

# PARANOIA XP

## PARANOIA

//Service Pack One//



Original design by  
**DAN GELBER**  
**GREG COSTIKYAN**  
**ERIC GOLDBERG**

Paranoia XP design by  
**ALLEN VARNEY**

# END CITIZEN LICENSE AGREEMENT FOR ALPHA COMPLEX USAGE

## IMPORTANT! READ CAREFULLY!

BY READING, BROWSING, STANDING NEAR, POSSESSING, NOT POSSESSING, THINKING ABOUT OR NOT AGREEING WITH THIS AGREEMENT, YOU AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING TERMS COVERED BY AND NOT COVERED BY THIS AGREEMENT.

YOU RECOGNIZE THIS AGREEMENT IS FOR THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF ALL CITIZENS RESIDING IN ALPHA COMPLEX.

THIS DOCUMENT IS CLASSIFIED SECURITY CLEARANCE **ORANGE** AND APPLIES TO CITIZEN OF ALL CLEARANCES.

**FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THIS AGREEMENT IS TREASON PUNISHABLE BY SUMMARY EXECUTION.**

## 1. License grant

Subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement, THE COMPUTER grants THE CITIZEN (referred to as 'the clone' or 'you') a non-exclusive, revocable, limited license to (a) live in THE COMPLEX, (b) work in THE COMPLEX and (c) obey THE COMPUTER.

## 2. License conditions

You may not rent, sell, lease, sublicense, distribute, assign, copy, give, take, or in any way reassign in whole or in part THE COMPLEX, its EQUIPMENT or any other fixed or free-standing structure residing within without express orders from THE COMPUTER. You may not modify, reverse-engineer, disassemble or otherwise explore THE COMPLEX. You do **not** have the right to, and may not, **not** obey THE COMPUTER.

You understand THE COMPUTER, in its sole discretion, may modify or discontinue your right to access any of its services or use of THE COMPLEX at any time, and it or its agents may at any time demote, censure, medicate, brainscrub or terminate you.

You acknowledge and agree THE COMPUTER has no obligation to make available to you subsequent improvements or changes to THE COMPLEX.

## 3. Ownership

You acknowledge and agree THE COMPLEX is licensed for your use by THE COMPUTER. You acknowledge the COMPLEX, including all equipment, content, protocols, software, documentation and licenses provided to you by THE COMPUTER in conjunction with its services, are protected by THE COMPUTER's service firms, by Troubleshooters in service to THE COMPUTER and by the threat of summary execution.

## 4. Content and infringement

You understand that all contents of THE COMPLEX, including, without limitation, all equipment, articles, structures, furnishings, graphic or video messages and all information, text, software, music, sound, graphics or other materials ('Content') made available or accessible by THE COMPUTER or THE COMPUTER's service firms, whether publicly available or privately transmitted, remain the sole property of THE COMPUTER. You understand and agree that by using THE COMPLEX, you may be exposed to Content that may be offensive, objectionable or lethal to you. You agree to accept all risks associated with the use of any Content, including any reliance on the accuracy, effectiveness or condition of such Content. Under no circumstances will THE COMPUTER be liable for any Content, including, but not limited to, any errors or omissions in providing any Content, or for any loss or damage or any number of deaths you incur by use of any Content.

THE COMPUTER is not responsible for the appropriate or inappropriate use of any Content by Citizens of THE COMPLEX. Although THE COMPUTER makes every effort to provide a safe living and working environment, you recognize and accept you are exposed to various security issues. By accepting this Complex Agreement you indicate you understand, acknowledge and agree by living and working in the COMPLEX, you may be subject to various risks, including the exposure to radiation, Communists, mutants, traitors, nerve gas and poisonous or infected-with-flesh-eating-bacteria algae chips, and you accept all such risk as solely your risk and responsibility.

## 5. Your obligations

You represent and warrant you are neither a Communist, a mutant nor a traitor, and are obliged to report these to THE COMPUTER for registration or termination. If you uncover any information in connection with the use of any unregistered mutant powers, traitorous activity or Communist ideologies, you agree to report this information, including the location of the body or bodies, directly and immediately to THE COMPUTER. If THE COMPUTER has reasonable grounds to suspect such information is inaccurate, not current or not complete, THE COMPUTER may demote, censure, medicate, brainscrub or terminate you and also pursue other appropriate remedies. THE COMPUTER shall use the information you provide in furtherance of your subsequent termination as an unregistered mutant, a traitor or a Communist.

You agree not to use the COMPLEX or any Content or services provided by Computer to conduct any secret society meetings or activities or to solicit the performance of any such meeting or activity.

## 6. Disclaimer of warranty

YOUR USE OF THE COMPLEX AND ANY CONTENT AVAILABLE THROUGH ITS SERVICE FIRMS IS AT YOUR SOLE RISK. THE COMPUTER PROVIDES THE COMPLEX AND ITS CONTENT ON AN 'AS IS' AND 'AS AVAILABLE' BASIS WITHOUT WARRANTY OF ANY KIND, EITHER EXPRESS, IMPLIED OR STATUTORY, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE, TITLE, CUSTOM, TRADE, QUIET ENJOYMENT, ACCURACY OR TERMINATION.

The above exclusions may not apply in sectors that do not allow the exclusion of certain implied warranties. Should you locate such a sector, you agree to report it at once to THE COMPUTER for immediate correction.

## 7. Termination

You may be terminated.

## 8. Limitation of liability

YOU EXPRESSLY ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE IN NO EVENT IS THE COMPUTER LIABLE FOR ANY DIRECT, INDIRECT, INCIDENTAL, SPECIAL, PUNITIVE, CONSEQUENTIAL OR EXEMPLARY DAMAGES OR OTHER RELIEF ARISING OUT OF, OR RELATED TO, YOUR USE OR INABILITY TO USE ANY OR ALL OF THE COMPLEX'S CONTENTS OR THE COMPUTER'S SERVICES INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, LOST CLONES, LOST LIVES OR LOST LUGGAGE.

## 9. Arbitration

Any claim or controversy arising out of or related to this Agreement, or the products or services THE COMPUTER provides or distributes, shall be settled by individual binding in an appropriate confession booth or Internal Security interrogation room so all parties may discover why you believe THE COMPUTER is wrong.

## 10. Successor agreements

The terms of this Agreement may change from time to time. Check with THE COMPUTER regularly to determine if material changes have been made. THE COMPUTER will prominently post changes at the Central Processing Unit's Central Comnode, Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET, at least 15 minutes prior to the effective date of the change.

## 11. General

This Agreement, as modified from time to time as described above, and including THE COMPUTER's Privacy Policy, Terms of Service and any other policies incorporated by reference, sets forth the entire understanding and agreement between the parties, excluding the use of Bouncy Bubble Beverage which is covered under its own agreements, 'Bouncy Bubble Beverage By-Laws' numbered 1 through 4.



**WELCOME, CITIZEN, TO ALPHA COMPLEX.  
WELCOME TO YEAR 214 OF THE COMPUTER.  
WELCOME TO...**

# PARA

*//Service Pack One//*



by **ALLEN VARNEY**

**DAN GELBER  
GREG COSTIKYAN  
ERIC GOLDBERG**

**KEN ROLSTON**



**JIM HOLLOWAY**

Cover and illustrations

**AARON ALLSTON  
PAUL BALDOWSKI  
BETH FISCHI  
DAN CURTIS JOHNSON  
and PARANOIA-LIVE.NET**  
Additional text

# PARANOIA

TM



Copyright ©1983,1987,2004 Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. **PARANOIA** is a trademark of Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User  
*ILLUMINATI* and the eye-in-the-pyramid logo are registered trademarks of Steve Jackson Games, and used by permission.

Similarities between characters in this game and person or corporate profit, by photographic, electronic or other means of storage and retrieval, is prohibited. You may copy blank character sheets, record sheets, checklists and tables for personal use.

Based on material published in previous editions of **PARANOIA**: the first edition (published in 1984 by West End Games) and the second edition (published in 1987 by West End Games). None of this material is 'open game content' this version, **PARANOIA XP**, as well.

**Note on pronoun usage:** The Computer suggests any citizen concerned about this game's usage of 'he' for the generic third-person pronoun, instead of 'he or she,' should attend to more important matters, such as serving The Computer with fervent loyalty.

E-mail questions and comments about this game to Mongoose Publishing at [sales@mongoosepublishing.com](mailto:sales@mongoosepublishing.com), or write to **PO Box 1018, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 1DG, UNITED KINGDOM**. Visit us on the World Wide Web: [www.mongoosepublishing.com](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com).

Published by Mongoose Publishing. Publication **MGP 6630**. ISBN 1-904854-26-5. Published August 2004. **Corrected second printing ('Service Pack 1') December 2004.**



# PARANOIA XP — Service Pack 1

## ALLEN VARNEY

Principal writer & designer/Chief scapegoat  
([www.allenvarney.com](http://www.allenvarney.com))

## DAN GELBER

## GREG COSTIKYAN

## ERIC GOLDBERG

Original system design & development

## KEN ROLSTON

1st/2nd edition development/Tone Czar

## PAUL MURPHY

1st/2nd edition editing/Lost in mists of time

## AARON ALLSTON

## PAUL BALDOWSKI

## BETH FISCHI

Additional material/Co-conspirators

## DAN CURTIS JOHNSON

'Mister Bubbles' writer/Training officer

## GREG COSTIKYAN

Project supervisor/Shadowy eminence

## IAN BELCHER

Mongoose line editor/Go-between

## IAN BARSTOW

Mongoose studio manager/Sub-scapegoat

## ALEXANDER FENNELL

Mongoose production director/Executioner

## JIM HOLLOWAY

Cover and illustrations/Minister of Arts

## STEVE GILBERT

## KEN ROLSTON

## ERICK WUJCIK

Wrote some older stuff we rehashed

## ALLEN VARNEY

Layout & editing/Tweak tweak tweak

## ANDY 'JAZZER' FITZPATRICK

Coollest Clone in the Complex

(mastermind of [www.Paranoia-Live.net](http://www.Paranoia-Live.net))

## CHAZ ESTELL

Combat simulator

## SAUL RESNIKOFF

Service Pack index/Damage control

## CHLORPROMAZINE, CLOZAPINE, THIORIDAZINE

Got us through the day

## THE COMPUTER

Our shining example

## ZAK ARNTSON

## BYRON BARRY

## RON BEDISON

## STEVEN DASHEIFF

## JASON DURRAL

## ALON ELKIN

## JÖRG ELLERMANN

## ROB FARQUHAR

## ZEKE FRASER

## ADAM HAASE

## SCOTT JONES

## HUMZA KAZMI

## JOHN KENYON

## VILLE LAHDE

## KARL LOW

## JOSHUA MARQUART

## ERIC MINTON

## JOSH MORETTO

## RICHARD NEALE

## TOM PIERCE

## MICHAEL PURGAR

## R. ERIC REUSS

## PATRICK SHAUGHNESSY

## GLENN SNAPP

## JARED A. SORENSEN

## JOHN SPANN

## DAVID STARR

## ALLAN STOJANOVIC

## PHILIP STORRY

## JEFF VANDENBERG

## MATT VENZKE

## WESLEY WILLIAMS

## RICHARD WINTERS

## ZIV WITIES

Valuable service to The Computer

## HARVEY BARKER, TANYA BERGEN,

## MARK BILLANIE, CHRIS BRAYDEN,

## ALICE CABRERA, DAN COPE, ANNE

## CROSS, MATT DALTON, DALLAS

## DEATLEY, DIETER EICHHORN, BEN

## ENGELSBERG, DANIEL FARBER, SARA

## FITZGERALD, SEAN FITZGERALD, TIM

FITZMAURICE, CHRISTOPHER FLACK,  
JOSHUA FLACK, ERIC FRANKLIN,  
JACK GEBHART, MARK GEDAK,  
JAMIE GODFREY, ALEX GOLDEN,  
JEFF GROVES, DAVID HELMS,  
JAMES HERBERT, DANIEL HASLAM,  
MARK HOWE, GREG INGBER, PAUL  
JACOBS, SCOTT JOHNSON, MARK  
KINNEY, PATRICK KOSSMAN, ROB  
MacDOUGALL, JEFF McRORIE,  
TOPI MAKKONEN, MURRAY PERRY,  
DAN PRESTON, C.H. PRINCE,  
JEFF REBBECK, ROBERT RODGER,  
DANIEL SCOTHORNE, EVERETT  
SHELBY, DAVID SIEGLE, MARK  
SIZER, AMY SNAPP, FRANK SRONCE,  
JENNIFER SRONCE, PAUL TEVIS,  
MICHAEL TRENT, JOHN TRUSSELL,  
MARK WAKS, STEPHANIE WOOD,  
MICHAEL WULFF, MICHAEL J. YOUNG

Playtesters or Toothpaste Disaster High  
Programmers

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
<b>Player</b> section	7
Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!	8
1. Greetings, RED citizen!	12
2. How <b>PARANOIA</b> works	14
3. Creating your Troubleshooter	16
4. Spending your credits	29
5. Clones	30
6. Mandatory Bonus Duty (MBD)	32
7. Doing things	33
8. Treason and commendation	36
9. Proper behavior for players	38
10. A solo mission	39
11. Tips for traitors	43
12. Going forward	47
<b>Gamemaster</b> section	49
Contents are Clearance <b>ULTRAVIOLET</b>	
<b>Sourcebook</b> section	95
Contents are Clearance <b>ULTRAVIOLET</b>	
<b>Mission</b> section	207
Contents are Clearance <b>ULTRAVIOLET</b>	
<b>Charts and tables</b>	244
Character sheet	254

# Now commencing *PARANOIA*...

## SECURITY CLEARANCE INFRARED— CLEARED FOR ALL CITIZENS

May I be of assistance?

**Sure. Why don't you tell me how this roleplaying game works?**

I'm sorry, citizen. That information is not available at this time.

**Huh? Most games are really eager to teach you the rules.**

Not *PARANOIA*. In *PARANOIA* you don't know the rules. You don't know who your enemies are. You don't know how your equipment works. You're never sure why you're doing anything. One thing you do know: Everyone is out to get you.

Ignorance and fear; fear and ignorance. These are your watchwords.

**Uhh... The back cover says something about a computer.**

In *PARANOIA* you play a Troubleshooter in service to The Computer. Trust The Computer! The Computer is your friend! You are The Computer's trusted agent and protector of Alpha Complex, The Computer's underground city of the far future.

**Why am I a Troubleshooter?**

You turned in a friend for treason. The Computer had him executed for betraying Alpha Complex. The Computer rewarded you for your loyalty.

Now you root out all traitors and apprehend or execute them. You uncover corruption among The Computer's servants and turn them in to Internal Security. You find trouble, and you shoot it.

**What's a 'traitor'?**

A traitor is a malevolent human citizen who has betrayed his friend The Computer and seeks to destroy The Computer, Alpha Complex, humanity and life as we know it. You must unmask and destroy all traitors. Watch out! Traitors are everywhere!

**Mutants** are traitors. These genetic freaks have uncontrollable abilities they selfishly use for their own advancement, rather than to serve Alpha Complex. You must subdue or eliminate them.

Members of **secret societies** are traitors. In organizations unsanctioned by The Computer they conspire irresponsibly to undermine the good order of Alpha Complex. You must destroy them.

By the way... *you* are a mutant, *and* a member of a secret society. You are a traitor.

**Wait, I'm a traitor?**

That is correct. Your fellow Troubleshooters would be eager to unmask you as a traitor and execute you. You work with many Troubleshooters. They all carry powerful weapons.

**Let me get this straight. My job is to hunt and kill traitors. I work with other people who have the same orders. They all want to kill me?**

Not quite. They all want to kill *traitors*. They don't know you're a Commie mutant traitor. Yet.

**If they find out?**

They'll apprehend or kill you, as any right-thinking citizen would. Of course, if you convict them of treason *first*, The Computer will have them executed, and you may survive. Note, though, false accusations of treason are themselves treason.

**So I want to prove they're traitors before they can prove I'm a traitor. If I don't, I die?**

Precisely. Dead traitors cannot testify to their own innocence, or to your guilt. It is convenient to be the last Troubleshooter on your team left alive.

The good news is, Troubleshooters routinely get shot, stabbed, incinerated, mangled, poisoned, blown to bits, and occasionally stapled, so you have many opportunities to ensure your teammates meet their just end.

Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy!

**...Are you sure this will be fun?**

Certainly, citizen! Fun is mandatory. The Computer says so, and The Computer is your friend. Do you doubt The Computer? Doubting The Computer is treason.

**Uh! No, certainly not. If The Computer says fun is mandatory, then this certainly will be fun. Only a Commie mutant traitor could believe otherwise.**

Excellent! You're getting the idea. As a sign of its trust, The Computer promotes you to Security Clearance RED. Welcome to *PARANOIA*.

## Attention, player!

Obtain **paper** and a **pencil**. Obtain **one 20-sided polyhedral die**, available in hobby stores. Obtain **three to six other players**, one of whom will be the Gamemaster (GM) who runs the game.

Whether or not you are familiar with the concept of roleplaying games, read the **Non-example of play** later in this introduction. If you are already familiar with other roleplaying games, also read the **boxed text** titled 'What You Must Forget.'

Now you may begin to play *PARANOIA*. True, you know nothing about the game yet. This is acceptable and even desirable for *PARANOIA*.

If you insist, you may read all of the **Player section**, which begins on page 7 and ends on page 48. It teaches a bit about the *PARANOIA* setting, how to create your Troubleshooter character, and *nothing at all of any importance* about the rules of the game. The Player section section is classified Security Clearance RED. You are now a Troubleshooter with Clearance RED, so you may read this section without fear of execution.

The rest of this book—the **Gamemaster section**, **Sourcebook** and **Mission**—is classified Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. This is above your clearance, so you are not permitted to read it. Only the Gamemaster, the person who runs the game, may read it. If you read any Gamemaster material, or display any knowledge of its contents during play, you are a traitor and subject to summary execution.

Of course, you paid for this nice book and would like to get your money's worth, so naturally you'll read it anyway. Don't tell your Gamemaster you did. Pretend you haven't read it. If he asks, look him straight in the eye, cross your heart, spit over your

shoulder and promise you have *never, ever* read the book and you have no intention of doing so. Of course he will believe you.

By the way—and this is for real—**don't read the mission!** No, really, don't. A mission is a story the Gamemaster will inflict—*run* for your characters. If you know all the plot details and surprises in advance, you'll have less fun when you play.

## Attention, Gamemaster!

Oh fortunate one, most trusted of The Computer's servants, you are Clearance ULTRAVIOLET and therefore may read this entire book. Read the Player section first so you know what your players know, then read the rest. You don't have to memorize anything; *PARANOIA* is a game of freewheeling improvisation, and you can revise, upgrade, ditch or bluff about any rule as you go along. Players can't argue with you—they're not allowed to show they know the rules.

The Player section includes rules for creating Troubleshooter characters. However, the first few times you play, we suggest you give your players the pregenerated (ready-made) characters in the Mission section. Photocopy these characters and hand them out to your players before you begin their mission.

The first time you run *PARANOIA*, use the mission provided in this book. This is an unusual game, and by using the mission, you'll see how to do things. Later you'll devise your own missions to delight and torment your players.

## Attention, longtime players and Gamemasters!

**Citizen:** Friend Computer!

**The Computer:** At your service!

**Citizen:** Please tell what happened when you Crashed in the *Crash Course Manual*, and how you came back, and what happened to Alpha Base.

**The Computer:** Your request is senseless. The Computer has never Crashed. There is no such place as Alpha Base. Any statement to the contrary is a rumor. Rumors are treason.

**Citizen:** But what about the Secret Society Wars, and MegaWhoops, and Reboot Camp?

**The Computer:** The *PARANOIA* products that refer to these fictitious events have never existed. They are now un-products. You have experienced bizarre hallucinations.

Be reassured! Due to highly advanced engineering and multiply redundant systems, your friend The Computer cannot Crash. It is impossible. The Computer cannot fatal exception error.

[Feedback squeal, followed by a long pause.]

**Citizen:** Um... Friend Computer?

**Computer:** [Happy xylophone tune.] Welcome to *PARANOIA* XP. Please press Control-Alt-Delete to log on.

The first edition (1984) and second edition (1987) of *PARANOIA* were, of course, perfect. The Computer says so. This edition is even *more* perfect. Entirely new character creation and rules systems make the game more like what it really is. To improve efficiency and fun, characters from previous editions



# INTRODUCTION CLEARANCE INFRARED

are completely incompatible with the new rules. Other (non-fun) games would offer a character conversion system. In **PARANOIA** XP no conversion is required, because older characters could not possibly have survived this long.

**PARANOIA** XP re-emphasizes the darkly humorous tone of the game's first edition while retaining the fast-paced, rules-light approach of the second. This edition also offers three play styles, each with its own tone and sometimes slightly different rules.

- ③ If you've discussed your fondest memories of **PARANOIA**, did you speak of frenzied firefight fiascos in briefing rooms, elevators and sewers? Multiple deaths in Research & Design before the mission began? Did you use the phrase 'giant radioactive mutant cockroaches'? Of course you did. The *Classic* play style retains these elements.
- ③ Experienced players may also like the more restrained *Straight* style, which gives Troubleshooters a halfway decent chance to survive (gasp!) through several missions.
- ③ To initiate new players into the pleasures of Alpha Complex, try *Zap*, a fast and frantic shoot-em-up where no one gets out alive.

## Non-example of play

Nearly every published roleplaying game (RPG) starts with an explanation of how an RPG works. We Famous Game Designers used to skip reading these, until we realized they tell a lot about the designers' philosophy. Many RPGs describe roleplaying as 'It's "let's pretend," but with rules.' Others call it a deeply emotional collaboration in storytelling. Some offer scholarly and arcane discussions of Gamist, Narrativist and Simulationist RPG philosophy. Some indie games even compare roleplaying to laying down tracks in a hot jazz band.

We like all these descriptions. **PARANOIA** is somewhat like all of them, in a non-jazz-band sort

of way, but it's also different. **PARANOIA** is also something of a psychological exercise.

Because of this, we won't tell you how to play, unless you're cleared for it. We won't even show you an example of play for this game. Instead, here's an example from some other game.

**PARANOIA** is set in a high-tech future underground city of lasers, robots, cloned citizens and an insane Computer. This game has no character classes—no warriors, wizards, priests or rogues—no magic and, aside from the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach, no monsters.

Yet, that said, a good way to dramatize the unique nature of **PARANOIA** is to imagine another RPG's familiar dungeon crawl filtered through the paranoid mindset.

## If Popular Fantasy RPG™ worked like PARANOIA

**Gamemaster:** You're in a long dungeon hallway with a dirt floor, stone walls and an arching stone ceiling. There are burning torches in wall sconces every ten feet. You see one door.

**Warrior player:** What color is the stone?

**GM:** Sort of orange.

**Rogue player:** Aah! I'm only Clearance RED! Get me out of here!

**Priest player:** I'm casting *Mass raise security clearance* to make us all ORANGE. [*Passes note to the GM: 'I'm also casting Subvert to Communism on the warrior.'*]

**Wizard player:** I'm using the Gem of Memory to document the priest's spellcasting. I, uh, may want to study his technique later.

**Priest:** Of course, of course. [*Looks significantly at the rogue, whom he subverted earlier. The rogue nods and passes a note to the GM. The GM rolls a 20-sided die (1d20).*]

**GM:** All right. You're all ORANGE for the moment and can pass safely down the hallway. Your orders, you recall, were to investigate the door. [*Passes note to warrior: 'You feel a strange, treasonous impulse to overthrow the existing social order and restore power to the people.'*]

**Warrior [Gulps]:** Come, Comra— fellow heroes, let us break down the door!

**Wizard:** Wait! Did you almost call us 'Comrades'? That's a Commie word!

**Priest:** Of course he didn't. I heard nothing of the sort.

**Rogue:** Nor I. Are you leveling false accusations against our leader? That's treason.

**Wizard:** Don't anybody move! I'm not only leveling accusations, I'm leveling my Wand of Fireballs against all three of these traitors. By the way, I'm recording all this with the Gem of Memory.

**GM:** When you reach for it, you notice the Gem is missing.

**Rogue:** Uh-oh! You've lost a valuable magical item. That'll mean a heavy fine at the guildhall.

**Wizard:** I'm firing a fireball at all of them!

**GM [Rolls a 20-sided die]:** I'm sorry, it appears your experimental Wand of Fireballs has backfired. In a trice you are immolated in a ball of flame. Fortunately the fire is orange, so at least your charred body hasn't breached its proper security clearance. Scratch one wizard. Your next simulacrum has been dispatched from the guildhall and should arrive shortly.

**Wizard:** You bastards are gonna pay.

**GM:** No comments from the currently dead, please. Suddenly the door opens. A huge hobgoblin in leather armor stands there with his broadsword drawn. On his chest you see the mark of a silver hand.

**Rogue:** I attack him with—

**Warrior:** Wait! I wave my fingers at him from under my chin.

**Priest and rogue:** What?

**GM:** The hobgoblin nods at your recognition signal and lowers his sword. He waves you all inside. Who's going in first?

**Warrior, priest and rogue [Pointing at each other]:** Him!

...And so on. To repeat, none of the traditional fantasy elements in this example resemble anything in Alpha Complex, the underground city of **PARANOIA**. At this point you know nothing much about Alpha Complex.

Keep it that way. You may live longer.

## What you must forget

If you have prior experience with other roleplaying games, this is regrettable but can be overlooked. However, it is mandatory to abandon the following notions, which interfere drastically with the **PARANOIA** experience:

- 1. Solidarity among characters or players.** Other (non-fun) RPGs exhort you to do your part in the adventuring party, split the loot equally, avoid internal strife and generally play good little scouts. In **PARANOIA** this trusting behavior will get you killed six times in six minutes. Trust no one, especially your fellow players.
- 2. The quest for weapons and loot.** Other games reward your efforts with treasure, cool new powers and ever more damaging attacks. Most powerful weapons in **PARANOIA** are experimental. You'll learn quickly not to trust experimental weaponry. You have a mutant power, but it too is hard to control and prone to backfires. The Computer rewards successful missions with credits, which you can spend on a variety of useful or gratuitous possessions—but only if you're cleared to own them.
- 3. Shaping a complex personality.** In other games you can craft a highly individual character of emotional depth, who grows and changes over time in fascinating ways. In **PARANOIA** it is unwise to grow attached to your Troubleshooter, whose lifespan is typically measured in days, if not hours. The Computer prizes conformity; interesting or outlandish behavior is not actually illegal but always suspicious. Instead of plumbing depths of character, experience the game's atmosphere. You'll probably enjoy the game more if you treat your Troubleshooter as a stand-in for your own hopes, schemes and fears.
- 4. Comprehensive attributes, skills and combat options.** Many other RPGs have elaborate character creation, movement and combat systems. These games offer a well-designed character a broad range of control in almost any situation. In **PARANOIA** you have no control. The Gamemaster decides all details of movement, combat and the environment. Your character survives entirely at the pleasure of the GM, who shields you from other players so long as you do entertaining things. Entertain or die.

The GM tells you what you see. You say what you want to do. The GM tells you what happens. You don't try to optimize your tactical advantage; instead, you want the best *dramatic* advantage. The most entertaining character wins; put on a good show and Fate will smile on you. You'll enjoy watching the boring characters die like—well, like Troubleshooters. Won't that be fun?

Of course it will. Fun is mandatory.

# PARANOIA Player Section

Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter	8
1. Greetings, RED citizen!	12
2. How PARANOIA works	14
3. Creating your Troubleshooter	16
4. Spending your credits	29
5. Clones	30
6. Mandatory Bonus Duty	32
7. Doing things	33
8. Treason and commendation	36
9. Proper behavior for players	38
10. A solo mission	39
11. Tips for traitors	43
12. Going forward	47
<b>Charts and tables</b>	
Troubleshooter creation checklist	17
Specialties list	19
Service firm tables	22
Mutant power tables	23
Secret society tables	24
Secret skills	25
Equipment chart	28
The Prime Rules for Players	33
Acceptable behavior	37
Insubordination	37
Treason	37
Meritorious conduct	37
The IR Market	48

Until today you were **just another Clearance INFRARED worker**, working a low-pay job for one of **The Computer's** service firms. For a hundred credits a month you did light drudgework in a food vat, bot maintenance facility, reactor control room or clone tank.

The work was dull. Meals consisted of microwaved Hot Fun pouchmeals, extruded ropes of Cold Fun and a bag of algae flakes, washed down with CoffeeLike, TeaSir or the occasional Bouncy Bubble Beverage. You slept in a different bunk each night in the communal barracks. It was loud as a boiler room. It smelled like turpentine. You got skin rashes and ringworm. Still, you drifted along blissfully in a haze of free HappiTime medication.

