Lightnin, and Conjured Chainsaws), Summoning, Heal, Movement, Influence

Weapons: Punch (8), Kick (9), Blast (12), Desert Eagle .50 (12/3/9+1, you knew he was the type, right?), Auto-Ordnance Pit Bull (10/1/7+1)

Nameless Monks of Boundless

Contemplation

Sample Dialog: "Aiiiiii!"

Attributes: Bad 7, Chi 2, Mnd 4, Ket b

Skills: Martial Arts 9

Weapons: Punch (8), Kick (7), Nunchaku (8)

twelve eyes going all the way around it. In combat, she's fond of grabbing enemies with her tongue and pulling them into her mouth.

When she escaped from the Architects during a TacOps mission gone bad, she found herself in the Netherworld. She stumbled upon the Ice Pagoda, and there discovered a world where she could be Camilla. She only revealed her other form during an attack from the King of the Fire Pagoda. She found the tolerance of the Ice Queen a pleasant surprise, and has grown steadily more devoted to her patroness.

She always speaks calmly, even in the midst of combat, even when transformed. She loves big words.

Camilla shows up wearing her old Buro uniform (Buro Blue Flag on one shoulder, Helix Ripper on the other, Buro 9 as a sidearm) with a few modifications to make it look current. She has one extra clip for each gun.

Lumpy McThumpy, aka "Camilla," Abomination Servant of the Ice Queen

Sample Dialog: "I must reiterate that my presence does ~~mean~~ a great deal of verisimilitude to your claim of being from TacOps; therefore, I feel that my contributions to tactical discussions should not be summarily dismissed. Furthermore, I intend to eat the head of the next person who calls me 'that thing'."

Attributes: Bod 10, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 5 (Int 6) (Cha 1 in "Lumpy" form), Ref 5

Skills: Arcanovave Device 13, Creature Powers 13, Guns 13, Martial Arts 13, Info/Midwestern Recipes of the 1970s & 80s 11

Creature Shticks: Abysmal Spines (teeth and claws), Tentacle (tongue), Regeneration, Transformatiøn

Arcanovave Shticks: Aerial Mobility Unity, Helix Ripper

Unique Shtick: Sees in all directions simultaneously.

Weapons: Bite (12), Punch (13), Kick (14), Helix Ripper (15*/7/-), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1), Buro Blue Flag (13*/4/30)

Jill "Mockingbird" Moktiber, Jammer Pilot

Sample Dialog: "That there's a Bobo Spear of Freedom surface to orbit launch vehicle — real reliable once you get past that blowing up on the pad problem. Just joking."

Attributes: Bod 8, Chi 0 (For 4), Mnd 5, Ref 8

Skills: Driving 16 (includes aircraft and Buro spaceships), Fix-It 14, Guns 14, Sabotage 14, Martial Arts 9

Weapons: Punch (9), Kick (10), Landridge Cutter (12, p. 45), Heckler & Koch MP5 (10/3/30), Glock 18 (10/2/33+1). The grenades have a damage rating of 9 for people within 3 feet, or 20 if it's right next to you.

The Jammers

The Jammers are *freaking* out over the Transworld Maglev Network, but they don't have the personnel to do to much about it. Battlechimp Potemkin is hesitant to put all his eggs in one basket — especially a basket with an abomination, two Lodge members and a sorcerer in it. He's got several squads trying to find ways to spoil the Maglev Network, but he recognizes the value of the Fist of Shiva mission. He thinks it's a long shot, but one worth taking, so he's decided that he's willing to send a pilot — Jill "Mockingbird" Mokhiber — along for the ride to even the odds.

Jill is a slightly chunky blonde woman with a ruddy complexion. She looks strong, and she's stronger than she looks due to massive steroid abuse. (Big Bruiser characters, police from the 90s, and anyone from the 90s with Info/Sports has a chance to recognize the yellow eyes and poor impulse control that give this away.) She often refers casually to potentially hideous disasters, then says "just joking" in a deadpan tone. She also bites her nails a lot.

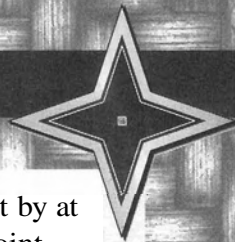
Jill has piloted 112 spaceship launches — in a simulator. She only got assigned to one real launch in her Buro career, and that one she scrubbed. She insists that the danger was real and that she'd have died if she'd tried to launch under the existing conditions, but the Buro ruled that she'd panicked and demoted her to vat work.

She's been itching to get back at them for years, and now's her chance. Jill is a dyed-in-the-wool, hard core Jammer. She's been blowing things up and hiding from the government for over 12 years. She's seen a lot of friends die, and a lot suffer fates worse than death. She'll do anything to hurt the Buro, and danger does not deter her.