Then **you reported another INFRARED's treasonous behavior** to your friend The Computer. In recognition of your service, **The Computer promoted you to RED Clearance**, awarded you 1,000 credits and your own quarters, authorized a reduction in sedation, and granted a token treasure from the high-clearance hydroponic gardens: **an apple.**  
**A real apple.**

**Security Clearance RED**  
**WARNING!**

Knowledge or possession of this information  
by any citizen of Security Clearance INFRARED  
constitutes treason punishable by summary execution

Eating that apple—the first time you'd ever tasted actual food!—you realized **people at higher clearances eat like this all the time.**

Thinking clear thoughts—the first time you'd done that, too—**you burned with a new desire:** to live better than you have. **To get ahead.**

The Computer told you the name of that variety of apple: Red Delicious.



CLEARANCE  
RED

- ◆ **Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!**  
(Clearance RED)
- ◆ **Troubleshooter Central**  
(Clearance GREEN)
- ◆ **Mission Status**  
(Clearance INDIGO)
- ◆ **Contact Troubleshooter Central**  
(Clearance ULTRAVIOLET)

Pss! Click [here!](#)

You're on **HPD&MC Friendship Network!**

[<http://RED.hpdmc.aaa/WelcomeTShooter.01>]

## Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!

*Orig 1.0 date 3.11.16/14:15:04.6*

*Rev 843.7 211.06.30/22:56:09.1*

Many Troubleshooters before you have loyally served Alpha Complex and The Computer. It is now your honor to follow in their glorious struggle—stained with blood but never treason!—in helping The Computer achieve its imminent and inevitable victory over Communism.

Keep the heroic sacrifices of your predecessors ever in mind. Emulate their bravery against overwhelming odds. Use every bone and sinew, every drop of blood in your struggle, as they did. Let their ultimate immolation on the pyre of steadfast devotion be your example.

It will be fun!

### Victory is Near!

Every Junior Citizen envies the exciting life of a Troubleshooter. Supporting The Computer's 'Great Complex' initiative (*replaces completed Happiness Initiative 'Trust Can Be Fatal' per HPD&MC dispatch HPD211.06.25/25 rev 6, Clearance RED*), rooting out traitors and mutants, protecting helpless citizens from terror, corruption and subversion—this is more than the stuff of nightcycle vidshows. This is your high duty. This is why you are alive.



CLEARANCE  
RED

- ◆ **Welcome, Lucky Troubleshooter!**  
(Clearance RED)
- ◆ **Troubleshooter Central**  
(Clearance GREEN)
- ◆ **Mission Status**  
(Clearance INDIGO)
- ◆ **Contact Troubleshooter Central**  
(Clearance ULTRAVIOLET)

Pss! Click here!

Heads up, flunky! Just wanted to hack in some secret notes about your upcoming hose-job in the Trouble victims. Don't let on to the high-colors (they like you stupid) but these tips may keep you alive long enough to spend your first mission bonus.  
—Norm-O, Leet Phreak

# Welcome, Luck

Orig 1.0 date 3.11.16/14:15:04.6  
Rev 843.7 211.06.30/22:56:09.1

IF YOU ARE READING THIS YOU ARE ALREADY COMPROMISED. IntSec sniffers in the walls. Monitoring all transmissions of this text and receiver's coordinates. IntSec on your case is worse than bad Sandallathon. Ditch this readout, skip fast!

209.10.22 Hacked a sweetheart subroutine for IntSec sniffers, now logs bogus coordinates and UV clearance. Nobody smart checks them. —HappyClone

INTSEC PLANT DON'T TRUST HIM  
IT'S TRUE STOP READING THEY ARE  
ALREADY ON TO YOU

hey i know happy - probably did throw off intsec but he probably hacked this readout to steal your me card too watch out

Many Troubleshooters before you have loyally served Alpha Complex and The Computer. It is now your honor to follow in their glorious struggle—stained with blood but never treason!—in helping The Computer achieve its imminent and inevitable victory over Communism. Keep the heroic sacrifices of your predecessors ever in mind. Emulate their bravery against overwhelming odds. Use every bone and sinew, every drop of blood in your body as they did. Let their ultimate sacrifice on the pyre of steadfast devotion be your example.

MIKE-U LIVES! Read first letter each sentence. Even Computer knows! Mike-U-BCE-5 finest clone ever / tried to overthrow Comp & free us all / join PURGE keep Mike-U-5 memory alive! I DREAMED I SAW MIKE-U LAST NIGHT—

Mike-U-5 and Mike-U-6 both led the revolt. Computer offered them both but needed 'hero'. Get truth in pamphlet *Lies The Computer Taught Me and Make Credits Fast Through Multi-Clearance Marketing*. Wear Teela-O pin on left overall strap. We will contact you.

Dear Vatslime Traitor and Total Nullwit With Lead-Brain Mutation! This code obviously refers to Mike-U-BCE-6, heroic defender of Alpha Complex, not Mike-U-5, damnable heathen apostate. Memorialize true heroes! Join First Church of Christ Computer Programmer, for The Computer maketh me to lie down in a soft haze of happiness.

Anyone who thinks putting an algae wafer on his tongue means he's gonna get 'saved' and uploaded to The Computer's databanks forever is a few bugs short of clean code. Corpore Metal offers us a clean practical path to the next stage of evolution. Give up your meat!

Oh yes indeed, toddle off and live forever as a scrubot and forget the negligible achievements of Old Reckoning humanity: Amadeus MossHart, Frank Loyola Wright, Pikasso, World War II of the Rings, Microangelo, King Stephen, Currier Ives, The Cowsills. One less uncultivated meatbrain merely makes life less stressful for Romantics who cherish our elevated past. For a delightful taste, check the attached file, a profound and enigmatic text that evokes the magic of centuries past. It's called *Webmaster in a Nutshell*.

oops think i deleted attachment. was hoping it told about new drugs. anyone got venslimamine? leave under NE table in mess hall 242 vcj sector. leave contact info, will pay you 1000 credits twosday. —must go head hurts—

It will be fun!

Victory is Near!

Every Junior Citizen

exciting life

Supporting

Complex' in

Happiness Initi

HPD&MC dispa

Clearance RED

mutants, protecting helpless citizens from terror, corruption and subversion—this is more than the stuff of nightcycle vidshows. This is your high duty. This is why you are alive.

**CLEARANCE  
RED**

## **Born in Crisis, Tested Under Fire**

No matter how many stories you've heard at your current or previous security clearance about Mike-U-BCE-5 and -6, the truth about these legendary High Programmers and the origin of the Troubleshooters is more wonderful still.

Originally diligent INFRARED workers in the earliest years of The Computer, the Mike-BCE clone family earned The Computer's trust, and Mike-BCE-5 and -6 both rose in clearance to the illustrious ranks of the High Programmers. Heed their example! Earn The Computer's trust and you, too, may aspire to the highest service!

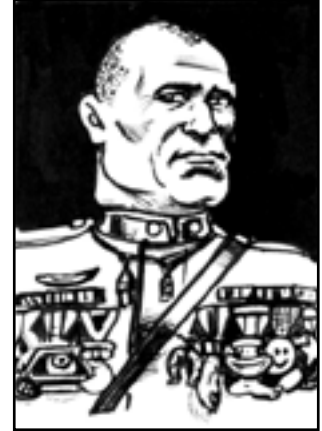
During his honorable early career, Mike-U-5 served The Computer loyally as Chief Supervisor of the Armed Forces. Only after a dangerous mission into the Outdoors Sector did Mike-U-5 succumb to the traitorous influence of mutant mind control. Even The Computer's most trusted servants are always vulnerable, so be constantly alert!

Subverted and compelled to commit treason, Mike-U-5 returned to Alpha Complex and foolishly attempted to lead the Armed Forces and Internal Security in an uprising against your friend The Computer.

Not corrupted as his brother had been, Mike-U-6 put down the abortive uprising, but Mike-U-5 and certain renegade forces escaped The Computer's justice. The lingering threat of Mike-U-5 and the temporary reduction in the strength of Alpha Complex defenses led Mike-U-6 to propose to The Computer the formation of a new elite service unit, the Troubleshooters.

Mike-U-BCE-6 led the Troubleshooters loyally on many missions in The Computer's service. Ultimately he himself led the mission into Outdoors Sector to locate Mike-U-5. As you know from numerous vidshow adaptations, Mike-U-6 confronted his traitorous brother in a Communist stronghold and terminated him, but not before the treacherous brother mortally wounded the great High Programmer. The dying words of Mike-U-6 to his loyal Troubleshooters still hold true to this day: 'Serve The Computer as it works to protect our Great Complex!'

*(Replaces and corrects previous last words per HPD&MC dispatch HPD211.06.25/25 rev 6, Clearance RED.)*



*Mike-U-BCE-6*

## **Your High Purpose and Great Opportunity**

The Computer has already shown its trust in you by promoting you to Security Clearance RED. By recruiting you now to its elite Troubleshooter service unit, The Computer demonstrates its confidence that you can face any problem caused by any traitor in any sector of Alpha Complex. Total victory is now in sight. Do your part! Fulfill your mission! Serve The Computer and you will rise rapidly in its service.

Beware! Traitors are everywhere! The safety of your fellow Troubleshooters and the security of Alpha Complex depend on you. Immediately report any treasonous or insubordinate behavior or any suspicion of treason or insubordination to The Computer. Failure to do so is treason.

Some of your fellow Troubleshooters may serve The Computer as guardians of Internal Security. They are here to protect you. They diligently report every hint of treasonous or insubordinate behavior to The Computer. Rejoice to know any treason among your companions will be discovered and punished!

You may be asked to test experimental equipment or perform vital services for your own or other service firms. Honor these simple requests, for they help The Computer protect and serve Alpha Complex!

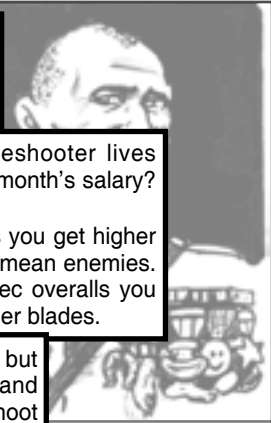
Your missions may take you to unfamiliar sections of Alpha Complex. The traitors you face may try to subvert you with unfamiliar and treasonous ideas. Be prepared! Know the enemy! Guard against treason!

When you are troubled or uncertain, always remember the honorable legacy of the Troubleshooters who perished before you. Do as they did. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

### Born in Crisis, Tested Under Fire

No matter how  
clearance a  
Programme

'No he doesn't!' PROOF all the Mike-U family died long ago. Clone tank tech back then was bad, they decanted six copies at the same time and then NO MORE. No MemoMax, no reboots! Cloning breakthroughs by PRO TECH are the only reason you can hope to live forever. GO PRO, BACK PRO TECH.



Mike-U-BCE-6

Originally diligent INFRARED workers in the earliest years of The Computer, the Mike-BCE clone family earned The Computer's respect. Mike-BCE-5 and -6 both rose in clearance to the illustrious ranks of The Computer's Programmers. Heed their example! Earn The Computer's respect by aspiring to the highest service!

'Live forever'? Like a Troubleshooter lives long enough to collect his first month's salary? Please!

Newbie, you're vatslime unless you get higher clearance than your buddies, I mean enemies. Until you get nice GREEN reflex overalls you better have eyes in your shoulder blades.

During his honorable early career, Mike-U-5 served The Computer as Chief Supervisor of the Armed Forces. Only after a dangerous mission in the Outdoors Sector did Mike-U-5 succumb to the traitorous influence of mind control. Even The Computer's most trusted servants are not immune, so be constantly alert!

Anyone with eyes anywhere but normal is a stinking MUTIE and Troubleshooters are right to shoot him!

Muties turned Mike-U-5. Muties killed Mike-U-6. Muties have killed me four times already and I'm getting seriously annoyed.

Subverted and compelled to commit treason, Mike-U-5 returned to Alpha Complex and foolishly attempted to lead the Armed Forces against his friend The Computer.

Not corrupted as his brother had been, Mike-U-6 put down the renegade forces escaped The Computer's justice. The lingering threat in the strength of Alpha Complex defenses led Mike-U-6 to propose to form an elite service unit, the Troubleshooters.

HPD&MC updates the Mike-U myth with every new Computer initiative. When I got drafted into the T-Shooters Mike-U-5 was officially subverted by Outdoors radiation after Commies sabotaged his armor.

Our team leader told me (just before I bumped him off, haha!) back when he was drafted, Mike-U-5 was getting corrupted by sinister secret society bureaucrats giving him fake drugs.

Hey newbies, if you get assigned to my team, lemme know the latest reason poor old Mike-U-5 went bad before I shoot you, OK?

Mike-U-BCE-6 led the Troubleshooters. He himself led the mission into the Outdoors Sector. In the Outdoors Sector, Mike-U-6 confronted the treacherous brother Mike-U-5.

MIKE-U IS A HOAX! Never existed! See suppressed MS *Proceedings of the Elders of the Brotherhood of Psion*, taped under Reactor Bay 4 in Tevatron Central Radiation Chamber, CXX Sector. This will open your eyes!

loyal (Repl...  
You  
The  
you  
any  
Fulfill  
Be  
depe  
insubordination to The Computer.  
Some of your fellow Troubleshooters are here to protect you. They will rejoice to know any treason among your companions will be discovered. You may be asked to test experimental equipment or perform various tasks. Honor these simple requests, for they help The Computer protect you. Your missions may take you to unfamiliar sections of Alpha Complex. You will be faced with unfamiliar and treasonous ideas. Be prepared! Know that when you are troubled or uncertain, always remember the honor of The Computer.

Mike-U-6's corpse is still preserved on display as a hero of The Computer in an INDIGO mansion. I know, I had to paint the thing with preservatives. After I got done the INDIGO had me declared a traitor and wiped my clone template. I killed him, at least for a while. (Hope his new clone cost a bundle!) Now I'm in hiding and recruiting warriors for an ultimate battle. Stand at NHN Sector Effluent Intake 473 and hold a bag of algae chips by one corner between thumb and index finger. I'll contact you. —SewerRat

INTERNAL SECURITY TRAP dont believe i nearly got caught and also lost my chips

Always burn your team leader first before he burns you. Smash his PDC and plant Commie propaganda on the body so you won't get hit with the cost of his clone. Kill him five or six times and Tech will eventually wipe his template.

Security. They are prior to The Computer.

Security. They are prior to The Computer. You may be asked to test experimental equipment or perform various tasks. Honor these simple requests, for they help The Computer protect you. Your missions may take you to unfamiliar sections of Alpha Complex. You will be faced with unfamiliar and treasonous ideas. Be prepared! Know that when you are troubled or uncertain, always remember the honor of The Computer.

Kill witnesses and smash their PDCs too! ALWAYS get to debriefing ALONE! ONLY WAY! ONLY WAY!

Only IntSec would tell lies so bald, spy! Sweat is truth!

NONONO never plant anything you touched, they trace your sweat chemicals. Instead use glove soaked in a mild solution of dilute Cold Fusion.

Don't forget surveillan monitors! Disguised nowadays to look like

Sweat trace is fake IntSec propaganda, just like RFID tags they conceal in your daily

RFID TAGS ARE REAL DONT BELIEVE HIM THEYRE IN YR

Get bots to plant evidence, they're stupid.

REAL T-shooters would destroy all bots, humanity's curse!

Fry RFID with new microwave gun, now avail from Free Enterprise, only

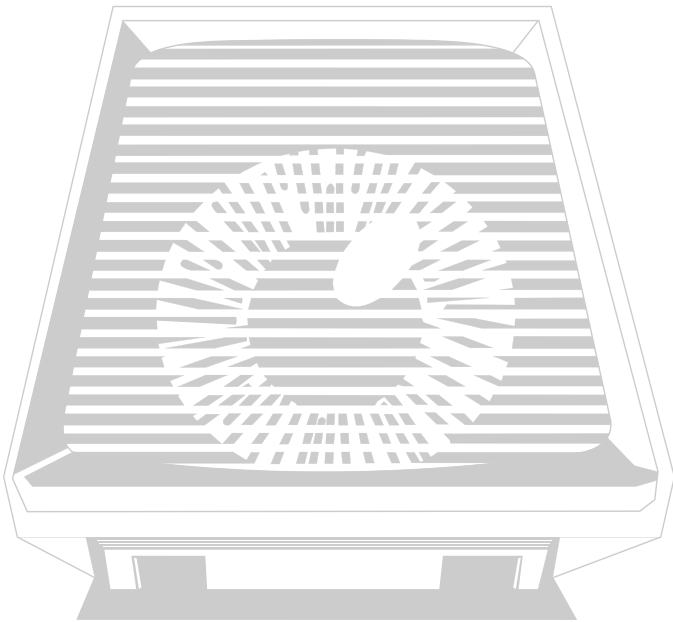
No they're not!

Yes they are!

No they're not!

Yes they are!

1. Greetings, RED citizen!



The Computer introduces you to your new security clearance with this comprehensive and entirely accurate guide to fun and success through service to Alpha Complex.

You are required to know and understand all contents or face summary demotion.

- ☞ You are Security Clearance RED.
- ☞ You are assigned to a service firm in one of eight service groups.
- ☞ You have five backup clone bodies and can purchase more.
- ☞ Hunt traitors: mutants and members of secret societies.

About your clearance

The Computer has promoted you from your previous INFRARED Clearance to your new and exciting RED Clearance. Your new security clearance signifies The Computer's benevolent trust in you. The Computer is your friend.

To review (as specified in HPD&MC Directive NSC-RED-44A rev 4,675, 'Orientation for the Newly Trusted'), The Computer's system of security clearances follows the colors of the electromagnetic spectrum: RED, your current clearance, followed in ascending order by ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO, and VIOLET. INFRARED is below RED, and ULTRAVIOLET (the clearance of the illustrious High Programmers) is above VIOLET. The higher a citizen's clearance, the more deeply The Computer trusts that citizen.

All citizens are required to wear clothing of the same color as their security clearance. As an INFRARED you wore black. With your new RED Clearance The Computer has thoughtfully provided a new red jumpsuit and boots. Wear them at all times. Failure to comply is treason.

(EXCEPTION: You may temporarily remove all or part of your clothing for hygienic purposes such as showering. Good hygiene is essential to good citizenship. Poor hygiene is insubordination.)

The Computer determines each citizen's clearance with complete impartiality. Higher clearance means greater responsibility; it also

brings benefits. The Computer cares for the needs of all citizens, of course, but it rewards most greatly those who sacrifice the most for the sake of society and their fellow beings.

Citizens of higher clearance are not necessarily more knowledgeable or capable than you. They have advanced solely because they selflessly served the greater good and earned The Computer's trust. Admire, respect and defer to higher-clearance citizens. Failure to defer at all times is insubordination and may be treason.

If you serve The Computer well, you will earn its greater trust and thereby advance in security clearance.

Aspire to advance! Seek to serve Alpha Complex in ever greater ways! Failure to aspire may be considered insubordination.

To ensure that only citizens of the requisite competence and trustworthiness have access to restricted areas, The Computer has divided Alpha Complex into colored areas. Citizens may only enter areas of their clearance or lower. You must stay within black (INFRARED) and RED areas at all times. Failure to do so is treason.

Remember, The Computer is your friend!

Your service firm assignment

To review (see previous citation for requirement and authority), eight service groups administer Alpha Complex municipal functions, supervised by The Computer.

The service groups:

- ☞ **Armed Forces:** Protection against threats both external and internal.
- ☞ **Central Processing Unit (CPU):** Executive operations, regulations, records, justice, human resources and culture engineering.
- ☞ **Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control (HPD&MC):** Education, entertainment, housekeeping, creche management and recreation.
- ☞ **Internal Security (IntSec):** Maintenance of good order; location and elimination of traitors.
- ☞ **Power Services:** Maintenance of nuclear and other energy sources and primary habitat systems—traffic, air, water and waste.
- ☞ **Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC):** Food and industrial production and allocation of resources.
- ☞ **Research & Design (R&D):** Creation of new technology and equipment.
- ☞ **Technical Services:** Maintenance of bots, vehicles, cloning services, industrial and production systems, and electronic and mechanical service systems.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

Well before you grew out of Junior Citizen status, The Computer ordered these agencies to outsource most of their duties for greater efficiency. The service groups now contract most municipal functions to a wide range of competing *service firms*.

A service firm is a for-profit company that performs duties for a particular service group. Any service firm can take on any contract for its supervising group. Each service firm is run by a Board of Directors, high-clearance citizens who selflessly direct its operations on The Computer's behalf for the good of all Alpha Complex. **Immediately report instances of service firm corruption and malfeasance to Internal Security.** Failure to report corruption is treason.

From the time you were decanted, your friend The Computer arranged your education to ideally suit you for a particular service group. When you reached age 14 and left your clone creche, you worked at one of that group's service firms as an INFRARED line worker. The Computer acknowledges and thanks you for your years of service there prior to your promotion to Clearance RED. Now that you have donned the red reflex overalls of the Troubleshooter, The Computer has graciously ordered your service firm to reassign you to a part-time position. You will still work there when not on a Troubleshooter mission.

As explained below under 'Cloning,' in the unlikely event you encounter terminal danger while on a mission, The Computer will order Technical Services to transfer your brain's recorded memories to a new, identical clone body. Unless you are currently on a mission and thus given high priority, Technical Services backlogs sometimes may keep you out of action so long your service firm must regretfully let you go. In these rare cases The Computer assigns you to another service firm in the same group.

If your career is particularly eventful, you may end up at a new service firm after each mission. Won't that be fun?

## Cloning

Long ago, in Old Reckoning times before The Computer began guiding Alpha Complex—before Alpha Complex even existed!—humans once reproduced by rutting, like vile animals. Shudders and expressions of revulsion are permitted, though not mandatory.

Because The Computer cares deeply for all citizens, it now grows them in clone tanks. This is much less messy and disgusting than the old way, and far less random. The Computer ensures every human citizen is genetically perfect in all respects. Improved by a program of mandatory hormone suppressants, human citizens are no longer troubled by the bestial urges of past generations.

The Computer's researchers in R&D continue to pioneer stunning advances in cloning

technology. Earlier generations of citizens were grown in 'clone families' of six genetically identical siblings, all decanted from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer's loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will.

R&D's amazing **MemoMax** technology can copy and transfer the deceased citizen's memories to a new clone with speed and absolute accuracy. Tech Services installed your MemoMax circuitry before you were decanted, and it functions perfectly today.

The rare citizen of Alpha Complex who meets an untimely demise must sometimes wait for resources to become available to grow a new replacement body. In contrast, as a Troubleshooter you enjoy The Computer's fullest consideration.

Though you need not expect unusual hazards as you locate and terminate the last remaining vicious Communist enemies of Alpha Complex, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered for you five ready backup clones and a **MemoMax Constant Realtime Update Priority** link. The CRUP link ensures the highest priority for your return to action.

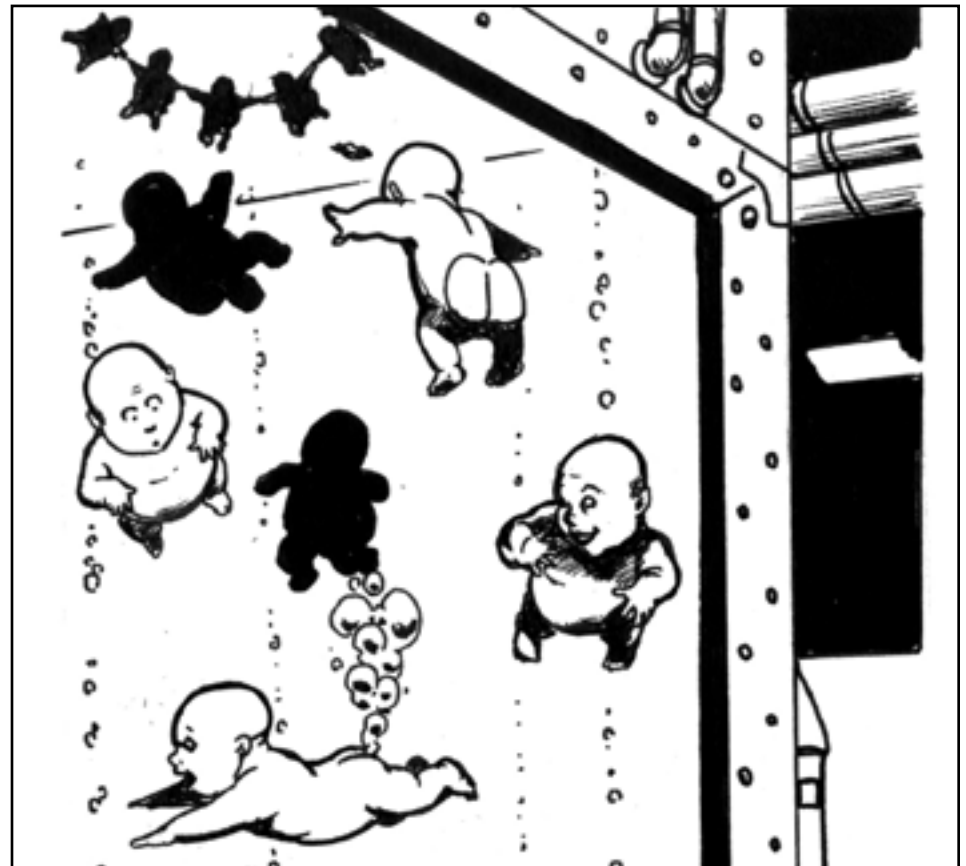
You may obtain more clone replacements, beyond the original five, from Tech Services at a regulated cost per set of six—though

again, do not worry! Historically the number of Troubleshooters who have required more than five replacement clones is within acceptable margins, given prevalent situational circumstances.

## Heroes and traitors

To maintain good order, The Computer has enlisted many loyal citizens like yourself. Those who serve with distinction are shining examples for all right-thinking people in Alpha Complex. In the ongoing 'Heroes of Our Complex' (HOOC) initiative The Computer periodically recognizes and honors meritorious individuals of all clearances. These lucky friends of The Computer see their smiling faces on evening vidshows, transtube loyalty posters and food containers.

For example, this month's HOOC honoree reduced waiting time by 22.3% on a per-line basis in her PLC subsector warehouse routing office through the simple yet ingenious expedient of subdividing the single line for each security clearance into three separate alphabetical lines indexed by weekday and devising a schedule designating visiting days for each alphabetical segment of customers. For this HOOC-worthy innovation, congratulations to [NAME DELETED per IntSec corrective order following discovery of treasonous history].



*Junior Citizens in Alpha Complex need not suffer the indignities of historical childbirth.*



Serve The Computer well, and you too may join [NAME DELETED]!

The Computer also attends regretfully to the pervasive presence of traitors. Traitors are everywhere! Though final crushing victory over Communist subversion is close at hand, the traitors' last shrill treason-laden gasps still endanger their innocent victims. Fight on, Troubleshooter, fight on for The Computer and all Alpha Complex!

- ☞ Locate and apprehend or destroy **unregistered mutants**. They endanger human genetic purity and must be terminated or enlisted in our great cause.

Do not terminate *registered mutants*, innocent citizens who realized they possess, through no fault of their own, a treasonous mutant power. These unwitting traitors promptly reported their power to The Computer. In its wisdom and benevolence, The Computer forgives those who make full confession,

and it permits registered mutants to live. However, The Computer requires registered mutants to wear a uniform with yellow stripes at all times. (YELLOW Clearance mutants wear a black-bordered yellow stripe.) Registered mutants are not subject to apprehension or termination when they use their powers. Encourage these former traitors to use their inhuman powers responsibly, for the good of all Alpha Complex, so they may someday overcome their unfortunate terrible stigma.

- ☞ Locate and apprehend or destroy **members of secret societies**. They are traitors, often terrorists, and must be brought to justice.

The existence of many secret societies is public knowledge. It is not technically illegal to discuss their treasonous doctrines and objectives, the better to enforce good order or promote greater sensitivity to danger. Remember,

though, as a Troubleshooter you are The Computer's trusted emissary. Discourage ordinary citizens from frivolously discussing these dangerous organizations.

Due to past isolated incidents of lax security, unsupervised thoughts and poor hygiene, traitors have infiltrated Alpha Complex from the lowest to the highest levels. It may surprise you to learn traitors have even been identified on Troubleshooter teams like yours! Be vigilant in guarding against these rare but troubling incidents.

Very soon The Computer will finally defeat the forces of Communism, terrorism and subversion and guarantee a loyal, stress-free Alpha Complex. With constant alertness and unwavering commitment you can help ensure freedom from worry for all citizens. The Computer is counting on you and your fellow Troubleshooters to help make this Year 214 the last year you need ever worry about anything.

## 2. How PARANOIA works

In a roleplaying game (RPG) you play the role of an important character in a story. A fun and friendly player called the Gamemaster (GM) generously describes the story's setting and events. Remember always to express your gratitude and admiration to the kind GM.

As the story's protagonists, you and the other players freely choose the actions of your *player characters* (PCs) as you solve the problems the GM benevolently throws in your path.

You depend on the GM for all knowledge about the story's setting and circumstances. The GM introduces the game session, describes the setting and plays the roles of the *nonplayer characters* (NPCs) you encounter during the story. When you want your character to do something, describe it to the GM. He determines your success using common sense and the game rules. Often he rolls dice, or asks you to roll instead. Because he interprets your success or failure in each action, he thereby determines your success or failure in the whole game.

How fortunate you are! For all his omnipotent power and unimpeachable authority, your GM is a fair and just referee, and not *in any way* a petty tyrant who will kill your character on the spot if he feels unappreciated or harrassed. Thank him for this, fervently and frequently.

### ■ Troubleshooting missions

In *PARANOIA* you play a Troubleshooter who undertakes *missions* for The Computer. A mission is a storyline, a sequence of episodes you and the other PCs experience. You might complete a mission in a game session a few hours long, or in a series of sessions.

**You are a player character (PC) in a story. The Gamemaster narrates and guides the story, or mission.**

**When your character does something, tell the GM. He will tell you what happens. Sometimes the GM or you will roll a 20-sided die (1d20) to find out.**

**You are secretly a mutant and a secret society member, and therefore a traitor.**

**Your fellow Troubleshooters want to find and terminate traitors. Accuse others before they accuse you.**

Possibly you might not complete it at all. The other PCs may kill you first.

You are—we now cut to the chase—a traitor. You are a mutant and a member of a secret society. If your fellow Troubleshooters (the other players) find out, they will have you arrested or more likely shoot you. If you die, you'll have to pay for a replacement clone body, and this new body may have unfortunate drawbacks. The best way to avoid this fate is to shoot the other bastards first.

It is unwise to just start firing randomly. The Computer requires you to first obtain *evidence* of a target's treason. Otherwise you yourself will be convicted of unjust accusations and probably terminated. If you present adequate

evidence, The Computer will remand the convicted traitor to Internal Security or authorize you to terminate him. This authorization may be retroactive.

Evidence can be documents, video records, incriminating materials or, most often, corroborating testimony from other Troubleshooters. Consider forming temporary alliances with other players to gain or create evidence against a common enemy.

### ■ Your goals as a Troubleshooter

The Computer assigns Troubleshooters several duties:

## 2. CONCEPTS

1. **Serve The Computer.**
2. **Locate and eliminate traitors**, including (but not limited to) Communists, secret society saboteurs and terrorists, unregistered mutants, data pirates, WMD manufacturers and IR Marketeers.
3. **Investigate and eradicate corruption.**
4. **Remove dangers** to the good order and smooth operation of Alpha Complex.

Aside from these duties, your Troubleshooter has some personal goals. Many are universal among citizens of Alpha Complex. Most citizens prioritize them as follows:

1. *Survive!*
2. Rise in security clearance.
3. Get rich.
4. Further your secret society's goals.

In addition to these standard goals, your Troubleshooter may have other goals not shared by all citizens:

5. (*Optional:*) Locate and protect fellow mutants who share your power.
6. (*Optional:*) Find Old Reckoning artifacts to collect or resell.
7. (*Optional:*) Escape from Alpha Complex to freedom Outdoors.
8. (*Optional:*) Overthrow The Computer (good luck!).

Note that none of these goals, in themselves, require your character to lie, conspire, suborn, plant evidence, bear false witness or commit assault against your fellow Troubleshooters.

Still, in the right circumstances, all that can help.

### PARANOIA play styles

You can play **PARANOIA** in several different styles—as pure comedy, frenzied slapstick or tense and fearful dark satire. The GM's chosen play style affects some game rules, including the rigor The Computer requires for an accusation of treason. The GM will divulge the style he has chosen before play begins, if this suits his worthy purpose.

**Classic:** Made popular in previous editions of the game, this is rapid-fire slapstick. Troubleshooters seldom live long enough to advance far. Alpha Complex suffocates in bureaucracy, perpetually on the brink of collapse. 'Laurel and Hardy get jobs with the IRS on the original starship *Enterprise*.'



The GM usually gives you a ready-made (**pregenerated**) player character. He may instead ask you to create your own character.

To create a character you need a photocopy of the **character sheet** in the back of this book (pages 254-255). Record your character's abilities and equipment on this sheet.



**Straight** (also called **Dark**): Fear, suspicion, striving for power and advancement, occasional hard-won successes in a scarily functional Alpha Complex. 'Yossarian from *Catch-22* gets a job in Orwell's Ministry of Truth.'



**Zap** (also called **Excessive** or **Frantic**): Pop-culture parodies, cartoon physics, and frenzied firefights at the drop of a Bouncy Bubble Beverage can. Alpha Complex is generally irrelevant. 'Yosemite Sam gets a job in a factory that makes sledgehammers, nuclear warheads and glass unicorn figurines.'

### Your character sheet

You have a *character sheet* that describes important game information about your character: skills, equipment and so on.

The first time your Gamemaster runs **PARANOIA**, and at other times as it suits his high purpose, he will probably provide character sheets with ready-made (*pregenerated*) player characters. These prefab PCs, ingeniously crafted by Famous Game Designers, are ideally suited to every possible need.

Should the GM wish you to create your own Troubleshooter character, thank him excitedly for his kindness. Make a photocopy of the blank *character sheet* at the back of this book (pages 254-255). Mongoose Publishing grants you permission to photocopy this sheet for personal use only. Other uses are punishable by termination and erasure.

All your character's secret information is on the back of the character sheet. At the game table, consider weighting down the sheet so devious rivals can't peek. A screen of dice, rulebooks or snack bowls also guards against spying. However, we officially recommend against threats of physical violence.

With photocopy and pencil in hand, proceed to Chapter 3, 'Creating your Troubleshooter'.



Citizen Teddy-R eagerly volunteers to serve Alpha Complex and his friend The Computer as a Troubleshooter.



## 3. Creating your Troubleshooter

You will now create your character. This will be lots of fun and not in the least anxiety-provoking. **Anxiety is forbidden.**

In the presence of your fellow players, be extremely careful to hide all confidential information, including your Secret skills, secret society and mutant power. **Hide nothing from the Gamemaster! Attempts to hide information from the GM earn immediate and dramatic reprisal!**

Be aware of other players' attempts to cheat, and report such violations instantly to the Gamemaster. Relax in the confident assurance the GM will chastise these cheaters appropriately. **Relaxation is mandatory! Failure to relax will be corrected instantly!**

Your Troubleshooter's character sheet records the following resources:

- ☞ Name and gender
- ☞ **Skills**, as well as optional **specialties** within those skills:
  - Three **Action** skills (Management, Stealth, Violence)
  - Three **Knowledge** skills (Hardware, Software, Wetware)
  - Three **Secret** skills (classified as Uncommon, Unlikely and Unhealthy)

To create your PC, photocopy the **character sheet** at the back of this book. Following the **checklist** on the next page, fill in the blanks on the sheet in pencil.

**Certain aspects of your character are secret. Don't let the other players find out your secrets!**

**Some aspects of your character are known only to the GM.**

A **vital specialty** in **Energy Weapons**, under the Violence skill

Up to six optional **common specialties** and six **narrow specialties** in the Action and Knowledge skills

- ☞ Employment in a **service firm**, which grants you one mandatory **service firm specialty**
- ☞ A **mutant power**
- ☞ Membership in one **secret society**
- ☞ 25 **Perversity points**

- ☞ Two recognizable **tics** of behavior that can earn you more Perversity points
- ☞ **RED security clearance** (the measure of how much The Computer trusts you)
- ☞ Two **attributes**: Power and Access
- ☞ **Equipment**—**personal** equipment you buy yourself, and equipment **assigned** by The Computer or its service firms
- ☞ 1,000 **credits** in savings (about a month of ordinary expenses)

### Your name

Citizens in Alpha Complex are named according to this scheme:

**[Given name]-[clearance initial]-[home sector]-[clone number]**

**Given name:** Some are drawn from databases of Old Reckoning names; others are wholly made up. Generally a single word; multiple-word personal names or names with internal capitals are discouraged but accepted. In some sectors The Computer selects names randomly; in others the teacherbots or human staff in the creche assign names. *Examples:* Billy, Sue, Ken.

**Clearance initial:** The first letter of your ROYGBIV security clearance. INFRAREDs use no initial, to avoid confusion with INDIGOs. High Programmers use U for ULTRAVIOLET. *Examples:* Billy (INFRARED), Sue-G, Ken-U.

**Home sector:** The three-letter code designating the sector where you grew up. Given the prevalence of duty reassignments, redistricting and sector-wide disasters, this is not always your assigned sector in later life. *Examples:* Billy-BCN, Sue-G-XTU, Ken-U-RON.

**Clone number:** The number of your current clone incarnation. You start the game with the original You, colloquially called 'the Prime' and numbered 1. Each time you die, increase the clone number by 1. *Examples:* Billy-BCN-1, Sue-G-XTU-4, Ken-U-RON-6.

Sabotage or software failure sometimes produces Junior Citizens with defective names: John-Paul-George-Ringo, Tra-LAH-LAH-LAH, Juan-2-B-U-LVA, 24-17-33-Hike. CPU procedures for renaming these citizens are intricate and lengthy; some citizens reach adulthood before gaining a correct name.

You are authorized to read the explanation of all these resources in the following sections. All tables required for character creation are generously provided throughout the player section. Failure to study all relevant sections and tables is insubordination punishable by fines.

### Name and gender

The tinted sidebar box at left describes the Alpha Complex naming scheme. So long as you conform to it, you may choose any name you wish. The Computer chooses citizen names at random, so your name need not sound plausible unless the GM requires it for his inestimable purpose.

Gender is not an issue in Alpha Complex. Low-clearance citizens (that is, the great majority) take daily hormone suppressants that minimize physical differences between the genders and absolutely annihilate all romantic or physical interest.

Your Troubleshooter team may someday undertake a mission to a ruined sector, or even go Outdoors, far away from Alpha Complex. After a day in such circumstances, equally far from the suppressant medication,

*[Continued on page 18]*

# 3. CREATING CHARACTERS

## Troubleshooter creation checklist

You need a photocopy of the **character sheet** in the back of this book. Fill it out using a pencil, not a pen! Before you start, find out which **play style** your GM is using: Straight, Classic or Zap.

1. **Name and gender:** See the box on the previous page for **PARANOIA** naming conventions. Your character can be male or female. In Alpha Complex nobody cares, because their hormones are suppressed.

### 1. NAME/ GENDER

PG. 16

### 2. SKILLS/ SPECIALTIES

PG. 18

3. **Service firm:** Roll 1d20 on the Service Firm chart. (The GM may instead tell you your service firm.) Select one common specialty from the list for your service firm. The specialty rating is 4 higher than its skill's rating, and has no compensating weakness.

### 3. SERVICE FIRM

PG. 21

4. **Mutant power:** Roll 1d20 on the appropriate Mutant Power table (Straight, Classic, Zap). The GM may instead determine your mutant power himself, and may or may not tell you what it is.

### 4. MUTANT POWER

PG. 23

5. **Secret society:** Roll 1d20 on the Secret Society table for your service group. (The GM may instead tell you your secret society.) Your starting *degree* (rank) varies by play style. *Classic:* Roll 1d20 and divide by 4. *Straight:* Your degree is 1. *Zap:* Roll 1d20. Choose three *Secret skills* from the list on p. 25.

### 5. SECRET SOCIETY

PG. 23

6. **Perversity points:** 25. You can get up to 10 more Perversity points by selecting up to **two recognizable tics**. A tic is a behavior that is *immediately identifiable* and *recognizable* as yours.

### 6. PERVERSITY/ TICS

PG. 26

7. **Security clearance:** RED.

### 7. SECURITY CLEARANCE

PG. 26

### 8. ATTRIBUTES (INFO ONLY)

PG. 27

9. **Equipment:** Your *personal equipment*, which you own yourself, includes a red jumpsuit and boots, laser pistol (without barrel), red reflex overalls, Personal Digital Companion with built-in camera and stylus, and ME Card (identity/credit card). You start with 1,000 credits. With the GM's permission, you may buy more equipment from the Personal Equipment chart.

### 9. EQUIPMENT

PG. 28

2. **Skills:** You have three *Action skills* (Management, Stealth, Violence) and three *Knowledge skills* (Hardware, Software, Wetware). Usually you roll 1d20 for each skill and halve the number rolled to get its rating; for results under 4, the skill's rating is 4. Or you can allocate 40 points among the skills, or just make all the ratings 7.

You have a **vital specialty** in **Energy Weapons**, equal to your Violence rating plus 4.

[Optional:] Choose up to **six common specialties**, divided as you wish among the skills. A common specialty's rating is 4 higher than the governing skill. If you take a common specialty, take a compensating common weakness(es) in the same skill; write it under the specialty. The weakness rating is 1.

[Optional:] You have open 'slots' for **six narrow specialties**, one in each skill. Take any or all narrow specialties now, or keep slots open to define during play. Each narrow specialty has a rating 6 higher than the governing skill, and no compensating weakness.

8. **Attributes:** This step is informational only; you do nothing. Your character has two attributes, *Power* and *Access*. Each attribute has a number rating, but only the GM knows what your attribute ratings are.

On a mission you will receive *assigned equipment* from The Computer's service firms. You do not own this, but are responsible for returning it in good working condition after the mission.

### Attention!

Before beginning play, familiarize yourself with the **Acceptable Behavior** (Straight and Classic styles only), **Treason and Insubordination** and **Reward** charts for Clearance RED.





[Continued from page 16]

characters, especially those in mixed groups, may become aware of strange new feelings.

No player past puberty really needs guidance in roleplaying incipient lust. Some players enjoy displaying restive androgenated or estrogenized personalities through exaggerated stereotypical behavior: The ladies primp, giggle, stage impromptu TeaLike parties and coo over cute little bots, while the menfolk grunt a lot, pump iron, scratch themselves and go out in the woods and drum.

## Skills

When you were a Junior Citizen in the clone creches, The Computer generously taught you to read and write and educated you in six broad areas of competence called *skills*, each rated 1 (low) to 20 (high). The skills are grouped in two categories of three skills each: *Action* skills and *Knowledge* skills.

Determine your character's ratings using one of these methods, according to your GM's instructions. Should the GM assign you one way to determine ratings, and assign different ways to other players, you will of course congratulate his perceptive tailoring of the rules to your individual needs. Write each rating on your character sheet.

- ☞ **Flat:** Each of your six skills has a rating of 7.
- ☞ **Random:** For each skill, roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled in half to get the rating (round fractions up). If your result is below 4, record 4 instead.
- ☞ **Custom:** Each skill rating starts at 0 (zero), and you get 40 skill points you may allocate among the skills. You must allocate at least 4 points to each skill, but you cannot put more than 10 in any skill. For each point you allocate, the skill's rating increases by 1.

(Your Troubleshooter also has three *Secret* skills, but these aren't determined the same way. See 'Secret skills' later in this chapter.)

Descriptions of the six Action and Knowledge skills appear below. Each skill description includes a list of areas of concentration called

*specialties*. To forestall bewilderment at these descriptions, you are first required to understand the nature of specialties.

## Skill specialties and weaknesses

A **specialty** is something your character is particularly good at—a specific emphasis within a skill. When a situation comes up that calls for your specialty, you are required to use the specialty's rating instead of the governing skill's rating. Omitting to employ a pertinent specialty in The Computer's service is insubordination.

Specialties can be *vital*, *common* or *narrow*.

- ☞ All Troubleshooters have one mandatory **vital** specialty: Energy Weapons—i.e., lasers. **Add 4 to your Violence skill rating to get your Energy Weapons specialty rating.** Write the Energy Weapons specialty and its rating under your Violence skill.
- ☞ A **common** specialty is useful in situations that crop up frequently in Troubleshooter missions—for instance, Projectile Weapons, Bootlicking or Surveillance. Common specialties are listed after their governing skill. **Add 4 to the governing skill's rating to get the common specialty's rating.** For instance, if you have a Management skill rating of 5 and you take Bootlicking (a Management specialty), your Bootlicking rating is (5 + 4=) 9.

Common specialties are listed in the table on the facing page. You may also invent your own common specialty with the GM's approval.

You are authorized to select up to **six common specialties** at your discretion. To take a specialty in any skill, write it under the skill's name. You can assign up to **three** of your six allotted common specialties to a single skill. You are never required to take a common specialty, but refusing The Computer's generosity can be construed as insubordination.

When you take a common specialty, you must also assign another common specialty in the same skill as your character's compensating **weakness**. A weakness is a particular blind spot, your area of incompetence. Write the weakness or weaknesses under the specialty. **Each weakness rating is 1.**

If, during play, it turns out your weakness does not limit you as often as the specialty benefits you, the fair-minded GM may assign you additional weaknesses to right the balance.

Your vital Energy Weapons specialty doesn't inflict a compensating weakness.

- ☞ A **narrow** specialty affects a single specific target character or small group (but not your fellow Troubleshooters or The Computer), a certain piece of equipment (not a type of equipment, but one particular item), or a highly specific situation. Examples appear after each skill. You are encouraged to make up your own narrow specialties. **Add 6 to the governing skill's rating to get the narrow specialty's rating.** A narrow specialty doesn't give you a corresponding weakness.

Your beginning character has 'slots' for **six narrow specialties, one in each skill**. Don't select them now; keep these slots *open* (undefined). During play, when a situation arises that seems to call for a narrow specialty, you may ask the GM's permission to use one of your open slots for that specialty. If the GM lets you put the suggested specialty in that slot, you have used up the open slot and keep that specialty thereafter. After you become familiar with **PARANOIA**, you can define any or all your narrow specialties when you create a Troubleshooter.

## Action skills

The **Action** group includes Management, Stealth, and Violence skills. Use these to affect or perceive the world and to interact with other people, bots, and The Computer.

Action skills may overlap (cover the same area of competence) in certain circumstances, but aren't intended to overlap routinely.

- ☞ **Management:** Nonviolent, nontechnical interaction with other characters who are aware of your presence. Management actions include bootlicking, bribery, confidence games, fast talk, intimidation, interrogation, oratory, and all other verbal actions. Management also

## Character example: 1

The GM grants you the privilege of designing a **PARANOIA** character. After thanking the GM for his kindness, you decide to name your character Ben-R-GOX-1. Ben is Clearance RED, like all starting characters, and is on clone #1 (that is, he is a Prime).

You choose to roll randomly for your six skills. For Management you roll a 20-sided die and get 15. Dividing 15 in half and rounding up, you get Ben-R's Management skill of 8. Not bad!

For Ben-R's next skill, Stealth, you roll a miserable 2, which would give Ben-R Stealth 1. But for any result below 4, you record 4 instead. Ben-R has Stealth 4.

In the same way, you roll 1d20 and halve the results to get Ben-R's other skills: Violence 5, Hardware 7, Software 10 (!), Wetware 5.

Ben-R has a vital specialty in Energy Weapons (that is, lasers). You add 4 to his Violence skill of 5 to get his Energy Weapons specialty rating of 9.

[Continued on page 20]

## Specialties list

If you don't see a specialty that covers the area you want, suggest a new specialty to the Gamemaster. He may allow it. If you suggest something cheesy like 'Infallible Enemy Detection', expect the GM's righteous condemnation. On the other hand, if you take something offbeat like 'Nutrition', you might get on your Gamemaster's good side.

## Action skill specialties

## Management

**Bootlicking:** How to ingratiate yourself with superiors.

**Chutzpah:** Getting others to accept doubtful statements through confident assertion, bluffing and unmitigated gall.

**Con Games:** Hoodwinking a citizen or bot through fast talk, spurious logic and persuasion. This isn't physical sleight of hand (see Sleight of Hand under Stealth).

**Hygiene:** Maintaining cleanliness in yourself, your surroundings, your teammates and innocent passersby.

**Interrogation:** Extracting useful information from Commie mutant scum.

**Intimidation:** This doesn't exactly ingratiate you with your inferiors, but it gets their cooperation.

**Moxie:** Streetwise smarts; canny assessment of a person, situation or statement.

**Oratory:** How to get a *bunch* of people to do what you want.

## Stealth

**Concealment:** Hiding stuff on your person or in your surroundings; also, spotting stuff others have hidden.

**Disguise:** Wearing a higher-clearance jumpsuit or false mustache without looking idiotic.

**High Alert:** Sensing imminent danger or covert surveillance. Not really different from most Troubleshooters' typical state, except you only get alarmed over actual threats.

**Security Systems:** Jiggering locks and alarms.

**Shadowing:** Following someone without being noticed.

**Sleight of Hand:** Palming and pocketing small things without being noticed.

**Sneaking:** Moving around without being followed or noticed.

**Surveillance:** How to bug things. How to debug things.

## Violence

**Agility:** Rapid or balanced movement, gymnastics, jumping.

**Demolition:** How to use TNT without killing yourself. At clearances below GREEN this skill is treasonous.

**Energy Weapons:** Hitting someone with a laser, sonic weapon or blaster. This is a **vital specialty**. You can't take Energy Weapons as a weakness, and it doesn't count as one of your six common specialties.

**Field Weapons:** Flamethrowers, gauss guns, tangles and the ever-popular plasma generator.

**Fine Manipulation:** Lockpicking, watchmaking, cutting the red wire one second before detonation.

**Hand Weapons:** Hitting someone with a force sword, neurowhip or truncheon, or with primitive weapons.

**Projectile Weapons:** Hitting someone with a slugthrower, cone rifle or other aimed weapon that uses ammunition.

**Thrown Weapons:** Hitting someone with a grenade, brick or rock.

**Unarmed Combat:** Hitting someone when you don't have a hand, energy, projectile, thrown or vehicular weapon.

**Vehicular Combat:** Hitting someone with a weapon mounted on a vehicle.

## Knowledge skill specialties

Just as all the Knowledge skills routinely overlap, one specialty can often bleed into another. Suggest something creative, and the ever-thoughtful GM may generously allow it.

## Hardware

**Bot Ops and Maintenance:** How to operate and fix docbots, guardbots/warbots, jackobots, scrubots and vehicle autopilots.

**Chemical Engineering:** Lots of uses for this, but somehow PCs always want to use it to make explosives.

**Electronic Engineering:** How to string together circuits and microprocessors.

**Habitat Engineering:** Knowledge of the air, communication, transport, power, water and waste systems. Mighty handy when you need to find a ventilation shaft to escape incoming fire.

**Mechanical Engineering:** How to make really neat Rube Goldberg-type contraptions.

**Nuclear Engineering:** How to operate a reactor without flooding half the sector with radioactive waste.

**Vehicle Ops and Maintenance:** How to use and repair all vehicles: autocars, crawlers, flybots, copters and Vulturecraft.

**Weapon and Armor Maintenance:** Sabotaging others' weapons and armor, and keeping yours from being sabotaged.

## Software

**Bot Programming:** Revising bot instructions.

**C-Bay:** Getting the best price buying and selling on Alpha Complex auction sites.

**Data Analysis:** How to understand Computer-generated stuff.

**Data Search:** Finding something useful using The Computer.

**Financial Systems:** How to transfer credits safely for legitimate or criminal purposes.

**Hacking:** Breaking into The Computer's systems. Really, what could go wrong? Treasonous at clearances below GREEN.

**Operating Systems:** Revising MemoMax clone backup tech. Rewriting The Computer's instructions. Treasonous at clearances below BLUE.

**Vehicle Programming:** Revising vehicle instructions.

## Wetware

**Biosciences:** Knowing what's likely to mutate you and how.

**Bioweapons:** Engineering your own Black Death or weaponized anthrax. Treasonous at clearances below BLUE.

**Cloning:** Repairing and operating the tanks that grow new and backup citizens. Operating MemoMax backup devices so the new clone remembers his name and boot size.

**Medical:** How to heal the injured and cure the sick, or ensure they don't heal or get cured.

**Outdoor Life:** Telling a tree from a weed, or a bird from an elephant, when most citizens have never heard of these.

**Pharmatherapy:** Ensuring wakefulness, sleepiness, happiness or any mental state through the application of little pills.

**Psychotherapy:** Recognizing insanity; helping others recover from it or descend further into it.

**Suggestion:** Biochemical and psychological techniques of subliminal persuasion.



[Continued from page 18]

includes checking and correcting another character's hygiene, appearance or demonstrations of loyalty.

Management is also your generic ability to behave properly or make others behave improperly.

Management doesn't typically cover anything requiring specialized or technical knowledge, such as medical or psychological diagnoses, or equipment calibration or repair; these actions require Knowledge skills.

*Common Management specialties:* Bootlicking, Chutzpah, Con Games, Hygiene, Interrogation, Intimidation, Moxie, Oratory.

*Example narrow Management specialties:* Pump My Service Firm Office Mates for Gossip, Suck Up to Boss Judd-G-LKN, Work the 'Cup and Algae Pellet' Swindle.

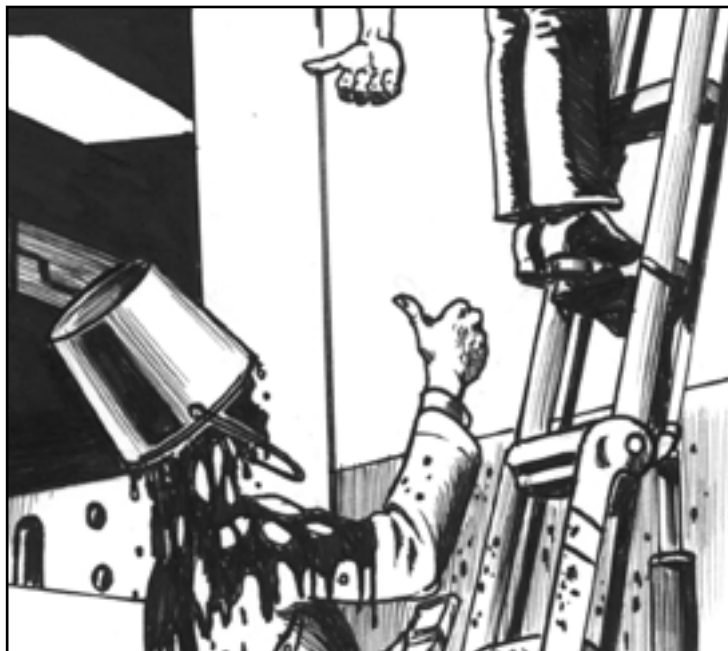
- ☞ **Stealth:** General sneakiness; any nonverbal attempt to detect or to physically evade detection, conceal physical objects or materials or locate them, misdirect another character's attention, or avoid being misdirected. Stealth includes security and surveillance.

Stealth skill describes more than skulking silently down corridors; it also measures sensitivity to things you're not supposed to perceive. Thus Stealth is your generic alertness and perception skill.

Stealth doesn't typically cover subliminal messages or sabotage of equipment; these require a Knowledge skill.

*Common Stealth specialties:* Concealment, Disguise, High Alert, Security Systems, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Sneaking, Surveillance.

*Example narrow Stealth specialties:* Palm Pharmatherapy Pills, Leave My Workplace Undetected Through The Floor Air Conditioning Vent, Spot When the Malfunctioning Security Camera in My Quarters is Working.



A Troubleshooter employs his Bootlicking specialty in glorious service to The Computer

- ☞ **Violence:** Physical, nonverbal attempts to hurt or kill characters, or destroy or break objects. Violence includes all weapon skills plus demolition. The vital specialty Energy Weapons falls under the Violence skill.

Violence is your generic physical activity skill, including running, jumping, and such fiddly activities as lockpicking, juggling and cutting the red wire just three seconds before detonation.

(Though this skill is named 'Violence,' as opposed to, say, 'Physical,' you must not assume that gratuitous violent behavior is typical or even unavoidable in Alpha Complex. This idea would demoralize your fellow Troubleshooters.

### Attempting to demoralize your fellow Troubleshooters is treason!

Violence doesn't typically cover sabotage of equipment; such subtle actions require Knowledge skills.

*Common Violence specialties:* Agility, Demolition, Energy Weapons (vital), Field Weapons, Fine Manipulation, Hand Weapons (force sword, neurowhip, truncheon, knife), Projectile Weapons, Thrown Weapons, Unarmed Combat, Vehicular Combat.

*Example narrow Violence specialties:* Wield My Trusty Truncheon 'Nora,' Hit Gordon-VLK's Funny Bone in That Way He Hates, Eat Entire Bag of Algae Chips in Four Seconds.

## Character example: 2

You choose Ben-R-GOX-1's six common specialties. Because he's good at Software, you put three specialties under that skill: Data Analysis, Data Search and Financial Systems. Each has a rating equal to Ben-R's Software skill (10) plus 4, or 14.

Because you selected three specialties in Software, you must take three corresponding weaknesses in the same skill. You choose Bot Programming, Operating Systems, and Vehicle Programming as your weaknesses. Each rating is 1.

For Ben-R's other common specialties you choose Moxie (a Management specialty); Security Systems (Stealth); and Projectile Weapons (Violence). To get

their ratings you add 4 to each specialty's governing skill. So Ben-R has a Moxie rating of 12 (4 added to his Management rating of 8), Security Systems 8 (Stealth rating of 4 + 4) and Projectile Weapons 9 (Violence 5 + 4).