Jill shows up dressed in the coveralls of a CDCA maintenance flunky, carrying a toolkit slightly smaller than Steve's. She's got a submachinegun and 10 grenades in there, along with two clips for the gun inside her coveralls.

Jill goes nuts in combat, but not in the fierce, directed manner of Steve Chung. She screams, weeps, froths at the mouth, curses, and yells things like "This is for Scott McDermott!" and "Take this for Otsu Yamamoto!" This does not impair her combat abilities at all.





THE STAR HUSTLERS

Jammer intelligence indicates that the best place to steal a space shuttle is the Tillaberi Launch Facility. The launch installation is way out in the middle of nowhere. There's a 3 meter Gonvex wall around it, with 10 remote-controlled Hellharrower emplacements atop it. Inside the wall there's a blocky, ugly three-story building housing launch control and the garrison, and a big arcanotechy-looking rocket on a launch pad. Oh, did I forget to mention the garrison? That would be the 166th Orbital Services Protection Brigade, who prefer to be known as the Thunderhawks. Mayhem, anyone?

GETTING IN

The goal of the attackers is to get over or through the wall, get across the courtyard to the rocket, get in and launch it. A detour to the launch center is optional. The launch is much easier if Jill (or a technically-inclined PC) can get to the launch center and start things from there.

Nayirah wants to talk her way in, but is unable to do so unless she's adequately supported by the PCs. (Individual GMs should decide what constitutes "adequate support.") If someone comes up with a clever plan, let them run with it. A clever plan gets the team into the courtyard before the fight starts. A superb plan, supported by great dice, gets them into the building before hell breaks loose.

The closer the Nameless Monks get before the fight starts, the better things go for the team; the Nameless Monks are far deadlier in close quarters. The Buro forces have an advantage on open ground.

The wall-mounted Hellharrowers are a pretty serious problem. Each is controlled remotely from the command bunker in the building's basement. Although it takes one person to control one gun, the controllers in the basement can switch control of the guns at will. Any

given point outside the walls can be hit by at least three emplacements. Any given point inside can be hit by at least five. There are only five markspersons on duty in the command bunker at any given time. It takes 45 Wound Points to destroy a given emplacement. When destroyed by anything other than fu strikes, they blow up.

THE THUNDERHAWKS

The members of the 166th prefer to be called the Thunderhawks. They consist of forty infantrypersons, ten markspersons, five sergeants, an abomination named Big Dumb Rex, and a commanding officer named Colonel Djibril.

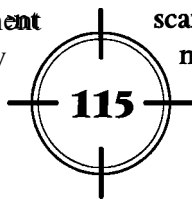
The infantrypersons prefer to stay back and ventilate their enemies, but are trained in hand to hand combat as well. They only fire on people wearing Buro uniforms if ordered to by a superior.

The markspersons are experts at blowing people away. Five begin the fight inside the command bunker, running the perimeter Hellharrowers by remote control. When all hell breaks loose, the other five are deployed to provide sniper fire from building's roof and windows.

The five sergeants are nameless, but a slightly higher class of nameless than the rank-and-file. Each one commands roughly ten grunts.

Big Dumb Rex is a humanoid, three meters tall, yellowish-gray in color, with hairy wings and eyes where his nipples should be. Also, there's no top on his head. It ends right above the jaw. (In case you're wondering, he chews by rubbing food against his teeth. It's a rough life, and it makes him grumpy.) He might be sent to guard the rocket if you're feeling merciful. If you're not, Djibril sends him out right away to demoralize and destroy opponents.

The commander of the Thunderhawks is a fierce looking woman with brown skin and a scar on one cheek. She's two and a half meters tall and doesn't take lip from any-





Nameless Thunderhawk Infantrypersons

Sample Dialog: "Here they come!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 9, Martial Arts 7

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Buro 16 (13*/5/32, full autofire), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1)

Nameless Thunderhawk Markspersans

Sample Dialog: "Got him!"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 10, Martial Arts 6

Weapons: Punch (6), Kick (7), buro 10 (13*/5/32, full autofire), Hellharrower emplacement (14**/8/40 full autofire)

Nameless Sergeants

Sample Dialog: "Stop them, worm! Move it!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 10, Martial Arts 7

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Buro 9A (10/1/17+1, full autofire)

one. Colonel Djibril will probably stay out of the fight, preferring to make sure that the Thunderhawks' resources are used intelligently and cohesively.

THE COURTYARD

This is a big, flat, open yard. Can you say "kill zone?" I knew that you could.

If the PCs try a gangbusters assault, make it simple. It takes one sequence to cross the courtyard in a vehicle, two running at full speed. For every shot in each sequence, every named character has to dodge a shot from a Buro 16 or Hellharrower (keep track of the markspeople controlling the Hellharrowers). Furthermore, every shot one Nameless Monk bites the dust. This is just from unnamed characters. Handle the Colonel and Big Dumb Rex separately.