For Ben-R's three compensating weaknesses—one each in Management, Stealth and Violence—you choose Intimidation, Disguise and Unarmed Combat. In each, Ben-R's rating is 1.

For now you decide to specify only one of Ben-R's six narrow specialties: Jigger My Barrack's Cash Machine to Give Extra Credits. This is a Software specialty, so Ben-R adds 6 to his Software skill to get the narrow specialty rating of 16.

### Knowledge skills

The **Knowledge** group includes Hardware, Software and Wetware skills. Use these to determine if your Troubleshooter knows a given scientific fact or technical procedure; how to operate, maintain, calibrate, and repair stuff; or how to sabotage your companions' equipment.

All three Knowledge skills overlap routinely. For instance, suppose you want to 'adjust' a medbot so it detects your team leader as a monstrous, tentacled alien invader. This could involve Hardware (adjusting biosensor voltages), Software (inserting a new variable in the bot's interpretation subroutines) or Wetware (altering the bot's biosensor settings). You are authorized to try to convince the Gamemaster a skill applies if you can offer a plausible reason.

## Character example: 3

- ☞ **Hardware:** Mechanical or electronic devices and inorganic materials, including laser and projectile weapons, armor, battle suits, bots, autocars and other vehicles, monitors, electrical equipment, power generation, many kinds of engineering (chemical, electronic, habitat, mechanical, nuclear), clone tanks, actual tanks, etc.

*Common Hardware specialties:* Bot Ops and Maintenance, Chemical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Habitat Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Weapon and Armor Maintenance, Vehicle Ops and Maintenance.

*Example narrow Hardware specialties:* Increase My Lucky Laser Pistol's Power, Get Barracks Vending Machine to Stop Making That Funny Noise.

- ☞ **Software:** Anything data- or software-related, including bot and device programming, operating systems, communication protocols, data search and analysis, safe software, software viruses and worms, confession-booth lie-detector programs and (at the highest skill levels and security clearances) even the inner workings of The Computer itself. Some of these are treasonous at your clearance.

*Common Software specialties:* Bot Programming, C-Bay, Data Analysis, Data Search, Financial Systems, Hacking, Operating Systems, Vehicle Programming.

*Example narrow Software specialties:* Soothe Autocar SPD-1's Jangled Brain, Speak in Weird Voice That Keeps Confession Booth NDF-445 Lie Detector From Catching Me.

- ☞ **Wetware:** Biological and organic topics and devices, including health, bioweapons, disease, drugs, first aid, biochemical therapy, cooking, poisons, bacteria and organic viruses, cloning procedures, bioscience engineering, survival Outdoors and identification and understanding of specimens from Outdoors.

*Common Wetware specialties:* Biosciences, Bioweapons, Cloning, Medical, Outdoor Life, Pharmatherapy, Psychotherapy, Survival.

*Example narrow Wetware specialties:* Make Hot Fun Into Sticky Paste, Make Hot Fun Into Acidic Solvent, Make Hot Fun Into Low-Yield Explosive.

For Ben-R-GOX-1's service group you roll 1d20 and consult the Service Group table on page 22. You roll 5—Central Processing Unit. Excellent! With Ben-R's strong Software skill, this should be a good match.

To find his service firm, you roll 1d20 and check the CPU firm table. 13—'Pocket Protector Refurbishers'. Huh. Well. Well, there's still an upside—you can choose a skill specialty from the CPU list. You decide

against choosing a new specialty. Instead, you take this opportunity to bump up your existing Financial Software specialty by 4, from 14 to 18 (the maximum allowed). Ben-R is a finance wizard!

You're in a Classic game. For Ben-R's mutant power you roll 1d20 and check the Classic table. You roll 6, Energy Field—whatever that is. You write it on the secret side of your character sheet.

### Service group and firm

At the time you were decanted, your friend The Computer designated you for a particular service group. When you reached age 14 and left your clone creche, you worked at one of that group's service firms as an INFRARED line worker. You worked there for years before The Computer recruited you as a Troubleshooter. You still work at your service firm when you're not on a mission and not currently dead. In this way Troubleshooting is like volunteer firefighting, just not voluntary and with more firefights.

Some service firms can be bitter towards their part-timers, treating them as slackers. Of course, you're sure your own firm wouldn't be so callous. At least, you hope not; your low-level connections in your firm may prove useful as sources of information or equipment.

To determine your service group, roll 1d20 and consult the Service Group table nearby. Find your die-roll on the left side of the table; the name printed on the same line is the service group your service firm services. Then, on the Service Firm table appropriate to your service group, roll 1d20 again to find your service firm. To learn more about your firm, talk to the Gamemaster.

The Armed Forces and Internal Security service groups limit service-firm outsourcing to non-security-related functions. The rest of the old service groups remain today as regulatory agencies supervising the appropriate service firms. These service group bureaucracies are absolutely not flagrantly corrupt sump-holes full of superannuated, impotent bureaucrats. Don't think that. No matter what they act like, don't think that.

### Service firm specialties

At your job, your service firm trained you in one common skill specialty. After thanking The Computer for its customary generosity, you will choose your service firm specialty from the following list. **Choosing a service firm common specialty is mandatory. Any attempt to choose a service firm specialty outside your service firm's authorized list will be answered with appropriate countermeasures.**

Your chosen specialty must enhance your character in exactly one of these two permitted ways:

- ☞ **New and improved:** From your service firm's authorized list you choose a new 'free' skill specialty different from, and in addition to, the six you (optionally) chose earlier. The new specialty works like other common specialties, with a rating 4 higher than the governing skill. You don't suffer a compensating weakness for your new service firm specialty.

- ☞ **Bumped:** You instead choose to enhance one of the six common specialties you chose earlier. The enhanced specialty must be on your service firm's authorized list. Add 4 to the enhanced specialty's rating (maximum 18). The enhancement has no effect on existing skill weaknesses.

For your convenience service firm specialties are labeled with their governing skill (**M**=Management, **St**=Stealth, **V**=Violence, **H**=Hardware, **So**=Software, **W**=Wetware).

- ☞ **Armed Forces:** Demolition (V), Energy Weapons (V), Hand Weapons (V), Projectile Weapons (V), Thrown Weapons (V), Unarmed Combat (V); Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H).

- ☞ **Central Processing:** Security Systems (St); Electronic Engineering (H); Bot Programming (So), Data Analysis (So), Financial Software (So), Data Search (So), Vehicle Programming (So).

- ☞ **HPD&MC:** Bootlicking (M), Chutzpah (M), Con Games (M), Moxie (M); Bot Ops and Maintenance (H); Pharmatherapy (W), Medical (W).

- ☞ **Internal Security:** Interrogation (M), Intimidation (M); Security Systems (St), Surveillance (St); Energy Weapons (V), Hand Weapons (V), Unarmed Combat (V).



# PLAYER SECTION CLEARANCE RED

## Service firm tables

### Service group

Roll 1d20 to determine your service group. Then, unless instructed otherwise, consult the table for your group to find your service firm type. The GM will tell you about your specific firm before play begins.

- 1 Armed Forces (group)\*
- 2-3 Armed Forces (service firm)
- 4-5 Central Processing Unit
- 6-8 HPD & Mind Control
- 9 Internal Security\*\*
- 10 Internal Security (service firm)
- 11-13 Production, Logistics & Commissary
- 14-15 Power Services
- 16-17 Research & Design
- 18-19 Technical Services
- 20 Industrial spy or saboteur\*\*\*

\* You serve in the Armed Forces proper, not as an outsourced civilian contractor. Don't roll for a service firm.

\*\* Write 'Internal Security' on the back of your character sheet. Roll again for another service group. You are a spy for Internal Security in that group. The second group is your 'cover', the group everyone thinks you work for. You learn a service firm specialty from Internal Security, not your cover group.

\*\*\* You've been assigned to spy on or sabotage another service firm in your group. Roll again to determine your group, then roll twice on its firm table to get two service firm types. Your first roll determines who you're spying for, the second whom you're spying on. (If you roll the same firm type both times, you're spying on a direct rival.) You learn a service firm specialty from your original group, not your cover group. You'll collect a salary from both firms, assuming you survive a month.

### Armed Forces

Workers for these service firms are civilian contractors, but often were assigned to their firms after an early stint as an Armed Forces grunt.

- 1-2 Ammunition Fresheners
- 3-4 Armed Forces Friends Network
- 5-6 Bodyguard Communications Liaisons
- 7-8 Blast Shield Maintenance
- 9-10 Crowd Control (Armed Forces)
- 11-12 Sensitivity Trainers
- 13-14 Threat Assessors (Armed Forces)
- 15-16 Tool & Die Works
- 17-18 Vulture Squadron Recruiters
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### Central Processing Unit

- 1-2 116 Emergency Systems
- 3-4 Credit License Checkers
- 5-6 Facility Surveillance Control
- 7-8 Form Facilitators
- 9-10 Form Inventory Officers
- 11-12 Form Disposal Advisors
- 13-14 Pocket Protector Refurbishers
- 15-16 Security System Installers
- 17-18 Volunteer Collection Agencies
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### HPD & Mind Control

- 1-2 Entertainment Scouting Agencies
- 3-4 History Purifiers
- 5-6 News Services
- 7-8 Public Hating Coordination
- 9-10 Sector Expansion Surveyors
- 11-12 Semantics Control
- 13-14 Singalong Agents
- 15-16 Subliminals Police
- 17-18 Trend Identifiers
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### Internal Security

- 1-2 Crowd Control (IntSec)
- 3-4 Forensic Analysis
- 5-6 Glee Quota Adjutants
- 7-8 Re-Education Client Procurement
- 9-10 Surveillance Operatives
- 11-12 Termination Center Janitorial
- 13-14 Thought Surveyors
- 15-16 Threat Assessors (IntSec)
- 17-18 Treason Scene Cleanup
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC)

- 1-2 Armored Autocar Escorts
- 3-4 BLUE Room Caterers
- 5-6 Equipment Assembly Control
- 7-8 Field Logistics Advisors
- 9-10 Food Vat Control
- 11-12 Inventory System Updaters
- 13-14 Printing Office Field Checkers
- 15-16 Storage Media Integrity Assessors
- 17-18 Warehouse System Inspectors
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### Power Services

- 1-2 Battery Backup
- 3-4 Burn Radius Assessors
- 5-6 Circuit Maintenance
- 7-8 Fuel Cell Replenishment (Power)
- 9-10 Fuel Rod Disposal Consultants
- 11-12 Odor Fresheners
- 13-14 Power Oscillation Professionals
- 15-16 Safe Atoms Initiative
- 17-18 Wire Supply Checkers
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### Research & Design

- 1-2 Biological Niceness Indexers
- 3-4 Bot Processing
- 5-6 Drug Interaction Testers
- 7-8 Field Data Collectors
- 9-10 Goo Cleanup
- 11-12 RoboPsych Auditing
- 13-14 Scientist Sanity Checkers
- 15-16 Vehicle Therapists
- 17-18 Weapon Effectiveness Assessors
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)

### Technical Services

- 1-2 Bedding Inspectors
- 3-4 Clone Tank Support Services
- 5-6 Consolidated Motorized Transport (CMT)
- 7-8 Fuel Cell Replenishment (Tech Svcs)
- 9-10 MemoMax Quality Assurance
- 11-12 Medical Services
- 13-14 Paint Control
- 15-16 Slime Identification
- 17-18 Tech Support
- 19-20 Other (see Gamemaster for details)



# 3. CREATING CHARACTERS

# MUTANT POWERS

- ☞ **PLC:** Chutzpah (M), Con Games (M); Bot Ops and Maintenance (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H); Data Search (So); Biosciences (W).
- ☞ **Power Services:** Data Analysis (So), Data Search (So); Chemical Engineering (H), Electronic Engineering (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Mechanical Engineering (H), Nuclear Engineering (H).
- ☞ **R&D:** Chemical Engineering (H), Mechanical Engineering (H), Nuclear Engineering (H); Bot Programming (So), Vehicle Programming (So); Bioweapons (W), Cloning (W).
- ☞ **Tech Services:** Chemical Engineering (H), Electronic Engineering (H), Habitat Engineering (H), Vehicle Ops and Maintenance (H); Bot Programming (So), Vehicle Programming (So); Pharmathrapy (W).

## Mutant power

Due to treasonous sabotage of The Computer's otherwise faultless cloning process, certain clones are decanted with innate mutations that grant them inhuman or superhuman abilities. Because these genetic impurities present an uncontrollable threat to The Computer's hard-won social order, possession of a mutant power is treason punishable by execution.

Unknown (probably) to your fellow Troubleshooters, you possess a mutant power.

You have known about it for some time, but kept it secret from everyone.

The GM may determine your mutant power himself, and may decide not to tell you. If he asks you to determine your own mutant power, thank him profusely and consult the Mutant Powers table nearby. Roll 1d20 and find the number you rolled in the left column of the table appropriate to your GM's play style (Classic, Straight, Zap). The mutant power on the same line is your power. Write the power name on the secret part of your character sheet, protected from other players' prying eyes.

During the game, when you want to use your mutant power, tell the Gamemaster—preferably in secret conference, via note or prearranged signal, by waving coded flags, etc.

To learn about your mutant power, ask the Gamemaster.

## Registering your mutation

Some mutants have patriotically registered their power with The Computer's Internal Security service group. After you know what your power does, decide whether or not to register it. However, if your power is **Machine Empathy**, *don't reveal it!* The Computer considers that power so dangerous it immediately executes anyone who possesses it.

A registered mutant isn't executed just for being a mutant. If you register your mutation, you can use your power whenever you like without being accused of treason. However, you must wear a yellow stripe on your uniform at all times (citizens of YELLOW Clearance wear a stripe with black borders). As a registered mutant you will certainly face

anti-mutant prejudice. Registered mutants get passed by for promotions, are the butt of jokes in service firm advertising and—most important for your purposes—are frequently the handiest scapegoat when anything goes wrong.

Registered mutants are second-class citizens, if that. The Computer tolerates you and assigns you to Troubleshooter teams in hopes of helping their odds. The Computer assigns responsibility for your safety to the Team Leader. Your fellow citizens can't just shoot you without the Leader's permission, or they risk getting recycled for destroying The Computer's 'equipment'. They can't execute you unless they can *prove* you did something treasonous. Yet citizens still hate and despise you publicly, though members of certain secret societies may look on you with pity.

## Secret society

Long ago The Computer wisely started several of Alpha Complex's secret societies as harmless outlets for citizens' repressed urges toward insubordination. Other, more dangerous secret societies formed independently or as offshoots from the originals. Most of the societies developed many feuding factions, all competing for resources or even locked in internecine warfare. These societies survive today, and though talking about them is insubordination, their existence is widely known among citizens of all clearances.

Because even the oldest secret societies now evince dangerous ideas of self-determination, The Computer has rightly condemned all secret society membership as treason punishable by

# Mutant power tables

## Classic

- 1 Charm
- 2 Corrosion
- 3 Detect Mutant Power
- 4 Electroshock
- 5 Empathy
- 6 Energy Field
- 7 Hypersenses
- 8 Levitation
- 9 Machine Empathy\*
- 10 Matter Eater
- 11 Mental Blast
- 12 Polymorphism
- 13 Puppeteer
- 14 Pyrokinesis
- 15 Regeneration
- 16 Slippery Skin
- 17 Telekinesis
- 18 Teleportation
- 19 Uncanny Luck
- 20 X-Ray Vision



\* Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.

## Straight

- 1 Adhesive Skin
- 2 Adrenalin Control
- 3 Bureaucratic Intuition
- 4 Charm
- 5 Death Simulation
- 6 Deep Thought
- 7 Electroshock
- 8 Empathy
- 9 Energy Field
- 10 Hypersenses
- 11 Machine Empathy\*
- 12 Matter Eater
- 13 Mechanical Intuition
- 14 Mental Blast
- 15 Pyrokinesis
- 16 Regeneration
- 17 Rubbery Bones
- 18 Toxic Metabolism
- 19 Uncanny Luck
- 20 Ventriloquist



\* Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.

## Zap

- 1 Absorption
- 2 Chameleon
- 3 Charm
- 4 Desolidity
- 5 Electroshock
- 6 Energy Field
- 7 Growth
- 8 Levitation
- 9 Machine Empathy\*
- 10 Matter Eater
- 11 Mental Blast
- 12 Polymorphism
- 13 Puppeteer
- 14 Pyrokinesis
- 15 Regeneration
- 16 Shrinking
- 17 Telekinesis
- 18 Teleportation
- 19 Transmutation
- 20 X-Ray Vision



\* Having this mutant power is grounds for immediate and lasting execution.



execution. This is unfortunate for you, because you are a secret society member.

All secret societies recruit aggressively among the INFRARED laborers of Alpha Complex. One such society recruited you several years ago, and you are now familiar with its goals and doctrines. You know its friends, enemies, methods and possibly even a few contacts. Because you recognize your society as a potentially powerful tool for your advancement, you work sincerely and aggressively to further its goals.

The Gamemaster may tell you your secret society, or may ask you to roll a die to determine it. In this case, thank him for his graciousness and consult the Secret Society table appropriate to your service group. Roll 1d20 and find the number you rolled in the left column of the table. The society on the same line is your affiliation. Write it on the secret part of your character sheet.

If you roll an entry with an asterisk, consult the table key below.

To learn about your secret society, ask the Gamemaster.

## Secret society degree

Like other institutions in Alpha Complex, most secret societies are strictly hierarchical. The higher your degree (rank) in your society, the more you can exploit your connections to procure restricted equipment or information, gain contacts, borrow funds, or many other kinds of perks. Your secret society designates your degree by a number from 1 (low) to 20 (high). This isn't (just) an abstract game rating but a literal status number tracked by your superiors in the society. Generally the higher your degree number, the greater the authority you can exert over those of lower degree. However, this varies; in some societies, high degree may indicate only prestige or, worse, the magnitude of your administrative drudgework.

## Secret society table key

\* Write 'Illuminati' on the secret section of your character sheet. Roll the die again to find a second, 'cover' society. You are an undercover agent for the Illuminati in this society.

\*\* You've been assigned to spy on another society. Roll twice more. Your first roll determines who you're spying for, the second whom you're spying on. If you roll a 20 again, the group you're spying on assigns you to spy on a third society. Roll enough 20s and you could be spying on the entire Complex. Good luck keeping your cover stories straight.

# Secret society tables

Roll 1d20 and find the table for your service group. The entry beside the number you rolled is your secret society. If the entry has an asterisk, see the key at lower left.

## Armed Forces

- 1-3 Anti-Mutant
- 4-6 Death Leopard
- 7-9 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 10-12 PURGE
- 13 Communists
- 14 FCCC-P
- 15 Free Enterprise
- 16 Pro Tech
- 17 Psion
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## Central Processing Unit

- 1-4 Computer Phreaks
- 5-8 Corpore Metal
- 9-10 FCCC-P
- 11-12 Sierra Club
- 13 Anti-Mutant
- 14 Communists
- 15 Pro Tech
- 16 Psion
- 17 PURGE
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## HPD & Mind Control

- 1-2 Anti-Mutant
- 3-4 FCCC-P
- 5-7 Humanists
- 8-11 Romantics
- 12-13 Sierra Club
- 14 Communists
- 15 Mystics
- 16 Psion
- 17 PURGE
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## Internal Security

- 1-3 Anti-Mutant
- 4-6 Death Leopard
- 7-9 FCCC-P
- 10-12 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 13 Communists
- 14 Free Enterprise
- 15 Pro Tech
- 16 Psion
- 17 PURGE
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC)

- 1-5 Free Enterprise
- 6-9 Humanists
- 10-11 Mystics
- 12-13 Romantics
- 14 Communists
- 15 Pro Tech
- 16 Psion
- 17 Sierra Club
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## Power Services

- 1-2 Computer Phreaks
- 3-4 Death Leopard
- 5-6 FCCC-P
- 7-8 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 9-10 Free Enterprise
- 11-12 Mystics
- 13-14 Pro Tech
- 15-16 PURGE
- 17 Communists
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## Research & Design (R&D)

- 1-3 Computer Phreaks
- 4-6 Corpore Metal
- 7-9 Pro Tech
- 10-12 Psion
- 13-15 PURGE
- 16 FCCC-P
- 17 Communists
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

## Technical Services

- 1-2 Computer Phreaks
- 3-4 Corpore Metal
- 5-6 Death Leopard
- 7-8 Frankenstein Destroyers
- 9-10 Mystics
- 11-12 Pro Tech
- 13-14 Psion
- 15-16 Sierra Club
- 17 Communists
- 18 Illuminati\*
- 19 Other (see GM for details)
- 20 Undercover agent\*\*

Your beginning secret society degree depends on your GM's chosen play style.

**Classic:** Roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4 (round fractions up). The result is your degree.

**Straight:** Your degree is 1, meaning you are a low-level flunky. Further your society's goals and succeed in its secret missions, and advancement will surely follow.

**Zap:** Roll 1d20. The result is your degree. Do you think it unlikely a powerful degree-20 potentate in a secret society would become a lowly RED Troubleshooter? True. Propose an explanation for this predicament to your GM. Using his incontestably unbiased judgment, he may see fit to give your imperiled character some secret perks.

## Secret skills

Contacts in your secret society have taught you things The Computer's teachbots never mentioned. These areas of knowledge or practice, not covered by the Action and Knowledge skills, are **Secret** skills.

Secret skills are grouped in these categories:

- 👁 **Uncommon** in Alpha Complex but not necessarily treasonous: Swimming, Rock Climbing, and other Outdoors skills; craft skills such as cooking or glassblowing; conceivably (among citizens whose hormone suppressants have worn off) even seduction. Knowing how to drive a non-automated vehicle is Uncommon; each vehicle type is a different skill. To

## Secret skills

If your secret society requires you to learn a specific Secret skill, it appears in **bold print** on the society's line in this table. Skills not in bold print are recommended but not mandatory. If you don't like a recommended skill, pick one from another society, or invent your own skill and submit it to the GM for approval.

Society	Uncommon	Unlikely	Unhealthy*
Anti-Mutant	Power Studies	Comic Book Trivia	Twitchtalk
Computer Phreaks	Cash Hacking	Jargon	Hacking, programming skills
Communists	Demolition	Tractor Maintenance	<b>Propaganda*</b>
Corpore Metal	Cyborging	Botspotting	Bioweapons
Death Leopard	<b>Demolition</b>	Action Movies, Partying	Gambling
FCCC-P	Alpha Complex History	priestly skills	Meeting Machine Empaths
Frankenstein Destroyers	Demolition	toolmaking skills	programming skills
Free Enterprise	Haggling	Advertising & Marketing	Bribery, Forgery
Humanists	Marital Arts <i>[sic]</i>	hobbies, languages	Old Reckoning Cultures
Illuminati	————— skills taught by your cover society —————		
Mystics	<b>Drug Procurement</b>	Meditation, Partying	Old Reckoning Drugs
Pro Tech	Experimental Equipment Repair/Maintenance	Video Games	WMD
Psion	Power Studies	Comic Book Trivia	Twitchtalk
PURGE	<b>Demolition</b>	Gloating	Bioweapons, Twitchtalk
Romantics	Archival Studies	Cooking, Knitting, Music	<b>Old Reckoning Cultures</b>
Sierra Club	Survival, Wild Lore, Travel	Birdwatching, Botany, Spoor Recognition, etc.	Bioweapons

\* Each society also has a specific Propaganda skill, an Unhealthy skill that is unique and differs from all other societies' versions of the skill.



Members of the Sierra Club meet in secret to commune with nature.



justify your character's Uncommon skill, offer the GM a convincing rationale. ('I became a bookbinder to repair a High Programmer's treasonous Old Reckoning book collection.')

- ☞ **Unlikely** to figure significantly in a mission: Knitting and other hobby skills, Whistling, Teela-O-MLY Trivia, Video Games, etc. However, by roleplaying these skills during the game, you can earn *Perversity points*, described later.
- ☞ **Unhealthy**: Treasonous skills such as Communist Propaganda, Digital Image Manipulation, Filesharing, foreign languages, etc.; knowledge of Old Reckoning Cultures; criminal skills (Twitchtalk, Fraudulent Accounting, Gambling); also skills legally available only at a higher clearance than yours (highly advanced science or mathematics, etc.).

Some secret societies mandate that you learn certain Secret skills. Other societies couldn't give a used algae chip which skills you learn. Find your society's preferences in the table nearby. If a skill appears in **bold print**, you must learn that skill. If the skill name isn't in bold, or no skill is listed, you may learn any Secret skill you wish. If you're undercover, learn your cover society's skills.

Unless the GM informs you otherwise, you are required to choose exactly **one Secret skill in each category** (Uncommon, Unlikely, Unhealthy). The GM, that paragon

of fairness, can veto your choices or assign them to a different category. Never choose something like 'Unerringly Destroy Fellow Troubleshooters' or you risk alienating the GM's tender affections.

Write the skills on the secret side of your character sheet. For Secret skills not on the regular non-secret list, roll 1d20; the result is the skill's rating. For specialties from the regular non-secret list, like Demolition, determine their rating normally from the governing skill's rating. If you already have that specialty or weakness, don't change the existing rating.

## ■ Perversity points and tics

You, the player (as opposed to your character), start play with 25 *Perversity points*. You can use these points for many desirable things explained later. You now have a valuable opportunity to earn bonus *Perversity points*! You will of course embrace this chance with a joyous heart.

You may earn up to 10 valuable *Perversity points* by choosing one or two identifiable *tics*: examples of your character's individual quirks, quiddities and habits.

A tic is any *obvious and recognizable* behavior or condition that seldom, if ever, directly affects the game—for example, humming absently, twiddling your thumbs when you're nervous, or twitching when anyone mentions 'the sewers'. Perhaps you acquired your tic while working at your service firm, or because of your mutant power. For instance, if you worked all day for years shuffling rods of enriched uranium from one Power Services reactor to another,

wouldn't you expect to have an odd rash or persistent sores or faintly glowing hair?

A tic is never secret. Anyone in your presence for more than a few minutes observes it. The tic doesn't inhibit your ability to do anything useful; it's just a way strangers might describe you. A database query for some generic description like 'tall male Troubleshooter, black hair, crewcut, shifty features' would bring up more hits than a Google search for 'sex'. A description that includes a few tics ('He had bow legs and a monitor-shaped mole on his jaw, he snuffled through his nose and when I offered him a bag of algae chips he screamed like a girl!') could pull you out of a police lineup with 99% accuracy.

Possibly you see no worth in this notion. Why, then, take a tic? First, it helps you roleplay a distinctive character. If that doesn't motivate you, consider this: For each tic you take during character creation (up to two tics), you earn *Perversity points*. The number of *Perversity points* is determined when all players have created their characters and, in unison, present their character sheets to the Gamemaster. The GM reads aloud all tics. For each of your tics the GM considers basically similar to another player's tic(s), you earn 1 point. For each of your tics that differs from all other players' tics, you instead earn 5 *Perversity points*.

Though you only earn *Perversity points* for the first two tics you select, you can add more tics if you wish, making your character still more identifiable. Why, look, your fellow players are encouraging you! Don't you want to please them?

## ■ Tics in play

Like Secret skills, Tics can earn you *Perversity points* not only during character creation but in the course of play. Tics are your roleplaying cues. When you play your tics effectively, in a fun and entertaining way, the GM may award you a *Perversity point* bonus. He may reward you for a particularly fun tic use during the game, but more often he'll make the award at the end of a play session. **Beware!** Boring or repetitive tics won't earn you points, no matter how many times you sniff your underarms or jerk your head to the right.

## ■ Security clearance

With its customary wisdom The Computer has arranged all Alpha Complex society using an unbreakable system of security clearances. The security clearances are ranked by color, low to high: INFRARED, RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, INDIGO, VIOLET, ULTRAVIOLET. INFRARED-clearance citizens wear black, and ULTRAVIOLET citizens (also known as *High Programmers*) wear white. Everyone else wears clothing of the color appropriate for their clearance. Rooms and corridors in Alpha Complex are painted in varying hues of their clearance colors. To pass

## Character example: 4

Next you roll 1d20 to determine Ben-R-GOX-1's secret society. You're not sure what the societies do, but with your great Financial Software rating, it sounds like you'd be a natural for Free Enterprise. Because Ben-R is in the CPU service group, you rub your lucky die, roll a 15, and check the CPU secret society table. 'Frankenstein Destroyers'—whoever they are, they don't sound particularly businesslike.

Looking at the Secret skills available in the Destroyers, you don't see anything attractive to a financial software guru. None of their skills are mandatory. You skip Demolition and the toolmaking skills. For Unhealthy you don't want programming; you like Twitchtalk instead. You could create your own Uncommon and Unlikely skills, but you like the Free Enterprise entries in these categories: Hagglng and Advertising & Marketing.

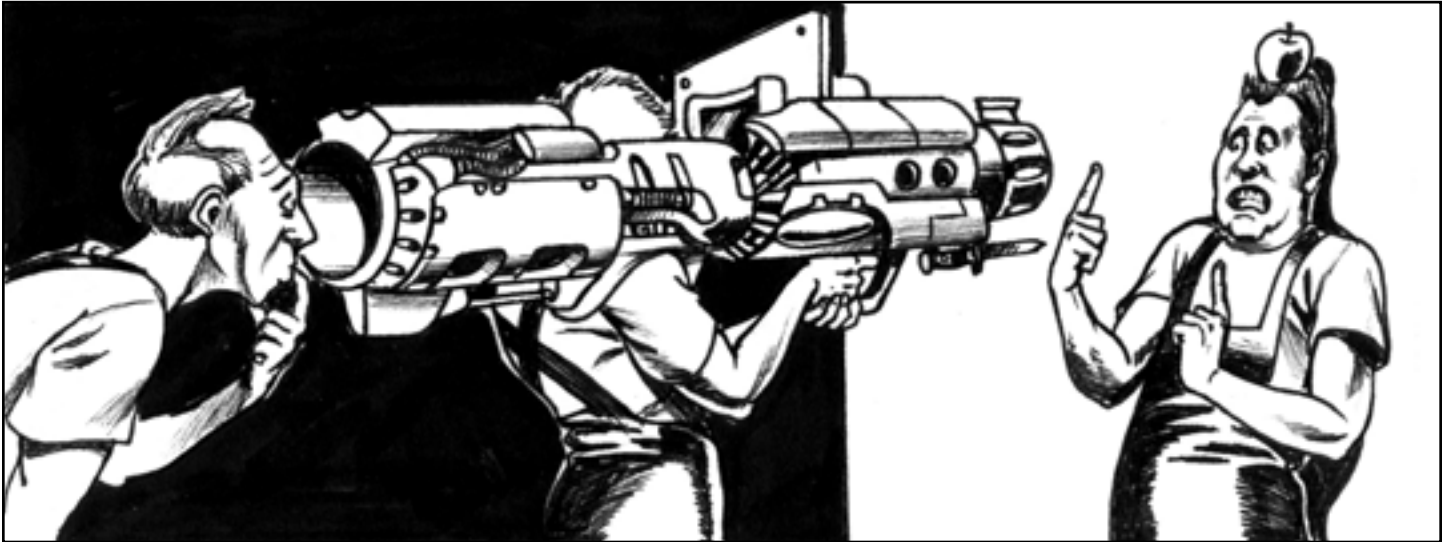
For each Secret skill you roll 1d20. Your Twitchtalk skill is 13, Hagglng is 6, and Advertising & Marketing is a dismal 1.

You start the game with 25 *Perversity points*—and those are *your* points, you the player, not Ben-R-GOX-1's points. You want more, so you choose two visible tics for Ben-R. All his software duties in CPU have left him with twitchy fingers (carpal tunnel), and he often clacks his teeth together in a fashion some might find annoying. If no other player chooses these same tics for his character, you'll earn 5 more *Perversity* apiece for them.

Ben-R is Clearance RED. He has two attributes, Access and Power, but you don't know what his ratings are.

Nothing looks good on the Equipment chart, so you keep your 1,000 starting credits for now.

When you show your character to the GM, he notes your strong Free Enterprise inclination despite putative membership in the Destroyers. He decides the Destroyers have assigned you to spy undercover on Free Enterprise. A chance to use that Financial Software skill after all!



A Troubleshooter practices his weapon skills in cooperation with an enthusiastic INFRARED volunteer.

through a corridor or enter a room beyond your clearance is treason.

Your clearance measures nothing less than The Computer's expressed trust in you. If The Computer trusts you not at all (as with most citizens), you are a common INFRARED. At the other extreme, if The Computer trusts you to revise the very code it runs on, you are a High Programmer, Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. All citizens in Alpha Complex, whatever their current rank, began as INFRAREDs. As the game starts, you have been promoted from the teeming masses of INFRAREDs to Clearance RED. The Computer encourages all citizens to aspire to higher clearance, so they may serve Alpha Complex more effectively.

Armed with The Computer's trust, those of high clearance can exercise great authority over everyone of lower clearance. Thus some selfish individuals may have a different motive for rising in clearance: so they can lord it over their fellow citizens. Of course, you and your fellow Troubleshooters are certainly immune to such selfishness.

**Note:** Players who ascend to **PARANOIA** after playing other (non-fun) RPGs sometimes mistake a rise in security clearance for what some games might call 'going up in level'—an increase in the character's abilities or general competence. **This is incorrect!** Security clearance simply measures The Computer's current regard for the character.

The Computer's regard for you, and hence your security clearance, might change often, both up and down. This absolutely doesn't imply that the GM is running the game capriciously, without due respect for your character's careful career plans. Nonsense. Who could imagine such a thing?

## Attributes

Your Troubleshooter, like every human character in Alpha Complex, has two innate attributes: *Power* and *Access*.

**Warning!** Each of your attributes has a numerical rating, but at Clearance RED you are not permitted to know your attribute ratings. You are only allowed to know, in a general way, what each attribute measures. **Displaying knowledge of your own or any character's attribute ratings below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET is treason.**

- ☞ **Power** measures the strength of your mutant power. The higher your Power rating, the more effectively you can use your power.
- ☞ **Access** describes how smoothly you can get things done in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. It measures your awareness of intricate clerical procedures and your ability to pull strings to get favors from influential people.

Access is different from security clearance, which measures The Computer's trust in you. Access is not trustworthiness, but streetwise efficiency. The higher your Access, the more smoothly you can (for instance) get that disgruntled clerk behind the counter in PLC to have a broken showerhead repaired promptly.

In this way Access is better than security clearance. A high security clearance just moves you to the front of the PLC line and lets you threaten the clerk—but if the clerk doesn't have the replacement showerhead, threats won't help. The Access attribute lets you realize you need Plumbing Supply Requisition Form 2214-PLC-5632 rev. 12, in sextuplicate. Or Access can instead ensure that a friend in Free Enterprise lines up an INFRARED-market showerhead pronto.

## Draining attribute points

You are not cleared to understand how the GM uses your attribute ratings in play. In general terms, he tracks these ratings as a pool of points, which he may spend to let your character accomplish tasks.

- ☞ If you are using your mutant power, the GM may drain Power points from your current rating to represent the energy you expend swallowing uranium or setting your supervisor on fire.
- ☞ If you want to get something done in the bureaucracy, the GM may drain Access points from your rating to represent your cashing in favors to locate your briefing room or repair your showerhead.

**Do not ask the GM how many points you have, nor how many he has drained to accomplish a given task. These questions are prohibited and punishable by stern measures.**

After draining your points, the GM will tell you the result of your action. He may or may not divulge whether the drain had any effect, as it suits his mysterious purpose.

If you run out of attribute points, you won't find out. You can perhaps deduce it from repeated failures, but this is mere guesswork. The kindly GM usually replenishes your points at the start of the next scene or play session. **Do not ask when the GM will next replenish your attribute points. This question is forbidden and will incur reprisal.**





## Equipment

By making Alpha Complex an all-embracing command economy drawing on the collective effort of all loyal citizens, taking from each

## Equipment

This chart lists many common and sought-after items and their typical costs. Prices vary with current production quotas, The Computer's current inflation policy and other, even more boring reasons.

Every item has a security clearance below which it is illegal to possess the item without specific authorization from The Computer. Possessing an item marked with a double asterisk (\*\*) below the listed clearance is treason. In Straight games possessing an item without the double asterisk is merely insubordination punishable by a fine. In Classic or Zap games possessing the item is treason.

**Note:** If the Gamemaster doesn't like something on this list, he'll change it.

## Bots

[cost; clearance]

Bot brain, used: 500; varies

Combobot\*\*: 30,000; B

Docbot 1: 1,000; R

Docbot 5: 10,000; B

Guardbot: 8,000; G

Jackobot: 10,000; O

Petbot: 400; any

Robutler: 2,500; Y

Scrubot: 1,000; R

Teachbot: 1,000; R

Warbot Model 425 Mark 4\*\*: not for sale

## Coms and multicorders

Com 1: 100; R

2: 500; Y

3: 1,000; G

4\*\*: 5,000; I

Multicorder 1: 600; R

2: 1,000; G

3\*\*: 5,000; I

4\*\*: 10,000; V

Multicorder programs: 100; varies

PDC: 250; R

## Vehicles

*Vehicle prices and availability vary. Rebates possible. Dealer prep and options not included.*

Autocar: 15,000; R

Copter: 75,000; G

Crawler: 50,000; Y

Flybot: 125,000; B

Transbot: 50,000; O

Vulturecraft\*\*: you can't afford this; B

*See the IR Market chart at the end of the Player section (p. 48) for more cool and potentially treasonous stuff to buy.*

citizen according to his ability and giving to each according to [CLASSIFIED], The Computer has fought off the Communist menace. In recent years The Computer's High Programmers have reshaped the Complex economy to encourage greater concentration of wealth in those best able to spend it wisely: the High Programmers. To this end many new service firms manufacture a wide range of consumer goods that you, as a loyal citizen, are extremely strongly encouraged to buy. Buy often! Spend freely! Spend to the limit of your means, for the good of the High Programmers and hence of all Alpha Complex!

You have both *personal equipment* you buy yourself with your own credits, and equipment *assigned* by The Computer's service firms as part of your mission.

Your personal equipment includes one standard-issue red jumpsuit with boots, a month's worth of REDdiMeals, and all the approved happiness drugs you want. You may also purchase more personal equipment using the chart nearby. If anything happens to your personal equipment, you must buy it again if you want replacements, and you may earn The Computer's disapproval for flagrant waste of property.

Your assigned equipment includes:

- ☞ One laser pistol body, minus the barrel.

**Note:** Your assigned laser pistol lacks a barrel. It won't fire without a barrel. Laser barrels are color-coded by security clearance and are issued at PLC when you pick up your mission-related equipment. (To get a barrel without proper PLC authorization is absolutely impossible, no matter what your secret society contacts tell you. It's impossible, so don't even think about it. PLC thanks you.)

- ☞ One suit of red reflex armor overalls in (more or less) your size.

- ☞ A Series 1300 Personal Digital Companion (PDC).

Your PDC is a helpful, friendly phone and AI contained within a cellphone-sized, easily concealable plastic case. The PDC has a small color display touchscreen, a stylus, a standard telephony keypad, and a built-in camera that can document still or video pictures of any treasonous behavior you might happen to point it at. The PDC also includes built-in online forms for reporting said treason quickly and conveniently.

On your PDC you can call The Computer at any time, as well as mission personnel

if they are willing to take your call. All images, data, and voice messages from your PDC are copied instantly to your personal, pass phrase-protected online file storage area, made available to you free as a public service by Internal Security. (Your End Citizen License Agreement gives IntSec the right to peruse at will the contents of your file area.)

You don't own your assigned equipment. You use it at the pleasure of the service firm. You are financially responsible for these items; if anything happens to them, you must reimburse the service firm for the items' cost, and you may earn The Computer's official disfavor.

You also own, as personal equipment, one *ME Card*.

## The ME Card

The Computer requires every citizen to carry a Mercantile Enterprise card—universally known as the **ME Card**. Though it looks and works much like Old Reckoning credit cards, your ME Card is far more. Loaded with your biometric data, credit history, property inventory, and authentication codes, the ME Card is, in a sense, your identity.

Sadly, the card's built-in sensors don't test whether the individual carrying your card is the rightful owner. The Computer, in its analysis of economic systems, has determined it doesn't matter who is spending the money so long as someone is. So if you lose your ME Card, the thief can become Officially You until you recover, destroy, or cancel your Card.

Because cancelling an ME Card is a slow, all-day ordeal at Central Processing (though nothing compared to the three-day hell of getting a replacement), it's far more practical to try tracking down your stolen Card—and in the meantime even to 'borrow' someone else's Card and become Officially Him for a while.

Identity theft in Alpha Complex has thus become not just a concern but an everyday event. Wise citizens go to extremes to protect their Cards.

Still, take heart! Theft of one's Card doesn't always mean immediate financial ruin. The ME Card's resources are highly unreliable, varying in their buying power and perquisites by sector, time of day and database availability.

## Character creation complete!

You have successfully negotiated the character creation process. **You have not yet completed the entire orientation process.** Continue promptly to the next chapter.

# 4. CASH FLOW

## 4. Spending your credits

You start your career as a Troubleshooter with a generous reward from The Computer of 1,000 credits. At Clearance RED, this is about a month of ordinary expenses.

Your salary of 1,000 credits a month is paid directly by The Computer and not from any service group budget, so no boss or overseer will demand a kickback. This lets you husband your credits to pay mission-related expenses. Troubleshooter missions, though they pay generous completion bonuses, do tend to incur expenses.

You won't *necessarily* die multiple times and have to buy new clones. You won't *inevitably* terminate some victim without sufficient evidence and thus be liable for the cost of his replacement clone. You aren't *inherently* likely to destroy property without authorization and be billed for the damage. You won't *absolutely, beyond any doubt* offend some high-clearance citizen who punishes you with a breathtaking fine.

It won't *necessarily, inevitably, inherently, absolutely, beyond any doubt* happen that way.

However, keep the possibility in mind. Thank you for your cooperation.

### ■ Salary and living expenses

The higher your clearance, the more it costs to maintain your existence in the manner to which you hope to become accustomed.

The monthly salary you earn depends on your security clearance. By a remarkable coincidence, this is the same amount as your average monthly living expenses. Here are typical salaries, by clearance, and the standard of living they buy. Because vidshows exhaustively document the lifestyles of the famous high-clearance citizens who have earned The Computer's trust, every citizen in Alpha Complex knows many perks available at every clearance. The Computer encourages tasteful expressions of desire for these perks, to the extent they signify one's greater service to Alpha Complex. Expressions of outright envy are impolite.

#### INFRARED (100 credits/month)

**Food:** FunFoods (Hot and Cold), many kinds of algae, Bouncy Bubble Beverage on special occasions. INFRAREDs can live without cost indefinitely. The Computer pays them a small monthly stipend to aid the Alpha Complex economy.

**Housing:** Communal barracks.

**Transport:** Feet. Transtube.

**Staff:** None.

**Authority:** None.

**Perks:** Perpetual happy drug haze.

**Typical INFRARED citizens:** Line workers and grunts of all service groups; over 80% of the population is INFRARED. The Computer

**As a RED Clearance citizen, you receive a salary of 1,000 credits per month. As a Troubleshooter, you are paid directly by The Computer.**

**Your living expenses at RED Clearance cost 1,000 credits a month. Higher clearances have higher monthly expenses. Live at the level appropriate for your clearance or risk loss of status.**

officially regards INFRAREDs as the admirably sturdy foundation of Alpha Complex. Nearly all higher-clearance citizens emerge from their teeming ranks; Alpha Complex has no hereditary aristocracy. Privately, many of RED Clearance and above (generically called 'trusted citizens') hold INFRAREDs in contempt as drugged drones.

Still, INFRAREDs tend to live longer than trusted citizens below, say, GREEN Clearance, because as a group they seem less prone to treason. For this reason, and because of their huge numbers, INFRAREDs are subject to much less surveillance than other groups.

#### RED (1,000 credits/month)

**Food:** FunFoods, REDdiMeals with Soyilent Red, Bouncy Bubble Beverage occasionally, real food a couple of times a month.

**Housing:** Room shared with up to five other citizens.

**Transport:** Feet. Transtube. Transition.

**Staff:** None.

**Authority:** None. Even Infrareds aren't likely to listen to you, as they're doing jobs for the higher-ups.

**Perks:** You're not drugged all the time, and you're not INFRARED.

**Typical RED citizens:** Troubleshooters, senior clerks, low-level technicians, Armed Forces grunts; about 10% of the population.

#### ORANGE (2,000/month)

**Food:** FunFoods, ORANGEyouGladMeals with Soyilent Orange, all the B3 you want, real food weekly.

**Housing:** Room shared with one other citizen.

**Transport:** Feet. Transtube. Transition. Autocar hack once in a while.

**Staff:** None.

**Authority:** You can coerce the occasional INFRARED.

**Perks:** Well, you're not RED. Some free time.

**Typical ORANGE citizens:** Technical supervisors, managers, mundane programmers, vidshow sidekicks, Armed Forces corporals; about 6% of the population.

#### YELLOW (3,000/month)

**Food:** FunFoods, MelloYELLOWMeals with Soyilent Yellow, real food once daily.

**Housing:** Your own room (under camera surveillance). Shared bathroom.

**Transport:** Transtube. Autocar hack.



*Citizens of all clearances show admirable zeal in service to The Computer.*



**Staff:** Whomever you can threaten.

**Authority:** You manage a small group at your service firm.

**Perks:** You set your own schedule (subject to higher-clearance demands). You can request changes in your pharmatherapy.

**Typical YELLOW citizens:** Mid-level bureaucrats, R&D project leads, vidshow hosts, Armed Forces sergeants, PLC artisans crafting handmade trinkets for High Programmers; about 2% of the population.

## GREEN (10,000/month)

**Food:** Real food each meal, supplemented with GREENGood and various SoyLents.

**Housing:** Private one-bedroom apartment.

**Transport:** Hack. Shared private autocar.

**Staff:** A housebot servant.

**Authority:** May assign on-the-spot insubordination fines. May demote RED citizens. You manage a large division of your service firm.

**Perks:** Noticeable jump in status (and, often, body weight). Lower levels may engage in spontaneous bootlicking—that is, not at laserpoint. Pharmatherapy optional.

**Typical GREEN citizens:** Senior supervisors, managing directors, elite artisans, Armed Forces lieutenants, IntSec goons. All citizens of GREEN Clearance and above (sometimes generically called 'administrators' or 'managers') collectively comprise about 2% of the population.

## BLUE (40,000/month)

**Food:** Nothing but real food all the time! At last!

**Housing:** Opulent suite in safe and prestigious subsector.

**Transport:** Private autocar.

**Staff:** Full bot staff and bot programmer. Seldom if ever do you encounter Infrareds.

**Authority:** May promote to Clearance ORANGE or lower. May demote from GREEN or lower. May assign Merit awards and penalties. You manage an entire service firm.

**Perks:** You go to the front of any line; invitations to vidshow award ceremonies;

exclusive club memberships; underlings grovel routinely. Your private life is exempt from routine surveillance.

**Typical BLUE citizens:** Junior executives on the rise, vidshow producers, Armed Forces captains and majors, IntSec officers, Central Processing managing directors.

## INDIGO (100,000/month)

**Food:** Gourmet meals and rich desserts.

**Housing:** A lovely big corridor all your own.

**Transport:** Several vehicles with chauffeur or pilot.

**Staff:** Full staff of humans and bots. You can go a month without seeing an ORANGE citizen.

**Authority:** May promote to GREEN or lower. May demote from BLUE or lower. You serve on the Boards of several service firms.

**Perks:** Obsessive coverage on celebrity vidshows, assuming you like that; always a table open or a room ready; you skip the lines completely and go directly to the manager. You pull lots of strings at Internal Security. If you offer sufficiently good reasons to The Computer, you can openly collect and study achievements of Old Reckoning Cultures.

**Typical INDIGO citizens:** Senior executives, Armed Forces colonels, IntSec deputy supervisors, Central Processing chief director, HPD&MC vidshow studio chiefs, most secret society chiefs.

## VIOLET (600,000/month)

**Food:** Huge Hollywood-scale dinner parties catered by a GREEN master chef. (You fought hard to get your chef, and you constantly fend off marauding rivals who want to spirit him away.)

**Housing:** A subsector or two.

**Transport:** Many autocars, truckbots, private flybots and maybe a sub; full motorcade with IntSec escort.

**Staff:** Full human staff. (Bots are so working-class.) You hardly ever encounter anyone YELLOW or lower.

**Authority:** May promote to and demote from INDIGO or lower. May order summary

executions and erasure of clone templates. 'Service firms? Oh, you mean my investment portfolio.'

**Perks:** You see this sector? It's yours. You don't go to managers; they come to you. You can freely say almost anything short of outright Commie propaganda. 'Internal Security? Oh, you mean my staff police.'

**Typical VIOLET citizens:** CEOs, generals, IntSec chief supervisor, Free Enterprise secret society chiefs, Machine Empaths. A typical INFRARED citizen may see a VIOLET once or twice in his life.

## ULTRAVIOLET (if you have to ask, you can't afford it)

**Food, Housing, Transport, Staff, Perks:** If they can't have it, it not only doesn't exist, it probably can't.

**Authority:** Nobody knows exactly what they do or where they live. High Programmers are either famous throughout the Complex or, if they prefer, totally anonymous. Mere knowledge of their activities is potentially treasonous.

**Typical ULTRAVIOLET citizens:** This information is not available at your security clearance.

## Underspending

In times of tight cash you can decide to save credits by living at a lower clearance level than you're entitled to. You can even return to living free at an INFRARED level of squalor, eating food out of a tube and bunking in a big echoing barracks that smells of acetone and formaldehyde. This costs nothing, except to the prestige and influence you enjoyed. However, your frugal ways will attract attention from The Computer.

The Computer tracks the amount each citizen spends every day. A citizen who spends notably less than average obviously must be doing something illegal: stealing what he should be buying, spending money on the IR Market, or even (gasp!) funneling funds to subversive organizations.

## 5. Clones

You need credits for many expenses, including (in Straight games) new clones.

In the old days of Alpha Complex, The Computer created citizens in families of six identical clones, all born from the tanks at the same time. When they died, their precious genetic heritage was lost to Alpha Complex. What a treasonous waste of resources! Today, thanks to advances in forced-growth cloning technology, The Computer's loyal servants in Technical Services can now produce new clone copies of any citizen at will, and can copy

**In the old days citizens were decanted in families of six identical clones. Now you are just You, alone—the Prime.**

**If you die, your memories are transferred to a clone backup body. You have five clone backups. If your GM allows it, you can purchase new six-packs of backups.**

## 5. CLONES

and transfer a clone's memories with absolute accuracy.

Most citizens who meet an untimely demise must wait months for Tech Services to get around to downloading their recorded memories into a new replacement body. Because Troubleshooters have a twenty-seven-thousand-percent higher fatality rate than average, The Computer has thoughtfully ordered Tech Services to prepare a number of ready backup Yous. Unfortunately, this costs money—and it comes out of your salary.

When you start a new Troubleshooter, Tech Services grants you six clones for a regulated minimal cost. You begin as Clone #1 in your line, the so-called *Prime*, which costs nothing. The value of the remaining five clones in your first six pack is 2,000 credits—a value of 400 credits per clone, yours free! Thank you, Friend Computer.

What happens when you run out of clones? That depends on your GM's play style.



**Zap:** You're gone. Generate a new character.



**Classic:** The Gamemaster chooses whether clones work like Zap games or Straight games.



**Straight:** If you have exhausted your six allotted clones, all is not lost. You can buy new 'six-packs' of six more clones. Still, things get unpleasant for two main reasons: cost and genetic defects.

First, cost. To discourage frivolous dying, The Computer has decreed that your first additional six-pack (Clones 7-12) costs 6,000 credits—1,000 per clone. The price goes up for each subsequent six-pack. The price progression after the twelfth clone is not available at your clearance. To pay for your fifth or sixth six-pack, you may need to take an odd job on the side. Maybe two odd jobs. Maybe two hundred.

If you lack the credits to pay for a new six-pack, your credit balance goes negative. If your negative credit balance dips too low, your clone bank forecloses and wipes your template. Once your deadbeat Troubleshooter dies, start a new character. The threshold for this catastrophe is 10 times the monthly living expenses associated with your clearance, described under 'Living Expenses'. For example, if you're Red clearance, with expenses of 1,000 credits a month, the clone bank forecloses when your balance hits -10,000.

**Your first additional six-pack of clones costs 6,000 credits—1,000 per clone. The cost of later clones is not available at your clearance.**

**Backup clones beyond your original five are prone to cumulative imperfections called genetic drift.**

The bright spot here is if someone else kills you without having adequate evidence of your treason, the impetuous murderer is liable for the cost of your new clone—assuming you can find the killer. (Remember, this applies to Straight games only.)

A more serious problem is genetic drift. Tiny imperfections in the cloning process enter your clone template and accumulate with each clone after the sixth. The seventh might have a minor speech impediment or be missing a finger. The eighth has the same problem and could also be nearsighted, partially deaf, or color-blind (a grave hazard in Alpha Complex). The ninth has both of these problems and might also have a pronounced limp, twitch, or hump. By the tenth or eleventh clone, think Quasimodo.

At Clearance BLUE and higher you can spend 10,000 credits to get Tech Services to clean up and correct your clone template, so that your next six clones are as perfect as the original. The only means of template cleanup at lower cost or clearance is an illicit deal made through a secret society. Generally the society requires you to do it a favor at some unspecified time in the future. Perhaps the society will never call in that favor, perhaps they will never need you...

Does your clone replacement always have the same mutant power as its predecessor? Not necessarily. If you want to keep the same power, tell the GM. Otherwise, he may give you a new power or ask you to roll again on the Mutant Power table in this section.



*In earlier times citizens were decanted simultaneously in 'clone families' of six. How wasteful of resources! New technology gives you new clones on demand.*



# PLAYER SECTION CLEARANCE RED

## 6. Mandatory Bonus Duty (MBD)

The Computer assigns fun and interesting duties to specific members of your Troubleshooter mission team as rewards for their continued service. These **Mandatory Bonus Duties** (MBDs) enhance the team's chances of success and provide many exciting and educational experiences. Your added responsibility will make you feel loved, wanted and secure, and not at all paranoid.

For instance, your MBD might be *Communications and Recording Officer*. As such, in addition to your normal duties during a mission, you'd operate a valuable multi-corder to record every action by your fellow

**Each Troubleshooter on the team has a special duty. You may be Team Leader, Loyalty Officer, Hygiene Officer, Communications Officer, Happiness Officer, or Equipment Guy.**

Troubleshooters. You could get all your fellow Troubleshooters to smile and demonstrate their loyalty to The Computer right there on camera as they execute their mission. Wouldn't that be fun?

Mission briefing officers may assign you an MBD based on detailed analysis of your past achievements, your performance on HPD&MC Mandatory Bonus Duty Determination Test 88-9b, your core competencies or your place in alphabetical order.

### The Duties



👁️ **Team Leader:** Offers guidance and sound advice to other team members; acts as tactical situation commander in combat



👁️ **Loyalty Officer:** Discourages treasonous thoughts; looks for early warning signs of Commie sympathy.



👁️ **Hygiene Officer:** Monitors the personal hygiene level of other team members, preventing poor morale, substandard performance and halitosis. CPU performance tracking statistics show [CLASSIFIED] percent of Troubleshooter missions fail due to poor hygiene.



👁️ **Communications and Recording Officer:** Chronicles the mission using advanced video technology, extremely sensitive microphones and gripping color commentary. Good lighting and innovative camera angles produce excellent training material and possibly even footage for popular evening vidshows like *Bake That Commie!*



👁️ **Happiness Officer:** Ensures everyone has fun on the mission; knows jokes, sings, leads citizen-instruction games; authorizes and administers biochemical supplements needed to guarantee a fun time is had by all.



👁️ **Bots/Weapons/Vehicles/Sundry Equipment Repair and Maintenance Officer (Equipment Guy):** Controls bots and vehicles assigned to the team; monitors each Troubleshooter's equipment maintenance level. The Equipment Guy is responsible for assigned mission equipment that gets lost, stolen or damaged.

## 7. Doing things

When you want your Troubleshooter to do something—use a skill, your mutant power, certain equipment, secret society contacts, etc.—tell the Gamemaster what you want to happen.

The GM sometimes simply tells you what happens. He may instead roll dice to determine the outcome of your action, or may ask you to roll a d20 and compare it to one of your skill numbers, your mutant power, or your secret society rank. In making the roll, you are ‘rolling against’ the skill.

Sometimes the GM tells you the skill you are rolling against, sometimes (in his undeniable wisdom) not. Sometimes the GM will let you suggest an appropriate attribute or skill. The skill areas overlap, so be creative.

In general, if the die roll is equal to or less than the designated number, your action succeeds. Sometimes the roll must be over the rating to succeed. Sometimes the GM may tell you which one you want. Or not.

Sometimes the GM may allow you and other players to spend *Perversity points* (explained below) to adjust the number you need to roll, thereby adjusting your chance of success. These adjustments, called *General Perversity Modifiers*, are described in the section ‘Scenes’.

### Scenes

A **scene** is the basic unit of play. Typically it begins when the Troubleshooters arrive at a location directly important to the mission’s main storyline. Typically it ends when everybody gets ki—when the Troubleshooters resolve the scene’s objectives.

The GM will tell you when a scene starts or ends. The start and end of a scene are each marked by a game event.

#### ☞ **Perversity point ration** (scene start):

The GM awards you a number of Perversity points. Perversity points are explained below.

#### ☞ **Congeniality award** (scene end):

The GM may optionally offer a bonus award of Perversity points to the Troubleshooter who most needs a morale boost.