If the Innerwalkers are crossing the courtyard after initiating combat in the building (or, somehow, at the rocket) resistance is much less organized. Play it by ear.

Other than the vehicle stunts and flight stunts any self-respecting experienced char-

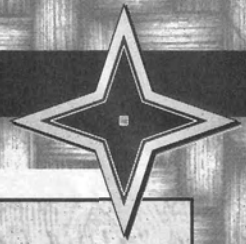
acters will try, all kinds of great stuff can happen in the courtyard:

- If a Techie-type can get up to one of those gun emplacements, it can be taken over and turned against the Buro. This is a Fix-It challenge of Difficulty 13 and takes 9 shots.
- The Buro troops won't risk shooting at targets near the rocket until it's clear that it's being hijacked. If the Innerwalkers head straight for it they won't get shot at during the second sequence (if running) or after they've left their vehicle. Instead, the Buro troops charge and attempt to intercept. So does Rex. It takes them one sequence to intercept.
- There are searchlights on the wall and on the building. If either is hit with a lightning bolt, the lights go out. If it's a night attack, this gives the Buro troops a +4 Difficulty modifier when shooting at the Innerwalkers, until the power comes back the next sequence. Furthermore, half as many Nameless Monks are killed in any sequence when the lights are out.
- Someone will, no doubt, shoot a gun off a little to close to the rocket fuel. See "The Rocket," below.

THE BUILDING

This is where PCs should want combat to occur. Close quarters are not only better for the Nameless Monks, it also limits the number of Buro bad boys who can mob the PCs at any one time.

The building has three interior floors and a basement. The command bunker and barracks are all in the basement. The ground floor contains a mess area (including kitchen) and some offices. The second floor is wall-to-wall offices and cubicles. The top floor contains the launch control facilities. The roof sports a waist-high reinforced wall all the way around behind which snipers can take cover.



- There are stairways. Lots of stairways. Shooting up them, chasing down them, throwing grenades in them, hurtling mooks on, down, and over the railings of them — there are many things to do on the stairs.
- The hallways have fire hoses with big, heavy metal nozzles. These can be swung with great force, or used to literally hose down mooks. Simply pulling one out of its casing and opening the valve to full will make the hallway all but impassable due to foam, thrashing nozzle and thick coils of hose.
- The barracks have bunk beds and footlockers. A good running battle could involve rolling over and under beds, leaping up on footlockers, diving between beds, shoving beds into the troops or knocking them over like dominos. The beds are full of puffy greenish foam, which flies up into the air if a mattress or pillow is shot, torn or cut.
- The kitchen is full of pots, knives, big ovens, hot water and a walk-in freezer. There's also a refrigerator that (contrary to *Rumble* in the Bronx) can not be opened from the inside.
- The office area of the building have a light-web system that makes all the tiny, cramped cubicles look like a sunny beach vista. The illusions are perfect, until they get shot, at which point they start to flicker.
- The cubicle walls don't reach to the ceiling. They're only 170 centimeters tall, so it's possible to leap up on a desk and run across the tops of the cubicle walls. (The ceilings are very high.)
- The launch center on the top floor is full of computers, big screens and screaming technicians. And a coffee machine. The four stairways up to the roof are here, one in each corner. A good trick would be to toss grenades up onto the roof, then pick off the markspeople as they stampede down the stairways.

The Launch Center

If the PCs can take over the launch center, Jill (or any other Techie) has three useful options. Each takes a sequence and a suc-

Big Dumb Rex

Sample Dialog: "Hmutht . . . thtop . . . inhrudeth! Hmutht kill!"

Attributes: Bod 10 (Str 11), Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 3 (Cha 1), Ref 6

Skills: Arcanowave Device 13, Creature Powers 13, Guns 13, Martial Arts 12

Arcanowave Shticks: Spirit Shield Generator, Feedback Enhancer, Juicer

Creature Shticks: Flight, Abysmal Spines

Weapons: Punch (14), Kick (15), Buro Hellharrower (14**/8/20, full autofire)

Colonel Djibril

Sample Dialog: "Concentrate your Hellharrowers on the rocket! If we can't have it, they won't either!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 1, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 14, Martial Arts 14, Leadership 9, Arcanowave Device 14

Arcanowave Shticks: Slap Patch, Spirit Shield Generator

Gun Shticks: Carnival of Carnage, Eagle Eye

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Backup Arm (8/1/5+1), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1)

cessful Fix-It roll, Difficulty 12.

1. Start prepping the rocket for launch.
2. Hack into the computer and re-route control of the rocket to the rocket's cockpit.
3. Take over the internal systems of the building (plumbing, heating, fire suppression, power, the front gate, the radio, the phones — everything except the command bunker and the Hellharrowers, which run off a separate system with their own generator.) Once command has been taken, executing any specific command (retracting the corridor onto the rocket, turning off all power in the building, closing the front gate) is a 3 shot action.

The Command Bunker

The command bunker is in the basement. Breaching its blast door takes 60 Wound Points. Inside are as many Buro goons as you deem appropriate. They're all well-armed. (They've got the munitions locker down there, meaning grenades and maybe even a rocket launcher.) There are chairs and computer terminals and not much cover. It's cramped and there's nowhere else to flee, which makes for an



ugly fight. Everyone in the bunker gets a +5 bonus on their first shots at people coming through the door, because it's cramped and they've been aiming right at it.

In the bunker, there are enough weapons for most bloodthirsty PCs, and the remote controls for the Hellharrows. Really clever PCs will get the idea of routing Hellharrower control to the rocket cockpit, or to their own portable computers. (Which is to say don't suggest this to them, but let them do it if they think of it.)

THE ROCKET

You've seen these before, just not tricked out with icky *arcano-tech*. You've got your basic big rocket on a basic big launch pad. You've got your basic big superstructure framework that keeps it from falling over. You've got your retractable bridge that leads from the framework to the cockpit.

If there are any infantry to spare, there are some here, guarding the stairs that lead up the structure. Big Dumb Rex also flies over if things are looking ugly.

- The tower is an open structure with lots of struts, tubes, machines, hoses and pipes. These can be dodged behind, swung on and shot at to produce showers of sparks or sprays of nasty chemicals. Oh yeah, and some of those pipes carry rocket fuel. Careful!
- The stairs that lead up the structure are totally exposed, unless you can hide behind a handrail. It would be a terrible shame if someone didn't fall over the edge — especially if he didn't manage to cling to a PC's clothing as he went over.
- When the rocket takes off, it's helped along by a gigantic underground gravity crane (p. 42). There are numerous smaller, portable gravity cranes around the tower that are used for maintenance, loading and so forth. These can be activated and used by those who recognize them.



- If the Buro still controls the command center the walkway onto the rocket is retracted, leaving a three meter gap between the tower and the access hatch to the rocket. The access hatch has a five centimeter lip around it. Jumping to it is a good trick (Martial Arts, Difficulty 10); so is jimmying the door open (Fix-It, Difficulty 10). **Techying** the walkway across is more safe, so maybe a Buro goon should get a lucky shot in that destroys the walkway's motor.
- A great aerial battle can be had, swooping around and about the tower and rocket; Lumpy, Rex and Chow can all fly. The tippy-top of the rocket would be a great place for a furious melee.
- Crashing a big truck into the rocket's base at high speed might tip it over, as if in slow motion. **PCs** who noticed a **BuroMil** truck barreling at the rocket would probably want to prevent that sort of thing.

Up, Up, and Away

Once the characters get on the rocket their troubles are over, right? Not by a long shot. There's room (and, more importantly, oxygen) for a dozen people — maybe thirteen if Lumpy changes form. But there are only two space suits. Space suits are not (strictly speaking) required for **taking** off in a rocket, but wouldn't you feel better if you had one?

If the Innerwalkers didn't get to the **command** center they have to fight for control of the rocket's computer. The geeks in the **command** center have already started draining the rocket's fuel. To add insult to injury, Col. **Djibril** orders the Thunderhawks to turn their Hellharrows on the rocket, and they pierce a fuel line. Someone will have to crawl (or fly) out on the rocket to patch it. That's double nasty if the launch has already started.

In the final analysis, some circumstance — use your imagination — should conspire to get some of the fuel out of the rocket before it takes off. (Preferably, it winds up on the launch pad so it ignites with the launch, is flung upwards by the gravity crane, and rains

down in fiery tears from heaven — but that's just gravy.) This is important to the plot. As the rocket rises into the sky, Jill (or whoever) **grave-**ly announces that the rocket has enough fuel to get to orbit (maybe) but not enough for **retro-**rockets. It's now a one-way trip. (If it's Jill, everyone waits for her trademark "Just joking." It never comes.)

Chow might freak at this point and demand that she scrub the mission and land the rocket, using the fuel to **retro** now. Jill refuses. Chow insists. If you wish, combat ensues.

STORMING THE SATELLITE

Eventually, the Innerwalkers reach the Fist of Shiva in a rocket that's empty of fuel and effectively worthless. But even though things look grim in the long term, they still have a job to do.

The Fist consists of five modules: a **dock-**ing/cargo bay, crew quarters, a control room, a workshop, and a surprisingly large and **well-**appointed bathroom. Each of these areas can be sealed off from the others and the air pumped out. The entire satellite has normal gravity unless the G-system (notoriously touchy) gets shorted out by impact or a bullet.