The GM might ask each player in turn to say aloud which player most deserves the Congeniality award. It is entirely permissible to vote for yourself, but there is no secret ballot. You voice your opinions to all. The GM may give the top vote winner(s) the award, may give it to a different player, or may give no award at all.

**Rule #1. The GM is right!**

**Rule #2. Know nothing.**

**Rule #3. Be entertaining.**

**To do something, tell the GM. He tells you what happens. He may roll 1d20 or ask you to roll.**

**Play proceeds in scenes. At the start of each scene you get Perversity points. Use poker chips to represent Perversity.**

**Sometimes the GM may let you spend Perversity points to affect a roll’s success chance. Each point spent increases or decreases the chance by 1.**

### The Prime Rules for Players

**Player Rule #1. The Gamemaster is right!**

**Player Rule #2. Avoid knowing the rules.**

As a Troubleshooter, you are Security Clearance RED. Displaying knowledge of rules of higher clearance than RED is treasonous. Arguing with the Gamemaster is incredibly treasonous (see Player Rule #1).

**Player Rule #3. Entertain everyone.**

Your fellow Troubleshooters want to kill traitors, that is, you. Repeatedly. You can gain some protection by spending Perversity points. You earn Perversity points by being entertaining. The best protection lies in the good will of the Gamemaster. You earn his good will by being entertaining. To put it another way:

#### Entertain or die!

Amuse the Gamemaster and the other players, or you are in for a short and frustrating career. Here’s why:

1. Your Troubleshooter’s path to success involves capturing traitors and creatively betraying, gloating over and terminating fellow Troubleshooters.
2. Often, doing this requires treasonous behavior, especially during the gloating and terminating parts. Treason is punishable by fines, demotion, censure, medication, brainscrubbing or summary execution, possibly all at once.
3. So while committing treason, how can you protect yourself? When it really counts, your actions must succeed. You must successfully hit your target or jiggle a security camera or alter a video record.
4. You increase your chances of success by spending *Perversity points* on *General Perversity Modifiers*. (Perversity points and Perversity are explained in this section.)
5. You get Perversity points by doing stuff that surprises, amuses or pleases everyone, furthers your mission, or otherwise improves the play experience for everybody. Sometimes unctuously flattering the GM works too.

So: By being entertaining, you can get away with treason—or at least it improves your chances.



## Scenes and non-scenes

Examples of scenes directly relevant to the mission's main storyline:

- ☞ The Troubleshooters are summoned to go to a briefing. *Objective:* Find the briefing room.
- ☞ They get the mission briefing. *Objective:* Accept the mission and set out.
- ☞ They receive assigned 'service service' duty, such as testing valuable R&D equipment, taking part in an HPD&MC loyalty parade or transporting plutonium for Power Services. *Objective:* Accept the service service and set out.
- ☞ They go to the mission site and investigate. *Objective:* Resolve the situation. (This may take several scenes.)
- ☞ They report for individual confessions, group debriefing and dispensation of rewards and punishment. *Objective:* Take it with a steely grin.

By contrast, the following incidents aren't part of the mission's main storyline and would not usually be scenes:

- ☞ You break off from the group to meet your secret society contact in a supply closet.
- ☞ Learning a fellow Troubleshooter has the treasonous Machine Empathy mutation, you draw him into a boiler room for a fast confab exploring possible blackmail and extortion schemes.

- ☞ For unknown reasons the team leader orders the team to stop at the recreation center to watch the premiere of the reality vidshow *My Dream Bot*.

## Perversity points

**Perversity points** are the Gamemaster's reward to you for entertaining everyone. You can earn them in both scenes and non-scenes, whether or not your character is actually present on the scene. All you have to do is be amusing, help the storyline along or really roast a fellow Troubleshooter—roast him with *style*.

The GM rewards you yourself, not your character, with Perversity points. If your Troubleshooter dies for good, you still keep your current Perversity point totals and can spend them with your next character.

You and the GM can track Perversity points on paper, but it works better to use poker chips. Use different colors of chips, if available, to represent 1, 5, and 10 Perversity points.

## How you earn Perversity points

Using incontestably fair judgment, the GM may decide to award you Perversity points in these situations:

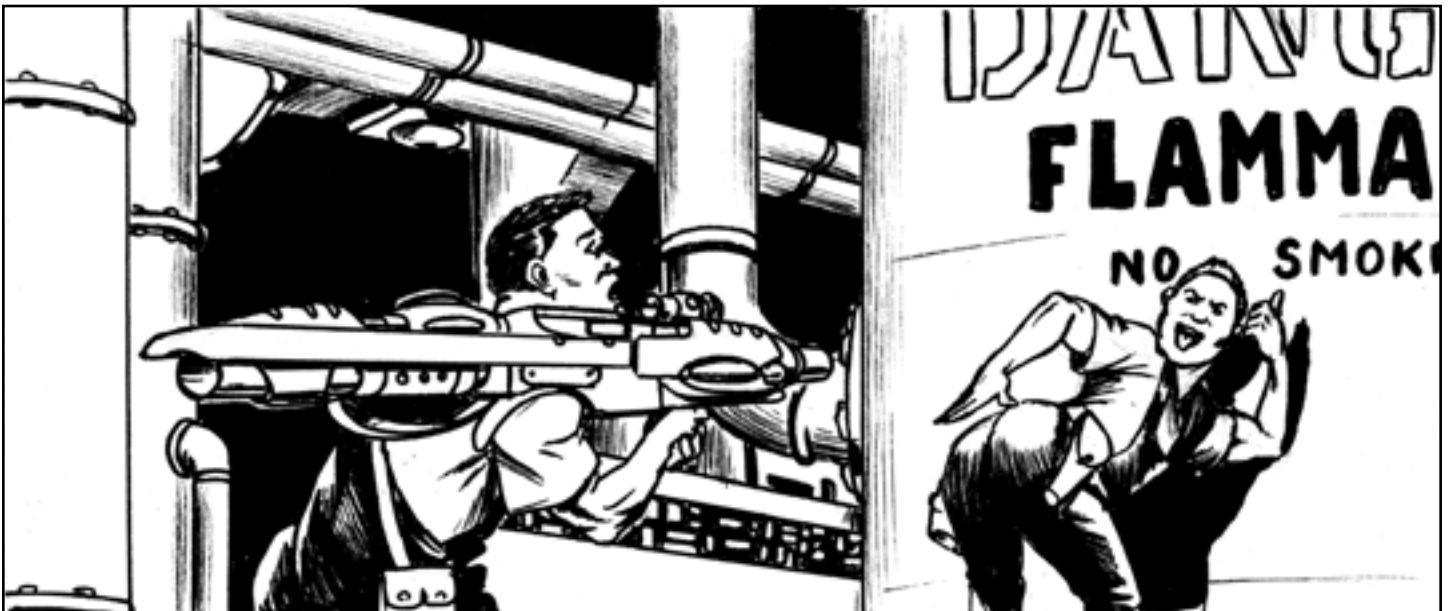
- ☞ At the start of each scene.
- ☞ When you do things the others finds entertaining. This may happen many times during a scene, if you're playing well.
- ☞ At the end of a play session, if you've played your chosen tics and Secret skills entertainingly.
- ☞ When you alert the GM to another player's treasonous behavior or rules

violations—in particular, to displays of rules knowledge above the character's security clearance.

- ☞ When you perform a valuable or interesting service that improves the game (say, creating a fascinating new rumor), gets a stalled play session moving, or helps lighten the GM's load and mood (playing an NPC for a scene, bribing the GM with munchies or beverages, paying the pizza delivery guy, etc.).
- ☞ When you **stylishly** and (in most cases) fatally betray a fellow Troubleshooter to fulfill the dictates of The Computer, a secret society mission or even a personal rivalry. The key word here is *stylishly*. Any old Troubleshooter can earn good standing with The Computer by terminating a traitor, but to earn Perversity points, you must terminate your enemy with panache—with gumption and avowed self-satisfaction—in short, with style.

A stylish termination typically requires you to inform your victim beforehand. Separate your target from all support, reduce him to helpless panic, take a few delicious moments to explain—even, if you're bold, to explain *in painstaking detail*—exactly what he did to deserve your imminent meting of justice, and finally off him as you would a rabid Commie.

Does your breath quicken at this prospect? Do your fingers already tremble on your laser trigger? You understand, then, the meaning of style.



This Troubleshooter is learning the true meaning of the term Perversity.



## How you spend Perversity points

You can spend Perversity points to improve your position in life or to undermine another's position. Here's what you can buy:

- ☞ **General Perversity Modifiers:** When the GM generously allows it, you can spend points to adjust the success of your own or others' die rolls. See the next section.
- ☞ **Increased skill and specialty ratings, and new specialties and Secret skills:** You can spend Perversity points to improve your Troubleshooter's competence. See Chapter 12, 'Going forward'.
- ☞ **Social perks:** Perversity points are not really intended as currency among players, but you may find that a generous donation of points gets you the seat near the GM that makes note-passing easier. Perhaps a few points will get you a roll of the GM's lucky die, a cold can of bubbly beverage or first choice of the munchies. Use your imagination.

## General Perversity Modifiers

You'll probably spend most of your Perversity points on *General Perversity Modifiers*.

Other (non-fun) roleplaying games use lots and lots of modifiers. You apply them to figure out what number you need to roll.

**Non-Fun game player:** I aim my rifle and fire it at the lead goon.

**GM:** Okay, your rifle skill is 10, +3 for aiming, -2 for the range to the target, -4 for his armor, but he doesn't see you so that's +3, and you're using the targeting scopebot and depleted-uranium ammo for +4, so you need to roll... wait, what was your skill again?

**PARANOIA** makes this process easy by reversing cause and effect. When the GM allows it, you and your fellow players can spend Perversity points as General Perversity Modifiers to influence your roll's success chance for better or worse. After all points are spent and the final success chance is determined, the GM interprets the circumstances of the roll to fit all the modifiers.

In many cases you'll spend points secretly. Sometimes, especially in momentous encounters, the GM will require you to announce how you're spending points. For example:

**PARANOIA Player #1:** I aim my cone rifle and fire it at the lead traitor. I have Violence 10, so I need a 10 or less to hit.

**Player #2:** No you don't. I'm spending 2 Perversity points on a General Perversity Modifier to reduce the number you need to roll down to 8.

**Player #1:** Bastard!

**Player #3:** Three more points to reduce it from 8 to 5.

**Player #1:** Betrayer!

**Player #4:** Two more to reduce the hit roll to 3.

**Player #1:** I'll get you in the mess hall!

**Player #5:** Uh, I'll pass.

**Player #6:** Well, I support this heroic action. *[Player #6 secretly knows Player #1's target is the high secret society official Player #6 has been ordered to assassinate.]* I'll spend 5 to raise the hit roll back up to 8.

**Player #1:** Good. I'm spending 5 to raise it to 13.

**GM:** All right. Plus 3 to hit, let's see... *[Thinks.]* Your malfunctioning rifle scopebot blinks back on just as the traitor's foot slips on a stray NiceLife empty. The scopebot says, 'Hey, what's up? Did I miss anything?'

**Player #1:** 'Scopebot, target that traitor!'

**GM:** The scopebot says, 'Ready!' Okay, roll.

**Player #1:** Here goes....

If the players' collective Perversity points expenditures had instead reduced Player #1's success roll to (say) 6 or less, the GM might instead retrofit the in-game situation as follows:

**GM:** All right, you're 4 down. *[Thinks.]* The cone rifle's broken scopebot suddenly yells drunkenly, 'Lubricant for everybody!' The traitor's head whips around. Even though he couldn't possibly have heard you at this range, he heard you. *[The GM has spontaneously decided to give the target the Hypersenses mutation.]* He dives for the ground. Roll.

See? Perversity Modifiers work like ulcers. People used to think you got ulcers from worrying too much. They had it backward; it turns out you get ulcers from bacteria, and your stomach pains make you worry. In exactly the same way, sort of, **PARANOIA** takes other games' arduous combat process (assess circumstances to figure out the modifiers) and reverses it for smooth and easy retrofitting (get the roll and then figure out the modifiers that caused it).

Your fellow players may ask something like, 'If the GM interprets one set of Perversity modifiers so my cone rifle gives me a bonus, how can I not get the same bonus in later attacks, even when Perversity goes against me?'

You, a wise player, can gently correct them in the characteristic **PARANOIA** way, as follows:

'Quiet, or the GM will let me kill you.'

## Perverse details

**Spending limits:** If the GM allows Perversity spending, you can usually spend up to 5 Perversity points on Perversity to affect a roll, and you usually only get one spending chance per roll.

Sometimes the GM will let only the acting player (the one rolling the dice) spend points on Perversity. Other times, the GM will go around to each player in turn, solicit Perversity spending, and move on. When everyone has spent once or passed, the acting player rolls. In truly climactic—not to say 'chaotic'—situations, the GM may allow you and everyone else to spend freely, without limit, as many times as you like until your points (or you) are exhausted.

**Rationalizing the perverse:** You can spend on Perversity whenever the GM allows it, whether or not your Troubleshooter is present at the scene. If your character is present, etiquette (or maybe the GM) requires you to do something in the game to reflect your spending. ('I'm poking him in the ribs as he aims, -2 Perversity.')

**Public or silent:** The GM may ask you to declare your Perversity spending publicly, or—more characteristic of **PARANOIA**—ask each player in turn to silently mark '+' (plus) or '-' (minus) on a sticky-note and pass it to him, along with poker chips representing the number of Perversity points spent. These cryptic glyphs indicate the two possible kinds of Perversity spending. A plus increases the player's success chance; a minus reduces the chance.





## 8. Treason and commendation

Survival, let alone advancement, requires clear understanding of what constitutes treason and insubordination, and what you can do that might possibly earn favor from those in power.

What is treasonous? The charts on the facing page summarize the most common behaviors.

The first chart, **Acceptable behavior**, lists activities you might think are treasonous but are not. Before you fry that traitor, be sure what he said was actually traitorous, or you're stuck with the bill for his replacement clone. (Applicable only to Straight and Classic games. In Zap games there is no acceptable behavior.)

The **Treason and insubordination** charts list offenses against The Computer, Alpha Complex, and proper etiquette. Insubordination is punishable by credit fines. Treason is punishable in many severe ways, including termination. In Zap games, treat insubordination as treason.

The Treason and insubordination charts include some out-of-game offenses, such as displaying knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules. If you, the player, demonstrate this unwelcome behavior, the penalties you receive transfer to your character.

### Treason and insubordination

In Straight and Classic games (but not Zap games), The Computer distinguishes between **treason** (gross disobedience, threats to Alpha Complex or The Computer) and **insubordination** (minor rulebreaking and transgressions of polite conduct).

Treason incurs penalties such as probation, medication, brainscrub, and termination. Insubordination incurs monetary fines.

Only The Computer, mission officials and citizens of Clearance GREEN or higher can assign treason and insubordination penalties. In practice these entities assign treason penalties mainly during formal proceedings, such as briefings, debriefings, and confessions. They assign insubordination penalties on the spot and freely.

Penalties are cumulative. Worse, if one GREEN citizen hits you with insubordination for being out of uniform, and 30 seconds later another citizen hits you with another penalty for the same offense, both penalties stick, even though you had no time to remedy the first offense. Complaining about the second penalty is a great way to get more.

Troubleshooters cannot assign treason penalties. The Troubleshooter team's loyalty officer assigns fines for insubordination; the team leader fines the loyalty officer. Other team officers can assign insubordination fines related to their duty (hygiene officer for failing hygiene inspections, equipment guy if you carve your

**The behavior charts on the facing page list behavior that is meritorious, acceptable, insubordinate or treasonous.**

**Meritorious behavior is rewarded with credits or promotion. Secret societies give IOUs for favors.**

**Insubordination is punishable by fines. Treason is punishable by medication, brainscrub, termination or worse.**

name in your cone rifle barrel, happiness officer for frowning, etc.). Fines are paid to The Computer, not to the officer levying the fine.

### Accusations of treason (Classic games)



To earn commendation from The Computer, an accusation of treason must be credible. The more reputable the target of your accusation, the less likely The Computer and its agents will regard your charges as credible.

To credibly accuse a target individual of treason, you need corroborating testimony or, even better, have (or be able to fabricate, after the termination) clear, documented evidence. Documented evidence includes still photos, video clips, and audio recordings. A treasonous act is 'documented evidence' for one of these reasons:

1. The GM says it is.
2. You have a convincing in-game reason for having documented the act, and the GM accepts it (see reason #1).

It doesn't matter how much time elapses between the treasonous act and your report. There is no statute of limitations in Alpha Complex. However, if the target has already been accused and penalized in the past for a given act, that act won't weigh heavily in your accusation.

If you can produce the required quantity of evidence for The Computer or its authorized representatives, and if the evidence happens not to mysteriously disappear shortly thereafter, The Computer may convict the target of treason. If you are making the accusation after you already killed the target, the GM tells you how much time you have to fabricate—*assemble* the required evidence.

Given the high (if unevenly distributed) technology of Alpha Complex, you may

wonder: Could some felon take video footage of a known Communist blowing up an IntSec station, then undetectably map a heroic Troubleshooter's face onto the traitor's?

Nonsense. As Internal Security experts loudly proclaim on reality vidshows (*Catch That Traitor!*, *CommieStopper*), The Computer's incredibly sensitive state-of-the-art software infallibly detects fraudulent image manipulation. All those experts say it is impossible, and who can doubt experts?

### Accusations of treason (Straight games)



This works much as in Classic games, except The Computer requires greater standards of evidential rigor. These are the differences in Straight games:

1. The Computer is less lenient about letting you assemble a case against a target after the fact—that is, post-termination. Evidence should be presented while the target is alive. The Computer gives high-clearance targets an opportunity to defend themselves, which may be troublesome for the accuser.
2. The target's past reputation confers some protection.
3. Unlike in Classic or Zap games, if The Computer decides the termination was unjustified, you are liable for the cost of your victim's replacement clone.

### Accusations of treason (Zap games)



Say 'You're a traitor.' Fire.

[Continued on page 38]

## Acceptable behavior

*(Straight/Classic only)*

*The following behaviors are acceptable (non-treasonous) anywhere in Alpha Complex:*

Understanding of this chart and the Treason, Insubordination and Meritorious Conduct charts and their contents. (Drummed into every INFRARED from decanting onward.)

Knowledge of the current Year of The Computer (214) and general awareness The Computer hasn't always been here; knowledge that a corrupt, destructive Old Reckoning culture existed before the rise of our friend The Computer. (However, curiosity about that benighted time is very impolite.)

Mere knowledge of the existence of specific secret societies, mutant powers, the Outdoors or Outdoor plant and animal life. (None of this is polite conversation, but it's not treasonous.)

Mere knowledge of various kinds of real food and drink; expressions of envy and the general living conditions of higher-clearance citizens. (Portrayed daily on glamorous vidshows.)

Expressions of ambition; desire to rise in clearance, get rich, live in luxury, etc. (The Computer encourages aspiration to greater service, though blatant greed is impolite.)

Casual joking or warnings about service firms, service groups, or higher-clearance citizens in general, as opposed to specific individuals or agencies. (Impolite and likely to draw suspicion, but not technically insubordinate.)

Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, in line of duty.

Asking questions directly relevant to a mission or duty (these questions are grudgingly condoned).

Asking whether a particular hypothetical question would be considered directly relevant to a mission or duty.

## Insubordination

*(Straight/Classic only)*

*This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason and insubordination, too. The GM assigns their fines or other penalties. In Zap games all these behaviors count as treason.*

Asking a question irrelevant to a mission or duty.

Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous.

Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass).

Being out of uniform or sloppy.

Being unhappy.

Bringing bad news.

Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times.

Curiosity in general, undue.

Evading Internal Security or Computer surveillance.

Excessive impoliteness.

Failing a hygiene inspection.

Jokes, insolence, or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty.

Jokes, insolence, or disrespect for a specific higher-clearance citizen.

Jokes, complaints, or warnings about a specific service firm or group.

Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher-clearance citizen.

Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer.

Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission.

Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty.

## Treason

### Accusations of treason

Being accused of treason.

Falsely accusing a citizen of treason.

### Conduct and bearing

Arguing with the Gamemaster.

Assaulting a citizen.

Being present in a location of higher security clearance.

Damaging, destroying, or losing assigned equipment.

Demonstrating knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules above your own clearance.

Failure to defer to a citizen of higher security clearance.

Framing a citizen of lower clearance for a crime.

Lying to the GM.

Possessing a treasonous skill.

Possessing unauthorized food, information, or equipment.

Refusal to take a prescribed drug.

Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing.

Threatening the physical or financial safety of another citizen.

Unauthorized destruction of higher-clearance property.

### Missions

Disobeying an order.

Failure to complete a mission or service service, or failure to file a proper report of the completion.

Refusing the assignment of a service service.

Refusing to accept a mission.

### Mutation

Banned mutation registration.

Suspicion or proof of mutation possession.

### Secret society membership

Confessing to, suspicion of, or proof of secret society membership.

Knowledge of Communist doctrine.

Being a Communist.

### Terminations

Terminating a citizen without sufficient evidence.

## Meritorious conduct

This is close to an exhaustive list. It includes entries an Alpha Complex citizen would not actually see; we leave identification of these lines as an exercise for the reader.

A given act may qualify for more than one reward. The GM will probably use the lowest. Nyaah.

### Acts deserving rewards

Being extremely happy.

Completing a mission.

Completing it successfully.

Completing a service service and filing a report.

Doing a favor spontaneously for a higher-clearance citizen.

Doing a favor for a secret society friendly to your own.

Risking your life to serve or rescue a higher-clearance citizen, to save Alpha Complex or to serve The Computer.

Terminating a traitor with sufficient evidence.

Turning a traitor over to Internal Security.

Unctuous flattery.



[Continued from page 36]

## Meritorious conduct

The Computer recognizes meritorious accomplishments such as protecting Alpha Complex and apprehending traitors. For great service of this kind you may earn credit bonuses and promotion. Unusual good behavior and flattery earn you credit bonuses and lesser rewards, such as real food.

In most roleplaying games characters try to (1) stay alive and (2) gain status and power. In **PARANOIA** the first goal is likely to require all your attention, at least initially. Once you catch on to the basic principles of survival in Alpha Complex, your characters can begin to enjoy the benefits of loyal and shrewd service: wealth, status and power. Best of all, you can do unto others as they would have done unto you, with weapons of ever-larger muzzle aperture.

## Credit bonuses

The Computer generally rewards successful completion of a mission with a bonus payment of credits. A rich reward (thousands of credits) indicates The Computer's favor. A puny reward (3 credits) is a subtle sign of The Computer's disappointment. All credit bonuses are automatically added to the balance on your ME Card.

Though no rules for standard compensation are available at your clearance, you may hope to earn as much as a month's standard salary for each successful mission. Because a typical Troubleshooter team (if such exists) completes about one mission a week, on average, you may hope to earn four bonuses a month, along with your regular monthly salary. Quintuple your standard salary! Thank The Computer!

In addition, you may earn bounties for capture or authorized termination of The Computer's most hated enemies: notorious Commie agitators and saboteurs, powerful unregistered mutants, high secret society officials and fugitive Troubleshooters who failed to destroy all of the above.

There is the troublesome matter of reimbursing expenses incurred during your mission. For unexplained reasons over [CLASSIFIED]% of Troubleshooter missions involve unauthorized property damage, loss of assigned equipment, reimbursement of cloning expenses for unauthorized termination of targets (in Straight games), and in extreme cases vaporization of whole subsectors. Troubleshooters responsible for gratuitous damage have expenses deducted from their credit bonuses, salary and future earnings unto the millionth clone generation.

## IOUs

Powerful individuals and secret societies—both your own society and those it regards as

friendly—may recognize great services you have done for them. You are required to track favors earned from you and owed you as **IOUs**. Each IOU is good only for the organization or individual who owes it.

If you have an IOU, you can use it to demand a favor from the organization or individual. Tell the Gamemaster you're spending your IOU, and make your plea. The GM tells you whether or not the favor is granted. If the favor is treasonous, you may wish to talk to him in private.

IOUs are valuable. Don't ask for too much when you cash one in. You'll only get what you want if the group is able to grant the favor, if the service you rendered was of roughly equal value, and if it suits the GM's elevated purpose. Otherwise the response to your request may be a mixed blessing.

## Promotion

If you perform particularly well and earn The Computer's trust, you may expect to be promoted to a higher security clearance. Conversely, poor performance may bring summary demotion. Especially at low clearances, a Troubleshooter with an active career may leap up and down in The Computer's esteem with dizzying rapidity. Trusted citizens who reach GREEN Clearance or higher typically enjoy a slightly more stable existence.

# 9. Proper behavior for players

Most roleplaying games pit player characters against opponents and obstacles posed by the Gamemaster. These games encourage players to cooperate in pursuing a goal.

**PARANOIA** provides opponents and obstacles without encouraging cooperation. In fact, your fellow player characters are the principal opponents and obstacles. To succeed, you must terminate them. Repeatedly. With style.

Vicious, deceitful backstabbing is fun. You'll feel no remorse as you shaft your fellow PCs, because you know they tried to shaft you first.

But it's important not to let the paranoid atmosphere of the game bleed into the real world. Distrust and betrayal among *characters* is fine, but not among *players*.

Many activities that wouldn't raise an eyebrow in other RPGs are bad form in **PARANOIA**. Looking at another player's character sheet is an unfair way to obtain evidence against him. One Troubleshooter character eavesdropping on another PC is fine, but eavesdropping on a private conference between player and GM is cheating.

**Don't read the mission.**

**Don't monopolize the GM with private conferences. Pass notes instead.**

**Don't look at other players' secret information. It's rude.**

**Don't automatically shoot a known mutant's clone backup on the assumption he has the same mutation. It's rude and not necessarily true.**

**Don't be paranoid in the real world—only in the game.**

## Meetings and notes

Speaking of conferences, you'll often want to communicate with the GM privately, to keep other players in the dark about your activities. In a private conference you can speak freely, but you are monopolizing the GM's attention. Do this too much and the other players will resent

it. Moreover, they'll start doing it too, and you'll spend most of your time waiting for the latest chat to end. Conferences slow things down, so ask for them sparingly.

More efficient methods of secret communication include note-passing and, if you all have networked laptop computers, instant messaging. These don't interrupt play.

## 9. ETIQUETTE / 10. SOLO MISSION

On the other hand, writing a note is slow work and requires terseness. Instant messages are faster but may distract the GM from his estimable purpose. Still, they're both better than conferences.

### ULTRAVIOLET information

Many games divide rules into Player and GM sections. **PARANOIA** depends more than most on keeping players in the dark. That's why much of this book is classified ULTRAVIOLET Clearance. Only Gamemasters are cleared to read that part. Naturally, it would be silly to sell you this game and tell you not to read it, but listen, seriously, really:

1. **Don't read the mission!** Only the GM is supposed to know what happens in a mission. Reading the mission will ruin your enjoyment when you play it. If you can't resist temptation, try not to take advantage of what you know when you play. Let the other players try to figure out what's going on without the benefit of your superior knowledge. Otherwise you'll ruin *their* enjoyment.
2. **Don't reveal your knowledge of the rules.** Lots of Alpha Complex citizens know more than they should. In fact, knowing treasonous things is probably vital to survival. However, citizens always do their utmost to hide this knowledge. Make that your own rule.

Go ahead. Read the ULTRAVIOLET sections, if you must. But any time you *reveal* your knowledge of their contents during play, your Troubleshooter will get into trouble. Even if you don't read the GM sections, over time you'll develop a knowledge of the rules—but if you talk about them, you'll soon find yourself staring down the barrels of large weapons.

### Killing and dying with style

We encourage you to terminate your fellow Troubleshooters with style, and a certain amount of gloating. In the same way, if they get you first, you yourself should perish with style. If you expect to be rapidly transferred to a clone backup, demonstrate a generous, charitable forgiveness toward the traitor, exit more in sorrow than in anger, and on revival prepare a cold revenge. If repeated treason has gone against you, and your clone template is about to be erased permanently, etiquette dictates your last clone should go down fighting, shouting secret society slogans and defiantly mocking the other PCs for their cowardly servitude to The Computer.

If another Troubleshooter dispatches you, it is exceedingly poor form to trot up in your new body and start firing back. Instead, enact a cool, calculated revenge, delayed for maximum suspense. Plant evidence; concoct deathtraps; get him in trouble with his secret society. The game plays much better this way, and everyone has more fun.

Likewise, if you terminate Martin-R-TSD-1 for having the mutant power of Slippery Skin, don't start firing immediately when Martin-R-TSD-2 arrives. You, the player, may know his skin is still slippery, but your *character* doesn't. Making every clone identical is a game convenience; it saves a lot of time creating new characters, and is the basis for some cheap jokes. However, the idea that all backup clones have the Prime's mutant power is unknown in Alpha Complex or to The Computer. Act accordingly.