The Fist is lightly guarded; there are three soldiers and three scientists. If they think they're going to be overrun, the soldiers have their orders: blow up the satellite. The scientists don't like this idea, and may even help the Innerwalkers save the satellite if the soldiers have set the self-destruct sequence.

Of course, the cavalry are also on the way. Once the rocket was stolen, the Buro mobilized a crack force of **zero-g** commandos to intercept it and kill the thieves. They show up a little later.

Oh, one other thing: the satellite walls are pretty thin. Bullets will go right through them, causing the whole thing to implode in seconds.

This occurs to Techies or scientifically-minded characters on a Perception roll of 4 (unless



Unnamed Scientists

Sample Dialog: "D-d-don't hurt me!"

Attributes: Bod 4, Chi 0, Mnd 5 (Int 7, Wil 8), Ref 4

Skills: Info/Weather 18, Martial Arts 5, Fix-It 15
Weapons: Punch (5), Ki (10)

Unnamed Soldiers

Sample Dialog: "Back off, groundhog!"

Attributes: Bod 6, Chi 0, Mnd 4, Ref 6

Skills: Guns 9, Martial Arts 8, Sabotage 10, Intimidation 10

Unique **Shtick**: Being trained in zero-g combat, these soldiers get a +1 bonus when fighting in no gravity.

Weapons: Punch (7), Kick (8), Buro 16 (13*/5132, full autofire), Buro Backup Arm (8/1/5+1). Their guns are loaded with safety slugs, which probably won't pierce the walls of the station unless they're aimed directly at them.

they ask you, in which case you can just tell them). Other characters will need to make an Intelligence roll of 7 to even wonder about it (unless the character asks, in which case he's obviously wondering about it already). As a last resort, Jill might mention this as the rocket docks with the Fist.

This means that gunplay on the satellite might kill *everybody*. If a wall gets pierced, it takes one sequence before the room is emptied out and everyone in it dies. (How do they die? They pop.) Safety slugs are less likely to cause catastrophic decompression. Kindly GMs will ask their players before the session what **kind** of ammo they're using. If they say "armor piercing," don't let on.

How do you find out if a given bullet ruins everyone's day? Well, as long as rounds hit the people they're aimed at, you don't worry about it. As soon as bullets start missing, though, roll some dice, hidden, and tsk sympathetically. Then decide what happens based on what will advance the plot best. Maybe the bullet embeds itself in a control panel. A lucky break . . . or was that an **important** control panel? Maybe it ricochets off a metal strut and hits the **character** with the lowest Fortune. Hey, at least we're not all dead. Maybe the characters

can seal that module off in time to prevent catastrophe. Use your imagination, just balance the need to keep the danger real with the need to not have everyone die a boring, **unfulfilling** death.

SUPPRESSING THE LOCALS

Pretty much the only way to get onto the satellite is to dock with the **docking bay**. Two of the soldiers, wearing space suits, wait inside it. They take cover (90% cover — the good kind) and fire at the first unlucky slob out the door (at +3, since they've been aiming). Since they're wearing space suits, they couldn't care less if they blow a hole in the wall. They figure vacuum is just as good as any other way of killing off invaders, and they can always patch it later.

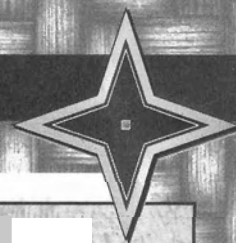
If either soldier takes a slug, or they fall under heavy attack, they retreat inside a second **airlock**, seal it and try to blow the air out of the cargo bay. It takes some quick Techie work — Fix-It, Difficulty 10, at the control panel on the docking bay side of the **airlock** — to prevent this.

Dealing with the soldiers shouldn't be **particularly** difficult, but it might be annoying. The fight can easily degenerate into a chase around the station, with the soldiers and scientists using their knowledge and experience of the satellite to frustrate the characters' pursuit. In the most likely case, the soldiers and scientists eventually make their stand in the control room module, sealing the doors and digging in.

If the three soldiers are removed from the equation quickly, the characters have a brief breathing space. If any scientists remain alive, the characters can **try** to bully them into working the satellite. If they fail their Intimidate rolls, the scientists pretend to cooperate but actually **try** to calm the weather around the site they were commanded to destroy.

If things drag out, though, someone notices that there's another shuttle on the horizon, and the commandos arrive.

You may want to allow the PCs to get the storm brewing before the commandos



arrive, or you might want to make the attempt to start the storm a feature of the fight. Up to you. (The best way to do the storm is as a typhoon so intense it tears down hills and drastically changes the shape of the terrain—flooding rivers — the whole Biblical nine yards, basically.) Once the storm's started, though, the PCs are sufficiently distant from the carnage that, while it looks awesome from space (a great black whirling mouth . . . a cruel eye of destruction upon the face of the earth . . . a vast, dark spider spinning its cloudy web over the land) they won't actually be taking part. The fight with the commando squad should be the immediate challenge.

A BOARDING PARTY

The Fist has no anti-ship weapons; few Buro spacecraft do. The soldiers have a fast shuttle. If the **docking** port of the Fist is occupied by the characters' rocket, they simply stick out a docking portal, glue it to the side of the Fist, and cut their way in.

There are a couple ways PCs can keep themselves from being boarded. (Assuming they want to. This shuttle is, after all, their only ticket home.)

- If Chow can be persuaded to go EVA in a space suit, he can shell the shuttle as it comes in. This might work, or might not — GM's call.
- The exoskeleton (see "The Docking Bay," p. 123) isn't strong enough to poke a hole in the ship's side, but nice try.
- Flying their own rocket into the shuttle would probably destroy both — a one way trip for some unlucky PC. If some player wants to sacrifice her character to save his fellows (well, to allow them to complete their mission and then die in orbit, anyway) let her. Be prepared for an abrupt change of pace in the session, with one character bravely killing himself while the others wait around to die after they blow up maglev central.

Unnamed Commandos

Sample Dialog: "If I kill you, I win. If you shoot me with that gun, you better shoot straight, or **everyone** loses."

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 0, Mnd 5, Ref 7

Skills: Guns 9, Martial Arts 11, **Sabotage** 10, Drive Shuttle 10, Fix-It 8

Weapons: Punch (8), Kick (9), Landridge Cutter (12, p. 45), **Deathsaber** (3, not reduced by armor or **Toughness**, p. 51)

Edna Ramirez, ~~Commando~~ Leader

Sample Dialog: "Take that, Jammer ~~s:um!~~"

Attributes: Bod 7, Chi 5, **Mnd** 6, Ref 8

Skills: Arcanowave Device 15, Guns 10, **Martial Arts** 11, **Drive Shuttle** 15

Arcanowave Shticks: Helix Ripper, Temporal Perception Suppressor (p. 62), Feedback Enhancer, **GateMaker** (p. 59)

Weapons: Punch (8), Kick (9), Landridge Cutter (12, p. 45), **Deathsaber** (3, not reduced by armor or **Toughness**, p. 51), Helix Ripper (15**/7/-), Buro 9 (10/1/17+1)

Laverne Onions

Sample Dialog: "Nice try, loser, **but guns . . . just . . . make . . . me . . . MAD!**"

Attributes: Bod 5, Chi 0 (Mag 8), Mnd 4 (Cha 1), Ref 10

Skills: Arcanowave Device 13, **Creature Powers** 13, **Guns** 12, Martial Arts 14

Creature Shtick: Damage Immunity: **Guns** (except for magic or silver bullets), **Blast (Acid)**, **Abysmal Spines 2**

Arcanowave Shticks: Neural Stimulator, Helix Ripper

Weapons: Blast (10), Punch (10), Kick (11), Helix Ripper (15**/7/-)

When the shuttle docks, it's a whole 'nother ball game. The shuttle contains ten crack **BuroMil** commandos, their commander Edna Ramirez and an abomination called Laverne Onions. All of the commandos are **hand-to-hand** specialists, trained in zero-gravity combat, very much the *creme de la creme*.

Laverne Onions got her name because of her complexion — it's the squidgy, purple black of uncooked liver. All over her skin are raised ridges that look (with some imagination) like cooked onions. "Liver and Onions," get it? She's about 160 centimeters tall, has no hair and her eyes look like uncooked hamburger. Other than that, and the big ugly spikes on her fingers, toes, knees and elbows, she's pretty

much human shaped. Laverne has a Helix Ripper, which won't hurt the satellite.

Edna is about 40 and tougher than nails. Unlike Col. Djibril from the launch station, Edna *Likes* combat. She knows, intellectually, that it's dangerous — but she really just finds it all too fun for words. She grins. Thanks to frequent arcanowave exposure, Edna has started to mutate. Her once-red hair is now coming in green in places. In fact, these patches make up an ancient Chinese character that, roughly translated, means "corruption of the heart." Also, her eyes glow in the dark and she's getting fangs. Off duty, she's a likable, easygoing type with a dirty mouth.

Edna, additionally, is equipped with a GateMaker (see p. 59) and is prepared to use it in a unique way. If she sees all the insurgents in one place, she'll shoot a hole in the wall behind them and then open a gate in front of her, escaping.

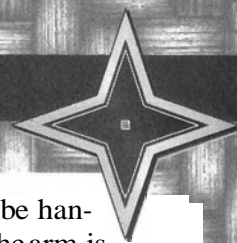
THE FIST OF SHIVA

The areas of the Fist of Shiva are arranged in a ring around the cargo bay. Contents of each are described below.