For that matter, you don't necessarily *know* the mutant power stays the same. The GM may give the new clone a different power. Don't assume anything based on the rules. The GM can adapt the rules to his exceptional purpose.

### Nothing personal

**PARANOIA** often purposefully blurs the line between you and your character. However, be aware of the differences, and don't let your feelings control your character's actions. Conversely, don't let your Troubleshooter's attitude toward Joe's Troubleshooter character affect your good feelings toward Joe himself. If Joe's character betrayed yours, don't get upset—betrayal is part of the game.

Keep your role distinct from reality. Failure to do so is treason, and is punishable (for your character) by summary execution, and (for you, in extreme cases) by a stringent requirement to buy pizza for the entire group for the next six sessions, and no arguments.

## 10. A solo mission

Usually **PARANOIA** missions require one Gamemaster and three or more players. A special kind of mission, called a 'solo', lets you play by yourself. This solo mission introduces you to some basic concepts of **PARANOIA**.

To run this mission you need pencil, paper and a 20-sided die (1d20). Begin reading with the section numbered '1'. Each numbered section describes a situation, then asks you to choose between two or more courses of action. When you choose your action, follow its instructions, then go the numbered section indicated by your choice and keep reading there.

As you go through the mission, you will record certain codes. Write these on a piece of paper. At the end of the mission we explain the codes you recorded.

After you complete this mission, try it again, making different choices to see how they affect the outcome. Even if you succeed, try the mission again to see what happens if you do foolish things. The mission will give you an idea

of the problems, decisions and consequences a Troubleshooter must face in performing missions for The Computer.

#### 01

**TROUBLESHOOTERS:** *David-R-URK-1, Technical Services; Joshua-R-THR-2, Technical Services; Edith-O-OFX-2, Technical Services.*

**MISSION:** *Surveillance systems check, Sector NHB. Rendezvous at NHB Troubleshooter Dispatch at 1300 hours. Investigate suspected surveillance systems malfunction in residence quarters of INFRARED citizens Lonnie-KKD-3 and Virgil-KKD-4. Residence coordinates F6-117/KKD.*

Do you accept the mission? If yes, go to **07**. If no, go to **14**.

#### 02

She keeps her weapon trained on you until the morgue bot and the Internal Security squad arrive to get Joshua's body. When they arrive, she accompanies you to IntSec sector

headquarters where they interrogate you thoroughly but release you. Go to **54**.

#### 03

Joshua-R fires at Edith-O and misses, leaving himself open. Edith-O fires and doesn't miss. Joshua-R drops, shot right between the eyes. Edith-O turns to you, covering you with her pistol. Edith's display of laser pistol marksmanship has impressed you. You doubt you could quick-draw your laser and fire before she nails you. There is no room to run. She keeps her weapon trained on you until the morgue bot and the Internal Security squad arrive for Joshua's body. Go to **09**.

#### 04

You have a clear shot at either Joshua-R or Edith-O. If you fire your laser, go to **41**. If you have experimental anti-personnel device X324-09 and you fire it, go to **23**.



## 13

You're not exactly sure how the device operates. As you were opening the case, a couple of red, green, and blue wires became detached. You're not sure how they were originally attached. You can put them back together if you like, but who knows what will happen if you use it? *Record an E code* and go to **50**.

## 14

Failure to accept mission is treason. Repeat: Do you accept the mission? If yes, go to **07**. If no, go to **51**.

## 15

Joshua-R turns to you with a fanatic gleam in his eyes and says, 'Freeing Humanity from the Machine! One day we'll all be free!' He points his laser at you. Go to **33**.

## 16

You made it past Joshua-R through the door and into the corridor. Joshua-R fires once more in your direction, wounding you in the hand. He panics and dashes away. Pursuit is impossible in the frenzied crowd. If you immediately seek a terminal and report these events to The Computer, go to **09**. If you try to flee and find a place to hide, go to **46**.

## 17

(At this point your Gamemaster would determine the effect of your shot on Edith. Here we graciously assume David-R is terrifically lucky) Joshua's shot at Edith-O misses and hits the wall. Edith-O finishes Joshua-R off with a single well-aimed shot. However, because she left herself wide open to your shot, you drill her directly in the temple and she slumps to the floor, killed instantly. *Record an L code*.

You have a problem: dead Troubleshooters. If you try to escape, go to **45**.

If you give yourself up, saying the two Troubleshooters killed each other, you are using the Management skill to persuade your interrogators to accept your story. David-R's Management skill is 5, which means you must roll 5 or less on the 20-sided die to successfully use your skill. In some cases the Gamemaster might allow you to spend Perversity points to influence your success roll, but in this case you can't. Roll 1d20. If you roll 5 or less, go to **53**. If you roll 6 or more, go to **53**.

## 18

With your mutant vision you can see Joshua-R clamping a green-ringed barrel onto his laser pistol. A green barrel should not be available to a Clearance RED citizen like Joshua. You have no armor against green laser weapons, and Edith-O probably doesn't either.

If you shout a warning aloud, *record an I code* and go to **30**. If not, *record a J code* and go to **11**.

## 05

It is a bad idea to turn your back on Edith-O, Internal Security agent. Edith-O is a crack shot with a laser. You take a few steps to the door and a searing pain rips through your back and into your chest. You regain consciousness in a RED sickbay under guard. Go to **19**.

## 06

A tiny note is written in dye on a CruncheeTym algae chip lying on the booth floor. It reads, 'Edith-O IntSec. Terminate.' You notice no one observing you. You eat the message and proceed to the rendezvous. Go to **43**.

## 07

An experimental anti-personnel device is available for field testing. Will you accept assignment of this device for this mission? If yes, go to **26**. If no, go to **44**.

## 08

You apparently didn't hit anything, or the weapon didn't work. You suffer a number of minor burns from melted plastic fragments. Go to **03**.

## 09

Internal Security agents arrive immediately, with docbots not far behind. The bot attends promptly to your wound as Internal Security GREEN goons question you. They send you to a RED sickbay, where The Computer gives you a 200-credit reward and enters an Official

Commendation in your permanent record. IntSec apprehends and terminates Joshua-R within minutes of your prompt report. *Record an M code* and go to **54**.

## 10

Your laser shot burns a hole in the wall. In the confusion no one could tell your target. *Record an N code*. Joshua-R fires at Edith-O and misses, leaving himself open. Edith-O fires and doesn't miss. Joshua-R drops. Edith-O turns to you, covering you with her pistol. If you shoot at her, go to **47**. If you holster your weapon, go to **02**.

## 11

Joshua-R apparently finishes whatever he was doing and steps toward Edith-O, who is in the hall searching with her device. Joshua-R suddenly produces a laser pistol and fires point blank into Edith-O's face. Edith-O crumples without a sound. *Record an L code* and choose one of the following actions:

If you duck out of sight, go to **39**. If you draw and ready a weapon, go to **21**. If you ask Joshua-R what he's doing, go to **15**. If you do nothing but continue to observe, go to **33**.

## 12

David-R has never been a convincing liar, but he gets lucky, and Edith-O apparently believes David's explanation that he just 'tripped' over the toolbox. Edith-O holsters her laser. *Record an H code* and go to **36**.

# 10. SOLO MISSION

**19**

Edith-O, Internal Security agent, has taken you into custody and reported your behavior to The Computer. David-URK-1 is no longer a Troubleshooter. You are now a low-status INFRARED laborer in the foul-smelling food vats with a record of treasonous behavior.

Your mission is over. The Computer is your friend.

**20**

You might learn more about the device by taking it apart and examining it. If you attempt this use of your Hardware skill, you must roll a 7 or less on the 20-sided die to succeed, because your Hardware skill of 7. Roll 1d20. If you roll 7 or less, go to **32**. If you roll 8 or more, go to **13**. If you don't try this, go to **50**.

**21**

Joshua's weapon is ready. He gets his shot off first. Go to **33**.

**22**

Edith-O goes down twitching and writhing. Joshua-R turns and smiles at you, then fires his laser at you. *Record an L code* and choose one of the following actions:

If you try to dodge his shots and escape into the hall, go to **34**. If you try to draw your laser left-handed and return fire, go to **21**. If you try to engage Joshua-R in hand-to-hand combat, go to **52**.

**23**

If you have recorded an E code, go to **08**; otherwise, go to **35**.

**24**

You overhear a woman's voice: '—for information of that nature is highly inappropriate. For the present I'll content myself to report your request to The Computer. If you show any further suspicious behavior, I shall remove you from this mission. Do you have any idea of the consequences? The subject is closed.'

The voice changes as the speaker walks toward you. You have just enough time to move away from the door and look innocent when Edith-O and Joshua-R enter the room. Go to **36**.

**25**

Joshua-R's toolkit contains nothing unusual. When you touch Edith-O's toolkit, it immediately sounds a beeping alarm. The voice in the next room stops instantly. If you try to silence the alarm using your Hardware skill, go to **37**. If you leave the room immediately, go to **05**.

**26**

You have been assigned Experimental Anti-Personnel Device X324-09: a 'neurostunner'. It works like a laser pistol, but requires less skill to target—or so your supervisor tells you. You will be rewarded for your loyalty to The Computer.

Record the serial number of the experimental device on your character sheet. The device has no user's manual. Do you ask for more information on the device? If yes, go to **38**. If no, go to **20**.

**27**

This paragraph is not part of the solo mission. Therefore, if you are reading this you have not followed The Computer's instructions. Return from whence you arrived.

**28**

You duck Joshua-R and almost make it to the door. A searing pain flashes through your chest. You fall to the ground. As the light seems to recede from you, you recall playing ball in the corridors as a Junior Citizen.

David-R is dead. Internal Security swiftly apprehends Joshua-R and terminates him. Edith-O receives a hero's funeral and a ten-minute spot on the evening vidshow.

That is all. The Computer is your friend.

**29**

Joshua-R has red reflex laser armor; your shot hit but didn't harm him. However, you distracted him enough to let Edith-O drill him right between the eyes. He drops like a seized-up bot and lies still on the floor. Edith-O holsters her laser and thanks you for help. However, she keeps an eye on you as you both wait for the morgue bot and the Internal Security team to come pick up the body. Edith-O promises to recommend you for promotion for your loyal assistance. *Record a K code* and go to **54**.

**30**

Edith-O and Joshua-R both hear your shout. Edith-O draws her weapon. Joshua-R takes a shot at Edith-O but misses as Edith-O ducks for cover.

If you duck out of sight, go to **48**. If you draw and ready a weapon, go to **04**. If you do nothing but continue to observe, go to **03**.

**31**

The skill to persuade someone is Management. David-R has a Management skill of 5, meaning you must roll a 5 or less on the 20-sided die to successfully use that skill. Roll 1d20. If you roll 5 or less, go to **12**. If you roll 6 or more, go to **49**.

**32**

You're not exactly sure how this thing operates, but it has an awfully large power pack and no apparent provision for setting the amount of power you use when you fire it. You put it back together with confidence you have not damaged it. *Record a D code* and go to **50**.

**33**

Joshua's laser blast catches you right in the chest. You feel searing pain, then see blackness. Somewhere a distant voice says,

'There, you poor devil, at least you're finally free of the Machine.' Then silence.

David-R is dead. Internal Security swiftly apprehends Joshua-R. The charges are treason and destruction of Computer property. An IntSec GREEN goon terminates Joshua-R on the spot. The Computer your friend.

**34**

Joshua-R fires and misses. If you can just dodge him and make it out the door, you'll be in a corridor with crowds of people. To successfully dodge past Joshua-R, you use your Violence skill, the all-purpose 'physical actions' skill. David-R's Violence is 9, meaning you must roll 9 or less on the 20-sided die to dodge. Roll 1d20. If you roll 9 or less, go to **16**. If you roll 10 or more, go to **28**.

**35**

The neurostunner releases a powerful blast of energy. The device suddenly grows hot in your hand and explodes before you can release it, showering you with bits of hot metal and plastic.

To see whether you hit with the energy bolt, you'll *roll against* (that is, check for success using) the Energy Weapons specialty of your Violence skill. Your Energy Weapons specialty is 4 more than your Violence skill of 9, so you must roll 13 or less on the 20-sided dice to hit your target. Roll 1d20. If you roll **13** or less and fired at Edith-O, go to **22**. If you roll **13** or less and fired at Joshua-R, go to **40**. If you roll 14 or more, go to **08**.

**36**

'David-R? This is Joshua-R and I'm Edith-O.' Coldly Edith-O says, 'I'm in charge of this operation, and don't either of you forget it.'

Edith-O directs Joshua-R and you to pick up your toolkits and follow her. She leads the way to the residence barracks of Lonnie-KKD-3 and Virgil-KKD-4 at coordinates F6-117/KKD. She produces a magnetic key and opens the door. She sends Joshua-R into the common room to check the master unit. She sends you to examine the remote unit in the sleeping room. Edith-O checks on Joshua-R and you, then turns her attention to searching the walls and floors with a strange device.

You can see Joshua-R in the other room. He is out of Edith-O's sight. Joshua-R doesn't appear to notice you looking. Joshua-R pulls something from a pocket of his coveralls and looks to be fiddling with it.

You can't see well at this distance, but your mutation, Hypersenses, may make it possible for you to see what Joshua-R is doing. If you use your mutant power to observe Joshua, go to **18**. Otherwise, go to **11**.

**37**

You can't shut off the alarm quickly or easily. A woman appears at the door to the next room. She holds a laser pistol, pointed right at you. If you raise your hands and surrender, go to **49**. If





you try to fast-talk your way out of the situation, go **31**. If you run from the room, go to **05**. If you try to attack the woman with a weapon or hand-to-hand combat, go to **42**.

**38**  
I'm sorry, that information is not available at your security clearance. *Record a C code on your character sheet* and go to **20**.

**39**  
Joshua-R leans in the door, fires and misses. You'll never get your weapon ready before Joshua-R can fire again at point-blank range. If you can just dodge him and make it out the door, you'll be in a corridor with crowds of people. To successfully dodge past Joshua-R, you use your Violence skill, the all-purpose 'physical actions' skill. David-R's Violence is 9, meaning you must roll 9 or less on the 20-sided die to dodge. Roll 1d20. If you roll 9 or less, go to **16**. If you roll 10 or more, go to **28**.

**40**  
Joshua-R goes down twitching and writhing. Edith-O turns and covers you warily with her pistol, but when she sees your weapon has disintegrated and you are injured, she holsters her laser and gives you first aid. She treats you with respect as you wait for the Internal Security Squad to come pick up Joshua's twitching form. As the docbot bears you away, she salutes you for your courage and assures you The Computer will reward your faithful service. Her final handshake is a little warmer than is strictly proper between Troubleshooters. Go to **09**.

**41**  
To see whether you hit with your laser blast, you'll *roll against* (that is, check for success using) the Energy Weapons specialty of your Violence skill. Your Energy Weapons specialty is 4 more than your Violence skill of 9, so you must roll 13 or less on the 20-sided dice to hit your target. Roll 1d20 and select a victim. If you roll 13 or less and fired at Edith-O, go to **17**. If you roll 13 or less and fired at Joshua-R, go to **29**. If you roll 14 or more, go to **10**.

**42**  
Edith-O has already drawn and aimed her weapon; you must draw your weapon or charge across the room. Edith-O's first shot hits you in the chest. You are losing consciousness and slumping to the floor when her second shot finishes you off. (Because you attempted to attack, she felt no obligation to bring you in alive.)

David-R is dead. Edith-O will get an Official Commendation for dispatching a traitor.  
Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

**43**  
Joshua-R and Edith-O are not in the headquarters conference room when you

arrive, but the toolkits of each are sitting on the floor behind the door. You can hear the sound of a woman speaking sharply to a man in the next room, but you cannot make out what she is saying.

If you open and examine the contents of their toolkits while the room is empty, go to **25**. If you move closer to eavesdrop, go to **24**. If you neither examine the toolkits nor move to eavesdrop, but sit quietly and wait for the other Troubleshooters, go to **36**.

**44**  
Field testing of experimental devices is a service to The Computer. The Computer is your friend. Will you reconsider and accept assignment of this experimental device? If yes, *record an A code* on paper and go to **26**. If no, *record a B code* and go to **50**.

**45**  
Because records clearly indicate you were with Edith-O and Joshua-R on this mission, it is only a matter of time before Internal Security finds you. Flight to avoid apprehension is deemed sufficient grounds for summary execution.

A squad of IntSec agents tracks and terminates David-R. The Computer awards the agents Official Commendations for prompt and efficient performance of their duties.

Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

**46**  
Internal Security agents, led by reports from loyal citizens concerning a man with a hand injury behaving strangely in their sector, quickly apprehend you. In the absence of contradictory testimony, The Computer finds your flight to avoid apprehension sufficient evidence of treason. You are terminated.

David-R is dead. Several IntSec agents receive commendations for their swift and efficient apprehension of a fugitive.

Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

**47**  
Edith-O has red reflex armor. Your shots don't affect her. She finishes you off casually. David-R is dead. Edith-O receives a commendation for dispatching two traitors. That is all.

**48**  
You hear the sound of several laser discharges, then silence. Edith-O steps into the room where you are and sees you are unarmed. She keeps her weapon on you until the morgue bot and the Internal Security squad come for Joshua's body. Go to **54**.

**49**  
David-R's lame excuse that he 'tripped' over the toolbox apparently doesn't satisfy Edith-O. Go to **19**.

**50**

As you proceed to the rendezvous with your fellow Troubleshooters at sector dispatch, a passerby gives the Pro Tech secret society recognition signal and whispers, 'Pro Tech mission. Check confession booth with cracked door for details.' The confession booth with a cracked door is directly ahead. If you stop and look inside for a message, *record an F code* and go to **06**. If you do not stop, proceeding

## Mission code key

**A:** No correction because you accepted the experimental device.

**B:** Censure for declining the experimental device. For a week, everyone you meet must officially scold you on that point.

**C:** Probation for inquiring about classified information. IntSec has many ways of tracking probation. You'll find out.

**D:** R&D notices your tampering with the neurostunner. For unauthorized examination of a device in search of information not cleared for RED Security Clearance, The Computer fines you 100 credits.

**E:** You have damaged experimental equipment in the process of unauthorized examination of the device. The Computer fines you 200 credits.

**F and G:** No one has observed either your contact with the secret society member or your discovery of the message in the confession booth. **G** means you have failed to follow the directives of your secret society, which may result in the loss of status and privilege.

**H** means nothing at all—but you were worried for a minute there, weren't you?

**I:** The Computer grants you an Official Commendation for quick action in protecting a trusted agent. However, because Internal Security later determines you couldn't have known what was going on in the other room without a mutant power, The Computer puts you on probation. It doesn't explain its suspicions you have an unregistered mutation.

**J:** Indicates no effect on treason or commendation points, because you can't be blamed for something you didn't know about (Joshua-R's hidden weapon).

**K:** Though Edith-O had some suspicions about you, she nonetheless felt you deserved a commendation for trying to help. You receive a 100-credit bonus.

**L:** You will receive a secret society promotion for Edith-O's death, whether or not you killed her (or, if you didn't look for the secret society message in the confession booth, whether you even knew you were supposed to kill her).

**M:** Your prompt action leading to the apprehension of a traitor earns you an Official Commendation.

**N:** Edith-O is not sure who you were going to shoot at. She reports your suspicious behavior and failure to assist her to The Computer. The Computer places you on probation.

# 11. ADVICE FOR PLAYERS

directly to the rendezvous, *record a G code* and go to **43**.

**51**

Failure to accept the mission is treason. David-URK-1 is assigned to food vat service. Possession of RED security clearance equipment is treason. The Computer revokes the assignment of red reflex armor and a laser pistol to David URK-1.

Your mission is over. You are now a low-status INFRARED laborer in the foul-smelling food vats with a record of treasonous behavior. The Computer is your friend.

**52**

You have to close with Joshua-R to fight hand-to-hand. You run right into his laser blast. Go to **33**.

**53**

Whether the interrogators believe the story or not, the evidence is incontrovertible. Your laser killed Edith-O. The Computer judges you guilty of treason and orders your execution.

David-R is dead. Treason does not pay. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

**54**

You have survived the mission.

Now, to help you understand the world of **PARANOIA**, we'll explain the commendations, corrections and other consequences of your choices during this mission. Compare the codes you recorded as you proceeded through the mission with the annotated list in the box on the previous page. The codes explain the consequences of your choices, and the reasons for those consequences.

## 11. Tips for traitors

*The following excerpts from the infamous manuscript known as 'Treasonous Jive That'll Keep You Alive' are presented by the inspired leadership of PURGE ('Smash The Computer. PURGE is your friend.') to help inexperienced Troubleshooters survive mission assignments.*

*This information is of most use to experienced Troubleshooters who have undergone, if not survived, several **PARANOIA** missions. They understand the kinds of snafus, insanity and general mayhem that can be expected. Don't feel compelled to read it the first time you play. (On the other hand, this advice will give you a signal advantage over other novices.)*

*The manuscript is a compendium of maxims, collected and annotated by an anonymous citizen with the assumed pen name of One-Clone Charlie. In the absence of more tangible evidence, the sheer size of this manuscript (over 600 handwritten pages in tiny, crabbed script) attests to the author's longevity and, therefore, the presumed utility of his advice. Imagine the difficulty of scribbling even one page of such treasonous wisdom while evading the ever-vigilant eyes of The Computer and its loyal servants and toadies.*

**I never saw a boot  
I couldn't lick.**

Or a bot sensor. Or a Computer terminal. Indeed, licking the metaphorical boots of The Computer is the primary survival skill. You know what The Computer wants to hear: Its citizens are safe and happy, treason has been rooted out and destroyed, and the citizens are endlessly grateful to The Computer for its bountiful generosity and compassionate concern.

Never tell anyone (or anything) something that he, she, or it does not want to hear. If this compels you to misstate yourself, and you are caught creatively interpreting the facts, immediately and humbly acknowledge your 'error' in memory, perception or judgment,

or blame the misinformation on some other source—preferably the perennial scapegoat favorite, Commie mutant traitors and saboteurs.

'Gosh, how could I have ever forgotten that flybot we lost. It just must have slipped my mind in my eagerness to report to you, sir.'

'Yes, Friend Computer, it is certainly clear from the explicit photographs you have shown me that it was indeed I who smashed the



*It pays to hone your Bootlicking skill.*



computer terminal with a hammer. Oh, woe is me! Surely I have been made the unwitting dupe of some Commie spy with mutant mind control powers! You must let me go seek this Commie traitor without delay before he corrupts some other loyal citizens.'

Always have a few nice speeches prepared in case you are forced to bootlick for your life on short notice. For example:

'Indeed, I can see that the circumstantial evidence demands my execution. But, in your extensive experience and abundant wisdom, surely you have discovered that appearances are deceiving, especially when the masters of misrepresentation, Communist traitors, have fabricated the web of falsehood to indict innocent citizens, confounding the process of justice and causing loyal citizens to suffer tragically in spite of their unswerving devotion to The Computer. All I ask for is an opportunity to clear my name and to fight this insidious threat to the security of all citizens and to their benevolent protector, The Computer.'

Numerous catch phrases are sure to receive a gratifying response:

- ☞ 'Friend Computer . . .'
- ☞ '. . . obviously the work of Commie saboteurs . . .'
- ☞ '. . . clear implication of the operation of some unregistered mutant power . . .'
- ☞ 'How terrifying it is to contemplate that even The Computer's information sources may be compromised by Communist conspirators.'
- ☞ 'No, of course not! The Computer in error? Completely implausible! No, it can only be the work of traitors . . .'
- ☞ 'But I was only following your orders when we [executed that High Programmer/cooperated with that registered mutant/tested the experimental matter imploder]. Who could have dreamed that your orders might be unwise or ill-considered?'
- ☞ 'Of course, for my own protection, that important information about [the flybot's operation/the weapon's destructive capacity/the instability of that isotope] was not available at my security clearance. I hope that as I rise in The Computer's favor, such tragic destruction of Computer property can be avoided.'

## ■ If you're making a citizen lick your boot, he might as well start with the sole.

A common mistake made by ambitious young Troubleshooters is acting heroically in the service of The Computer. The proper approach

is to direct subordinates to act heroically, then, after their inevitable and carefully planned demise (often in the act of their heroism), claim credit for their heroic deeds.

Always present orders that entail certain death for subordinates in such a way as to suggest that you are graciously offering them an opportunity to distinguish themselves, like so:

'Here, Gone-R, you take this experimental plasma-powered flashlight. I'm sure a comprehensive report on its testing will earn you a commendation.'

Or:

'Splat-R, I commend you on your courage in volunteering to disarm the berserk scrubot. None of us veterans could begrudge you the honor of serving The Computer in so selfless and loyal a fashion.'

Beware of excessively cooperative bootlickers. Many are simply mindlessly loyal and courageous, and present no threat to you, and you will find it easy to assign them to useful tasks that they will not survive. However, a shrewd bootlicker may have schemed a way to survive the task you have assigned, planning to exploit his actions to further his ambitions or to bring about your demise. Assign him to the task for which he has volunteered, but add some additional complication that he cannot have anticipated. For example:

'Why, thank you for volunteering to attempt salvage of that malfunctioning plasma cannon. A noble gesture. Of course, with such a dangerous mission, it would be unwise for you to further risk any of The Computer's valuable equipment by exposing it to any explosion that might result if you should fail. Therefore, I regret you will have to leave all your equipment here with us in the bunker. Yes, I'm afraid that means your tool kit, too.'

## ■ Accidents will happen—the sooner, the better.

Whenever possible, reduce the number of Troubleshooters in your mission group. Several basic principles are at work here.

- ☞ First, fewer Troubleshooters means fewer weapons aimed at your back.
- ☞ Fewer Troubleshooters also means more casualties to be tailored to your scapegoat requirements without the embarrassment of contradictory testimony.

'Yes, the villainous traitor Fawlg-I was obviously responsible for sabotaging our mission at every turn. How unfortunate that he did not survive so that we might force from him the complete story of his heinous betrayals.'

- ☞ Fewer Troubleshooters means less confusion when the commendations are handed out. (If you are the only

survivor of a successful mission, you can certainly dramatize your crucial role without argument.)

The unsophisticated method of reducing mission staff is the summary execution. This technique is effective if well-planned and executed, but, if no more than an impulsive bit of gunplay, the executioner is often executed by his victim—or by other trigger-happy citizens who want to join in the fun.

The accident is a more controlled and efficient method of reducing staff. A properly staged accident, even if it fails, does not prompt the victim to pull his weapon and start firing away. A well planned accident may not alert a victim that he has been the target of an attack; even if he suspects he has been set up, the victim is not sure who to shoot in retaliation. Also, occasionally survivors may be called to task when a mission group is decimated; if the fatalities were obviously 'accidents', charges of false execution are not likely to be filed.

## ■ Whoever heard of a trustworthy citizen?

A good position in the mission deployment is vital to survival. Since the mission leader usually has the power to order the group deployment as he likes, a discussion of best choices is properly addressed to mission leaders. However, if a mission leader is weak or stupid enough to permit personnel to position themselves as they will, other Troubleshooters should understand these basic principles.

The coveted position in any mission deployment is at the rear of the group. Normally, this position is preempted by the mission leader. (Oh, fortunate mission leader!) If you are the mission leader or the ranking citizen, demand this privilege. Do not be swayed by transparent tactics like, 'Say, my combat skills and training make me the perfect one to guard against attack from the rear,' or, 'Because I carry the multicorder and must record all our activities, I must stand behind you, Mission Leader Sir, for a panoramic view.'

Of course, if you are not the mission leader, you must try these transparent tactics. Some inexperienced or dimwitted mission leaders may fall for them. However, if the mission leader assumes the rear, then you must scramble to assure yourself of the best spot you can wrangle.

Far right or left flank is usually the second-best choice for a combatant, affording a wide field of vision and fire. If you are the Communications Officer or some other technician, you can usually make a good case for being back with the mission leader; without a drawn weapon, you present a less immediate threat to his security. (Note, however, a prudent mission leader arranges to eliminate any recordings of the mission, and thus the Comm Officer is at serious risk when near the mission leader and out of line of sight of the rest of the group.)

# 11. ADVICE FOR PLAYERS

The rear position is coveted for its superior range of fire and the safety it affords from backstabbing; it is also the place where fewest eyes are trained. Those who wish to do things that go unnoticed will find this is the ideal position.

Conversely, not only is the point man the focus of all weapons on his own team, as well as the weapons of any opposition, he is also constantly subjected to the scrutiny of his companions. This position should be assigned by the mission leader to the Troubleshooters most likely to present a real threat to him. Never waste this resource by placing a low-status nincompoop there. Wimps and morons should be graciously assigned a position in the center rear of the group, and told: 'Now, aren't I a kind and considerate mission leader to place you inexperienced men in such a safe spot?' Reassure them often about how safe they are, then terminate them at your leisure after the tough guys have been eliminated.

Never assign anyone with a powerful area weapon to a position on the periphery of the group. The temptation to turn and wipe out the rest of the party in one shot is just too seductive. Place him in the middle of the group where you can keep an eye on him.