As mentioned above, there are five modules. The docking bay is found in the center, with the other areas forming a circle around it. Each module is separated from those adjacent to it with a heavy door. Opening doors by technical manipulation (assuming the characters do not control the control room) takes a Fix-It roll of 10. Opening a door by violence takes 30 Wound Points.

A number of useful items can be found scattered throughout the ship. Most interesting to the characters will be the canisters of foam sealant. Any Techie familiar with 2056 will recognize them and realize their use. If a wall gets holed, someone needs to get one of these canisters there and pop it open using a ring on top.





Gloppy gray goo then shoots out and gloms over the hole, sealing it. (Incidentally, a person's body will seal a hole too, but the person will be firmly stuck and take 10 Wound Points – ignoring Toughness – from frostbite.)

Combat suggestions for the whole station follow the area descriptions.

The Docking Bay

This area is general purpose storage and contains the only **airlock** that leads out of the satellite. A number of potentially useful items can be found here.

First, there are three space suits. In addition to keeping a character from dying in a vacuum, each gives 2 points of armor and uses the normal armor rules. They give no other penalties, and are equipped for extra-vehicular activity.

Second, there's a four meter tall cargo-hauling exoskeleton of the type seen in *Aliens*. It gives its operator Strength 11, and takes 6 shots to get into. It won't fit through the **airlock** that leads to the rest of the station, and doesn't have any mechanism to keep it from floating away if used outside the station.

Finally, there are a number of canisters of oxygen, which can be blown up or used to keep people alive.

crew Quarters

These are pretty basic: narrow cots, closets and a media center. It's like a **BuroPad** (see p. 7) only even more cramped and for six guys.

Workshop

This is where new equipment and parts are made. There's a big workbench covered with tools and raw materials. Racks of tools line the walls, and if those aren't enough, there are heavyduty storage cases that contain even more.

Interesting tools include a landridge cutter (p. 45) and a variant suckerlight (p. 43) that only has Strength 3, but can be set to push as well, and it doesn't selfdestruct after 24 hours.

Really weird stuff includes an exoskeleton arm that gives Strength 10, but for the right arm only. It also has a **micro-hand** set into

the palm, which allows tiny objects to be **handled** as if they were 10 times larger. (The arm is fixed when the micro-hand is being used.) If using the micro-hand, characters get a +4 on tasks that would benefit from extremely fine, gentle manipulation.

There's an "extruder" that spits out a clear film that looks and behaves like plastic wrap for about ten minutes, after which it freezes into a hard, clear plastic (Strength 10 to shatter). Works great on people!

There's also more oxygen and sealant here (see "The Docking Bay," above).

Control Room

The control room is essentially a round room that looks a little bit like the bridge of the **Starship Enterprise**. The outer walls all feature a whole boatload of delicate control panels that run everything on the station: lights, air, gravity, pressure, communications, temperature – you name it, you can control it from here.

In the center of the room is a big, rotating Captain Kirk chair. The ceiling (and a donut-shape of floor around the chair) are clear, providing a beautiful view of the field of stars and the earth below. It's a superhard polymer, so anyone who gets flung into it bounces back into the thrower.

The main function of the control room on the Fist of Shiva, though, is to control the weather. Since this is the whole point of the scenario, controlling the weather to blow up the Transworld Maglev Network Hub is an automatic action for any **Techie** character or for Jill (or for the scientists, of course). For Pete's sake, though, don't let them know it's automatic. Call for Fix-It rolls, and generally keep things tense and interesting. If the characters try to control the weather someplace else, you're on your own.

Controlling any non-scenario-essential **function** of the satellite calls for a Fix-It roll ranging from 5 - 15, depending on how difficult you want the given action to be.



Bathroom

Apparently someone at the construction facility that designed the Fist of Shiva thought it should have a really big bathroom. Why? We'll never know.

The bathroom features the usual facilities: toilets, shower, sinks, closets and so on.

Combat Ideas

While some of the combat ideas here are specific to certain areas of the satellite, most can take place anywhere.

- Control panels – in the control room and next to every airlock in the place – spit sparks if abused. Hitting them may also accidentally activate (or deactivate) whatever that control panel is responsible for: airlocks, decompression of a given module, gravity in a given area or the whole station or what have you.
- When the gravity goes off (really, you should make sure that the gravity gets shut off at some point) the time is ripe for really incredible kung-fu stunts. Also, opening closets and tipping over workbenches while the gravity is off will cause all kinds of clothes and/or sharp, pointy objects to fly around the room, bouncing off the walls and each other. This will cause confusion and/or damage.
- Accidentally bumping the media center in the crew quarters activates a **lightweb** (p. 46)

that makes the whole module look like a mountaintop. Grating, arrhythmic music blares out at painful volume.

- There's important, fragile equipment **everywhere** – pipes, hoses, junction boxes, conduits – and it's all exposed. Flailing fists, large weapons, and thrown characters are in constant danger of getting snagged on something that's prone to throw off sparks, toxic gasses, superheated liquid or anything else that's dangerous.
- Someone should really put on the **exoskeleton** in the cargo bay and kick butt with it. If no character does, one of the **commandos** thinks of it.

DENOUEMENT

Once the fight's over, the PCs essentially have a two options. They can steal the **commandos'** shuttle and pilot that back to Earth, where they'll meet with a hot welcome, or they can try to use the **GateMaker** to escape to the Netherworld, to another hot welcome. (Remember the **GateMaker** beacons?) It's their choice. Feel free to influence things one way or the other if either option leads more easily into the next scenario you've got in mind.

One last joyful thought: The last time the Fist of Shiva was used, **2056's** weather patterns were permanently kinked, producing the **Reckoning**. What happens this time? A second ice age? The earth as a giant greenhouse? Your call, just make it fun.



so the time I can spend with Daddy
is extra-precious.

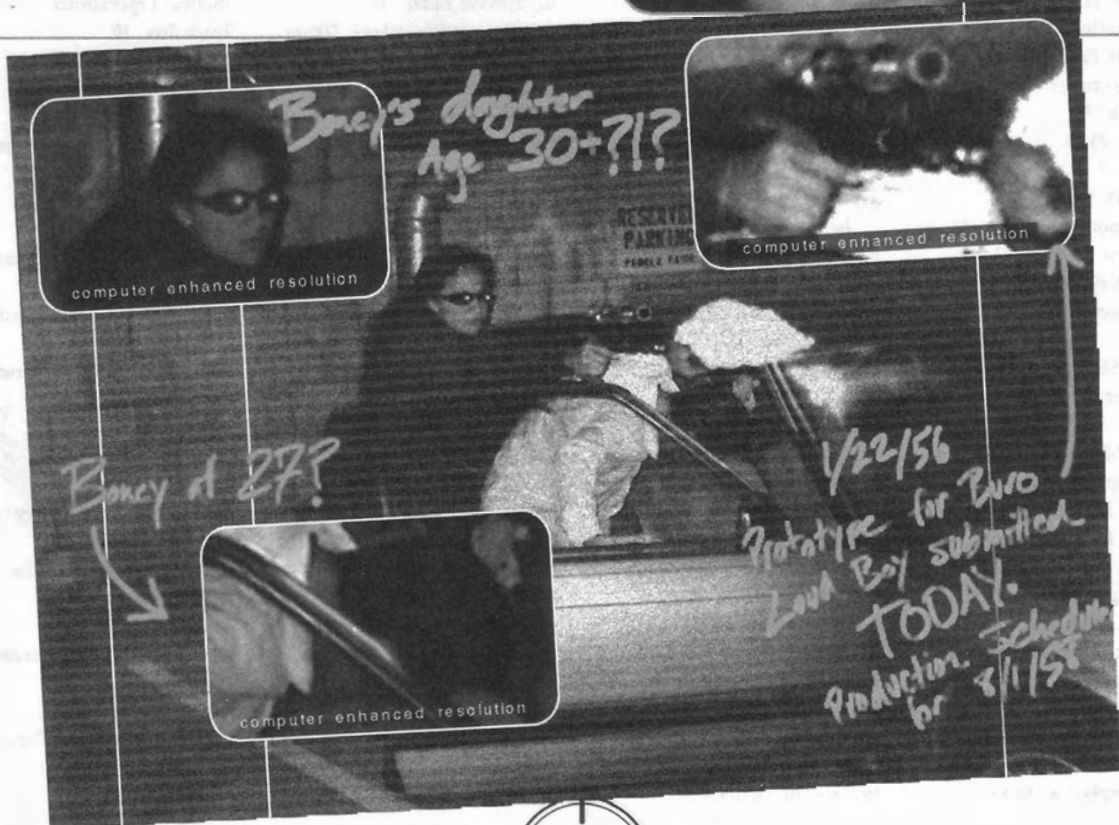
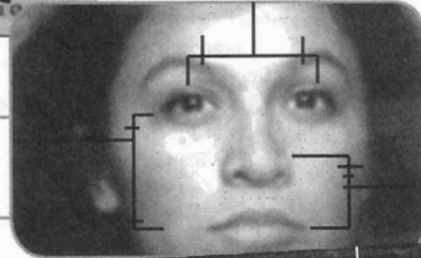
Much love,

Akiko Bonengel



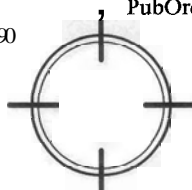
Madeline Lee = Boney's Daughter!
guiguity of elements = 91.72%

Photo subject Madeline Lee compared
to photo subject Akiko Bonengel: match,
with variance in bone structure of .022mm



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