Power armor appears to be an advantage equivalent to rear guard. However, the risk of equipment malfunction is serious — no leader wants to get caught helpless in a powerless power suit. A compromise is to assign the weakest, most docile, low-status dolt to the power armor, then position him directly in front

of you as you assume the rear position. This way you have the indirect protection of his armor and still have enough warning to get out of the way if he becomes obstreperous.

## Shoot only from a position of total superiority.

Inexperienced Troubleshooters haul out their lasers and open fire the moment someone says or does something that might be construed as an excuse for a summary execution. **This is dumb.** You are *not* looking for an excuse to execute someone. You are looking for an opportunity to execute someone in such a thorough and risk-free fashion, he is dead before his weapon can clear his holster.

Given the generally poor marksmanship of Troubleshooters, the unreliable killing power of their weapons, and the substantial protection of their armor, the chances of a prospective traitor before he gets off several shots is diminishingly small. Thus, you are as likely to die as your victim. **Dumb.**

Bide your time, build your case against your prospective victim, then plug him when he is relatively unable to return your fire—when he has his hands full of some other kind of trouble, like attacking hostiles or a malfunctioning weapon or a berserk bot. At the least, his weapon should be still in its holster and his attention elsewhere. Ideally, he should never even know it is you attacking him. Whenever possible, attack when you have superior firepower or when circumstances ensure you

will hit your target—for instance, when standing behind him with your slugthrower pressed against his torso.

Often, resorting to weapons is unwise. The 'accident' is more effective at eliminating a rival and claiming a commendation. If you never get a good opportunity during the mission, there's always the debriefing. A well-supported case of treason is a more deadly weapon than a laser and less likely to backfire on you than a summary execution.

## A sucker for every scheme, a scapegoat for every crime.

Carefully select your prime victim candidates. Certain types make excellent suckers and scapegoats. Trigger-happy, impulsive types can easily be induced to start trouble with hostiles, facilitating your shooting them from behind. Super-loyal, heroic types can usually be talked into getting involved in risky ventures that either kill them or distract them enough to give you a good shot at them. Naive types who throw themselves wholeheartedly into a mission won't notice the sneaky stuff you're doing to them.

Scapegoats should be of a lower status, permitting you to give them orders setting them up as fall guys for any of your schemes that backfire or blow up in your face. For example, just before you test an experimental weapon, always ask a lower-status tech to inspect it first. If something goes wrong, then obviously the tech damaged it during his inspection. (Of



The coveted position in mission deployment is at the rear.



## Traitors have nothing to lose by committing treason.

Many traitors are too indoctrinated by The Computer's propaganda to profit from their treason, despite the fact they are as likely as anyone else to be executed for being traitors, whether they behave treasonably or not.

Take mutants, for example. How many mutants effectively exploit their innate capabilities? Sure, many mutant powers are pretty unimpressive, but powers like hypersenses are just perfect for gathering information.

As for secret societies, no one ever uses their connections to full measure. Sure, it's dangerous, but what isn't in Alpha Complex? The moment I get a new mission, I find some excuse to stop by my society drop point and get the inside scoop from some highly placed lodge brother. Or I wangle a special, secret society assignment that promises a big payoff in INFRARED-market information or equipment. 'Er, excuse me, mission leader, but it appears my laser barrel has only one shot left in it, and my spare has a hair-line fracture at the aperture [*carefully put there for just such an emergency*]. Let me drop by PLC supply and pick up new ones so I'll be primed for this important mission.'

Don't be shy when asking for information or equipment. You aren't going to get something unless somebody is feeling generous, anyway. Secret society higher-ups prefer a little unbridled greed in subordinates; it indicates ambition and enthusiasm they can channel into bootlicking, profitable for all parties concerned.

## Debriefings go better when you are the only survivor.

'I speak without fear of contradiction...' is the opening sentence of the ideal debriefing. You get dinged for being the only one to make it back alive, but this is a minor inconvenience compared to the alternative. A creative dramatist can transform a disastrous mission replete with treasonous crimes into a heroic narrative with the speaker as the modest model of a loyal, courageous citizen serving The Computer with all his heart.

Other Troubleshooters are potentially embarrassing records of the mission. Get rid of them. Because slaughter is not always practical, bribing or blackmailing them into supporting your story may be an alternative.

Recording devices, like bots, multicorders and PDCs, must be eliminated, sabotaged or distracted wherever possible. Such records represent hard evidence—'hard,' that is, to explain away, and far harder to dismiss as Commie treason than the verbal statements of other Troubleshooters. Be prudent, however. Unsubtle and unrestrained destruction of recording and transmitting devices will be interpreted as a deliberate effort to compromise the records. It may be sufficient to ensure PDCs

course, keep an eye on the tech at all times to make sure he isn't *really* sabotaging the weapon.)

Absent scapegoats (either deceased, missing or imaginary) are preferable to scapegoats who can stand up at the debriefing and defend themselves. The all-time favorite scapegoat is the hypothetical Commie-mutant-traitor always lurking just out of sight. The Computer is an easy mark for the impassioned, melodramatic speech that conjures sinister images: evil agents hidden under benign, loyal smiles; demonic criminals hovering behind every back; tiny, gremlin-like presences of unimaginable malevolence with almost magical power to avoid detection. As long as other citizens can be dissuaded from persistently pointing their fingers at you and crying traitor, The Computer can be easily sent off on some wild bot chase, searching for an imaginary Commie, while your treasonous acts are overlooked in the hysteria.

## Nothing is more deadly than experimental equipment.

Though fatalities involving experimental equipment seem less memorable because they do not include the thrill of plotting, backstabbing, and gunplay, a quick survey of Troubleshooter records indicates a very large percentage of clone deaths are directly or indirectly related to malfunctioning experimental equipment.

Directly related equipment deaths include such typical misadventures as explosions, suffocation, incineration, poison, and brain-frying. Indirectly related deaths include secondary effects like distraction in combat (shrieking danger alarms that deafen listeners painfully), weapons that fail in crucial situations,

horribly expensive or otherwise valuable devices that cannot be abandoned when they break down in the midst of life-threatening disasters, and execution for failure to carry out stringent, unrealistic and impossibly deadly testing programs devised by proud R&D wizards.

Normally some pretext is made of offering a choice of devices for volunteers to test. Volunteer promptly, in best bootlicking style, for the least harmful-looking device under consideration. Jump in before anyone else and bubble over with enthusiasm. Thereafter, when other devices are offered or pressed on you, confidently assert that your complete attention must be given to the device you have already been assigned in order to properly test and evaluate it.

If no safe-looking item seems available, go for a portable weapon. Though such devices often present serious direct and indirect threats to your health, other non-weapon devices often present equally serious threats, but without the potential benefits of a first-class weapon. If the rest of the mission group is 'accidentally' killed before you realize the weapon's true destructive potential, such news is likely to excite and please, rather than dismay, R&D.

Avoid bots at all costs. No other experimental device is so unpredictable, expensive in fines for loss or damages, heavy and difficult to recover if damaged or malfunctioning, and capable of perversely independent action that may either implicate you in treason or force you to follow it into certain death to avoid abandoning it.

Never accept cumbersome items that have to be strapped onto your person by lots of tricky buckles and fastenings. These are often the devices with loud malfunction-warning alarms that go off at inappropriate times—like, whenever you use them.

# 11. ADVICE FOR PLAYERS

are turned the other way while you perpetrate nefarious deeds.

If you volunteer or are chosen as Communications Officer, your problems are more complicated. First, you wish to survive, which is not consistent with carrying something others are eager to destroy. Further, you are the one who gets fined if the device is damaged or destroyed. To improve your chances of survival, stick close to the mission leader; he's usually in the rear and less subject to outright attacks. Further, make it known that for a few credits you can ensure the mission record features a Troubleshooter's finest moments and overlooks his egregiously treasonous acts.

Another clever ploy is providing narration for the record tapes by speaking loudly as the events are recorded: 'Note the diligent labor of citizen Don-R as he searches for the source of the jackobot's malfunction.' (Don-R is in fact reprogramming the bot to respond to a remote control self-destruct device. This will obviate the need for an extensive de-briefing by obliterating the other party members and the briefing personnel.)

## When disaster looms, keep stalling.

When I'm called upon to perform the impossible in the face of certain death, I always politely ask The Computer if I can go to the bathroom first—and if I can have a glass of water—and if I can check just one more reference by data search—and if I can field-strip the electron howitzer to stop that buzzing noise it makes when you set the fuse timer—and so on—and so forth. This tactic is most effective if the requests can be made privately and without alerting the rest of the mission group you will be tarrying behind just a bit. Once the rest of the group catches on, everyone gets into the act, and The Computer's temper-simulation software gets short.

Stalling is also the ideal tactic for resisting the peremptory orders of security superiors: 'Of course, sir, right away, I'm right on top of it, just have to get my tools ready, yessir—er, could you stand back a bit so I can spread these out on the floor and make sure all of

them are neatly assorted by size, shape, color and serial number?'

Of course, stalling doesn't make the looming disaster go away. While you're stalling, you must continue feverishly brainstorming and scheming, hoping for some inspiration or the intervention of good fortune.

A gifted foot-dragger has one resource he can always count on: the impatience of other Troubleshooters. If the stalling is executed with exquisite subtlety—if your mission leader and fellow Troubleshooters perceive your actions as bumbling incompetence, finicky perfectionism, tiresome attention to detail, or simple cowardice—if they don't perceive your actions at all, so perfectly have you managed to avoid attracting their attention—then the action-oriented, impulsive types often push forward, elbow you out of the way and stride confidently into the trap you were desperately hoping to avoid.

Remember: 'He who hesitates is lost, but I'd rather be lost than eviscerated any daycycle.'

# 12. Going forward

As described in Chapter 7, 'Doing things', the Gamemaster may award you Perversity Points when you do something especially entertaining, move a scene along or otherwise improve the game. You'll probably spend most of your Perversity points on General Perversity Modifiers to adjust the success chance of die rolls. You can also spend Perversity to increase your character's competence.

- ☞ **Increased skill ratings:** Increasing one of your six basic skills by 1 costs 5 times the new rating number in points. For example, raising Violence from 9 to 10 costs (10x5=) 50 Perversity points. You can spend points this way only at the end of a mission in Straight games, or at any time in Classic or Zap games. Increasing a skill rating doesn't increase the ratings of its related specialties.
- ☞ **Increased specialty or Secret skill ratings:** A specialty or Secret skill rating increase of 1 costs 5 points, regardless of the new rating number. You can spend points when the GM allows it.
- ☞ **New specialties:** Each common specialty costs 20 Perversity points and starts at a rating equal to the governing skill rating plus 4. Each narrow specialty costs 20 points and starts at the governing skill's rating plus 6. You don't incur a compensating weakness when you buy a new specialty. You can spend points when the GM allows it.

**You can spend your Perversity points to increase your Troubleshooter's skill and specialty ratings, or to buy new specialties and Secret skills.**

**You don't know how to increase your Access and Power attributes. Only the GM knows.**

- ☞ **New Secret skills:** Each new Secret skill costs 20 points. In Straight games the new skill starts with a rating of 1. In Zap games, roll 1d20 and halve the score (rounding up). For Classic games, the GM will tell you which method to use, depending on how keen he is to encourage characters with tremendous skill in Knitting or Chartered Accountancy.

## Go forth and serve, citizen!

This completes your orientation. When you have completed your Troubleshooter character, submit your character sheet to the Gamemaster for approval. He may revise it or ask you to revise it. When play begins, the GM may ask you to introduce your character to the other players; **divulge no secrets** to them, or risk early termination!

You now know how to create a character, a little about Alpha Complex and The Computer, and enough about the rules to play. Actually you don't know much, but that is the key to maintaining **PARANOIA**. Life is exciting when you don't know your enemies. A successful Troubleshooter develops a healthy sense of insecurity.

However, you can't let paranoia paralyze you. You must survive. You must use wit, intuition and daring to rise to higher levels of access and prestige. At higher clearances you may learn secrets currently forbidden.

Remember: From the start, other players are interested in your PC. Granted, they want to terminate him, but that counts as interest. They help determine the adversity your PC faces, and they make creative suggestions that shape your PC's situation.

These players are focusing on your actions. Take their interest and play with it. Keep it. Be entertaining.



## IR Market goods and services

Now that you've been promoted to RED Clearance and joined the ranks of the Troubleshooters, just think what you can buy! You share an assigned apartment with just five or six other citizens, instead of crashing in a generic INFRARED barracks rife with smells and loud with snoring. You can afford literally all the Cold Fun you could ever want (and we know how much that is, don't we?), plus Bouncy Bubble Beverage more than a few times a month. Now you can venture down into the sewers and stairwells—down where the IntSec patrols are paid never to go and the cameras are ordered never to work—down to the local Free Enterprise **IR Market**. Down here you can buy all kinds of lucky charms, heisted high-clearance goods and ointment guaranteed to make you invisible to lie detectors. No, really, it's *guaranteed!* Would I lie to you?

What else can you buy? How much is it? At what clearance is it (legally) available? Here's a small sample, but really, you can get anything you want. *A-ny-thing*. Remember, nothing has a warranty, the legality of the purchase is your own problem, all payment must be in hard-currency plasticreds and trust me, I'm not making a half-credit on the whole deal.

### KEY

IR=INFRARED, (R)ED, (O)RANGE, etc. cr = credits

### FOOD, DRINK AND CONSUMABLES

- Bouncy Bubble Beverage (choice of flavors):
  - Plain (IR) 1cr
  - Extra Classic (R) 2cr
  - Tastes Just Like Something Orange! (O) 2cr
  - R&D Experimental Flavor #71 (illegal) 10cr
- CruncheeTym Algae Chips (choice of flavors):
  - Plain (IR) 1cr
  - Not Quite As Plain (R) 1cr
  - Trippple Cheeze (Y) 3cr
  - Vague Hint of Guacamole (G) 3cr
- Cold Fun (available in three fun flavors: Pink, Brown, and Vanilla)
  - Single-serving cup (IR) 2cr
  - Single-serving cone (R) 3cr
  - 5-gallon tub (O) 200cr
- Vita-Yum Meal Substitute Bar (plain) (R) 2cr
- Vita-Yum Meal Substitute Bar Substitute Pill (O) 5cr
- Chocolyke Puff Crunchers, per can (O) 10cr
- Minty Breath-O-Fresheners, per tin (O) 10cr

### DRUGS & RECREATION

- Cancer-Lite Cigarettes (R) 6cr
  - Cancer-Free Cigarettes (O) 8cr
- Xanitrick (Wakey-Wakey) tablet (IR) 1cr
- Visomorpain (Little Black Friend) tablet (IR) 1cr
- Gelgernine (Inner Happiness) tablet (R) 2cr
- Gelgernine aerosol spray (G) 200cr
- Sandallathon (Sleepy-Sleepy) tablet (R) 1cr
- Pyroxidine (Wide-Awake) tablet (R) 20cr
- Pyroxidine capsule (R) 100cr
- Asperquaint (Tireless Servant) tablet (Y) 6cr
- Rolactin (Happy Life) tablet (B) 50cr
- Smoking Boots gag—fool your friends! (R) 150cr
- Smoke refill for boots (G) 90cr
- PlastiLaser—realistic zap noise! (R) 50cr
- FunFun Firecrackers—safe for all ages! (R) 5cr each
- Yo-yo, lasts for hours! (G) 20cr

### HYGIENE & MAINTENANCE

- Teela-O Pocket Mirror (R) 5cr
- Hottorch (R) 100cr
- Instant Cleans-O-Spray (R) 50cr
- Comb, red (R) 5cr
- Lemonie-Moistened Towelettes, 20 count (R) 50cr
- Hammer (O) 10cr
- Dental floss, 10m (O) 1cr
- Crowbar (Y) 10cr
- Bandages, self-stick, box of 25 (Y) 25cr
- Chapstick, Dyno-mint flavor (G) 100cr
- Nail (I) 1cr
- Chainsaw, electric (I) 100cr

### CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

- Pen (plastic, black stick, black ink) (IR) 3cr
- Pen (metal, black w/gold trim, red or black ink) (R) 10cr
- Ink refills:
  - Black (IR) 1cr
  - Red (R) 1cr
  - Orange (O) 3cr
  - Invisible (illegal) 25cr
  - Invisible revealer (G) 160cr
- Gas mask (R) 50cr
- Sneakers, black w/red stripes (R) 120cr
- Sneakers, red w/black stripes (R) 220cr
- Shoelaces, spare (O) 1cr
- Heat-resistant mittens (O) 35cr
- FastDraw Executive laser holster (O) 90cr
- Sunglasses (O) 2cr
- Pencil, disposable (O) 1cr
- Notepad (G) 1cr
- Hiking boots (B) 75cr

### SURVIVAL & TECHNOLOGY

- Bullhorn, with MegaBooster! (R) 50cr
- Plasticord, per meter (R) 1cr
- Binoculars (O) 50cr
- Stopwatch (Y) 15cr
- Slide rule (Y) 10cr
- Magnifying glass, bifocal (G) 5cr
- Collapsible travel bag (G) 50cr
- Box of matches (B) 1cr
- Lantern, electric (B) 20cr
- Geiger counter (B) 100cr
- Utility knife multi-tool (B) 50cr
- Nightvision goggles (I) 300cr
- Disposable lighter (I) 4cr
- Calculator (I) 10crS
- Umbrella (V) 10cr
- Fake RED laser barrel, non-op (illegal) 12cr
- Fake ORANGE barrel, non-op (illegal) 18cr
- Fake YELLOW barrel, non-op (illegal) 27cr

### PROMOTIONAL MERCHANDISE

*[Listed price is for logo mug; x2 for T-shirt, x3 for poster]*

- Teela-O (IR) 15cr
- Funbot (R) 10cr
- Mark IV Warbot (R) 35cr
- Best Good Happy Sector Hour (Y) 25cr
- 'Death from Above' Mark IV collector patch (O) 110cr
- Toothpaste Disaster 'hoodie' sweatshirt (V) 300cr
  - w/ 'I survived' logo—very rare, few made (UV) 12,000cr



# PARANOIA Gamemaster Section

13. You can kill them when you want	50
14. What a Gamemaster does	51
15. A typical <b>PARANOIA</b> mission	53
16. Three kinds of <b>PARANOIA</b>	54
17. The Computer	56
18. Player conditioning devices	58
19. Basic rules concepts	60
20. Attributes	60
21. Task resolution	63
22. General Perversity Modifiers	65
23. Scenes and Tension levels	65
24. Combat	66
25. Weapons	71
26. Armor	74
27. Damage and injuries	75
28. Debriefings	79
29. Meritorious conduct	80
30. Treason and correction	81
31. Running the game	89
32. Presenting missions	91
33. Remember this!	94
<b>Charts and tables</b>	
The three play styles	55
Tension levels by location	66
Perversity modifiers ( <i>combat</i> )	69
Univ. Hostility Formula ( <i>combat</i> )	70
Weapon chart	73
Armor chart	74
Hit locations	75
Clone replacement costs	77
Univ. Hostility Formula ( <i>treason</i> )	82
Perversity modifiers ( <i>treason</i> )	83
Insubordination chart	85
Treason chart	86

**Player:** I try to stop my PDC from squawking so loud.

**GM:** As you punch the buttons, you accidentally turn on the phone. You hear a strange voice coming from it. Sounds like a conversation in progress.

**Player:** On *my* phone? Uh—I listen quietly, just long enough to see if I recognize the voice.

**GM:** You recognize the rasping voice of your mission briefing officer, Larry-I-NQW-4. He's talking with someone you haven't heard before, a deep growling voice.

**Player:** Do they know I'm— I mean, are they talking to me?

**GM:** Doesn't sound like it. Larry-I sounds nervous. The other voice is speaking with total authority. Something about guaranteeing the headquarters goes up in flames before anyone finds out.

**Player:** 'Headquarters'? What headquarters?

**GM:** They don't say. Larry-I says, 'I made sure he has the evidence to plant on the team leader.'

**Player:** *I'm* the— Oh, crap!

Security clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**  
**WARNING!**  
Knowledge or possession of this information  
by any citizen of Security Clearance **VIOLET** or lower  
constitutes treason punishable by summary execution

**GM:** They both hang up. There's no more sound from your phone. Do you want to report the conversation to your fellow Troubleshooters?

**Player:** *NO!*

**13. You can kill them when you want****The Prime Rules for the GM****GM Rule #1. You are IN CHARGE. You are ALWAYS RIGHT.**

We give you these rules as guidance. Use them when you don't know what you'd like to have happen in the game. When you do know, ignore them. We've tried to make the rules as helpful and powerful as we can, but **if you don't like a rule, the rule is wrong.** Good rules help a lot, but bad rules were made to be broken, tortured, lobotomized and summarily executed.

Dice are handy for giving players the illusion they control their destiny. This is valuable, but roll your dice out of the players' sight, behind a screen. **If a die roll gives you a result you don't like, the die is wrong.** Change the result to the number you want. You can dock the die credits or beat it up, though in our experience this has little effect.

If a player tries an action you like, roll lots of dice and consult lots of tables. Whatever they tell you, have the action succeed. If you don't like the action, roll the dice and have it fail. If you're undecided, use the rules in this chapter.

**GM Rule #2. The players aren't your enemies. They're your entertainment.**

Reward player behavior that entertains you; punish behavior that doesn't. Dance them like

puppets on strings. Of course, it's especially entertaining when a player somehow eludes certain death and, against all odds, wins big. Not to be sentimental, but this is the honest truth: **The best entertainment you get as a Gamemaster is seeing everyone have a good time.**

**GM Rule #3. Always turn the players against each other, not against you.**

As a **PARANOIA** Gamemaster your job is to set up situations where the players can entertain you. You'll do this by dangling great opportunities and then sometimes frustrating them, by giving the PCs many opportunities to kill each other, and by subjecting the players to psychological stresses to make them wish you'd just lacerate their forebrains with a bandsaw.

Sounds like fun, doesn't it?

**Player conditioning**

**PARANOIA** gamemastering, more than the referee's role in some other (not fun) games, involves the psychology of the players.

Imagine for a moment—only a moment—that your players are dogs or mice. You want them to behave. How can you condition them?

If you reward the players for doing something, they will do more of that. So reward them

for betraying their fellow characters, cleverly escaping certain death and being creative or funny. If they're really brilliant, let them succeed and advance in their careers. *Always reward brilliance!*

If you punish the players for doing something, they will do less of that. So punish them for stalling the game, disrupting the atmosphere and above all for arguing over rules. **Rules arguments must be universally, comprehensively, ruthlessly punished.**

At the most fundamental level, you presumably want the players to play more **PARANOIA**. Therefore, reward them for playing: Make them laugh. Make them get creative. Make sure when they're entertaining you, this also entertains them, and thereby conditions them.

As Gamemaster you hold absolute authority. Still, you needn't go out of your way to torment the players. You aren't their enemy, so don't be malicious. Don't kill the Troubleshooters arbitrarily; instead, set up situations where they can kill each other. They're champng at the bit to kill each other, so get out of their way. If a player argues about the rules, have a high-clearance citizen take away his PC's weapon, then put him in a dark room with the other PCs. End of that problem.

Okay, now you can stop picturing your players as dogs and mice.

Actually, forget we said that.

**The basic idea, historically, is for organizations to gain control over people gradually and progressively through the development and deployment of increasingly effective technologies. Once people are controlled, it is possible to begin reducing their behavior to a series of machinelike actions. And once people behave like machines, they can be replaced with actual machines such as robots. The replacement of humans by machines is the ultimate stage in control over people—people can cause no more uncertainty and unpredictability because they are no longer involved, at least directly, in the process.**

**—George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (1996)**

# 4. WHAT A GAMESMASTER DOES

## 14. What a Gamemaster does

In **PARANOIA** the Gamemaster presents missions for his players to enjoy. The players pretend to be Troubleshooters; they play secretive and conspiratorial player characters (PCs), say witty things, have clever ideas, solve puzzles, blow each other up and probably die multiple times. You pretend to be everything else: The Computer, the nonplayer characters (NPCs) the Troubleshooters meet, all the world and everything in it. You stage the development of the mission's storyline. You also act as the game referee, judging whether the players' actions are possible or permissible.

It's simple. Describe a situation to the players. They decide what they want to do and tell you. Roll 1d20, consult tables (either for real or for show) and decide whether each player's actions succeed or fail. Tell the players what happens and ask them what they do next.

At the same time, you play all NPCs in the scene, decide what they do, and determine whether their actions succeed or fail.

You want the collective actions of the PCs and NPCs to become, over time, a satisfying narrative. To this end, you provide a goal, obstacles, interesting events and a climax. *The narrative is more important than the rules.* Be willing to fudge or ignore die rolls, or interpret rules in dramatically appropriate ways to ensure everyone enjoys the story.

GMing a roleplaying game is tougher than playing in one. All a player has to do is get into the role he plays; in most games he doesn't have to know the rules, and in **PARANOIA** that's not even allowed. If he does something wrong, he relies on you or the other players to terminate him, or even set him right if they're feeling charitable.

But being a Gamemaster can be extremely rewarding. You're the only one who *really* knows what's going on. You get to create and run an entire imaginary universe.

That job has three parts: refereeing, roleplaying NPCs and sustaining psychological stress.

### Referee the rules

Refereeing means making sure the players abide by the rules you set, interpreting those rules and resolving disputes impartially and reasonably. As a referee, you are expected to know the rules, at least to the extent you have decided which rules apply to your game and which don't. When the rules don't cover a specific situation, you decide what happens. **In any dispute, your word is final.**

### Play NPCs

The player characters are the heroes of the mission, insofar as there are any heroes in Alpha Complex. They need patrons, opponents and a supporting cast. You take the roles of

these characters: The Computer, citizens, traitors and bots. Everyone has fun when you give these characters personality.

### Sustain psychological stress

The key to running a memorable **PARANOIA** game is creating an atmosphere of fear, ignorance and suspicion. You want this atmosphere to feel fun and funny, but as a practical matter the players will take care of that. Concentrate on the paranoia.

Pay attention to these elements:

### Suspension of disbelief

The world of Alpha Complex isn't real, but you and your players must act as though it were real. The more real it feels, the better the experience.

Make the world and NPCs feel real to your players. Tell everyone what they see and sense. The way you do that—the way you establish setting and tone—helps sustain the atmosphere.

Here are some aspects of suspension of disbelief:

☉ **Consistency:** If you let a player use one of his skills to do something in one mission, don't tell him he can't in the next—unless you have a good reason.

☉ **Plausibility:** This is a slippery concept in the crazed and satiric world of **PARANOIA**, and its importance depends on your chosen play style. Plausibility in Zap? Pfft, who cares? In Classic you can sacrifice a lot of plausibility in the cause of cheap gags and puns, but it helps maintain frustration and fear if you keep the bureaucracy and Internal Security approximately believable. In Straight you'll want to conjure a plausible, genuinely workable Alpha Complex, because it is engrossing and frightening.

☉ **Improvisation:** Improvise constantly to add colorful detail to the setting, to make the NPCs seem more real and to keep the players' problems from being insultingly easy to solve. For instance, if the Troubleshooters grab an INFRARED worker and tell him to walk into certain death, be inventive. Tell them he asks if he can visit The Computer's confession booth first to confess his minor treasons before dying; he mentions pressing orders from a BLUE Clearance supervisor; he asks to go to the bathroom; etc.

On another front, improvise freely to keep the mission moving along. If a firefight is dragging on, or if bureaucratic frustrations are boring the players as well as their characters, have a couple of IntSec goons charge through the room after some random Commie traitor, or a malfunctioning bot, or, or—well, anything that will keep the players occupied.

Remember, Alpha Complex is not a place but a state of mind. We leave many details intentionally vague because, frankly, we can't be bothered to do the work—no, wait, so *you* can create whatever works best for your group. Also, many aspects of life under The Computer are beyond the scope of any book. If you face a question that isn't covered, don't bother spending an hour searching through the text for the answer. It's not there! Make it up!

### Rivalry

A Troubleshooter's greatest enemies should always be his fellow Troubleshooters. Aim relentlessly, at every point, to foment distrust among players. Sincere, trusting alliances destroy the game. Keep each Troubleshooter feeling personally resentful and suspicious of *every single* fellow character in the group, without exception. Use the many tools described in the GM section:

☉ **Perversity spending:** There are many ways you can permit players to spend their Perversity points on modifiers to die rolls: publicly, in secret, on their own or other players' rolls. Each method promotes a particular psychology: complacency, suspicion, open hostility. Choose a method suited to the current situation.

☉ **Secret society clues:** Many secret societies passionately hate each other. Troubleshooters who bump off members of enemy societies can expect IOUs or advancement in their own. If two players seem to be getting too chummy, have one Troubleshooter's secret society contact him with urgent news: His new friend belongs to the hated opposition. Is it true? Who cares? Sort it out at the debriefing.

☉ **Mutation:** Nearly everyone distrusts mutants. If you use the optional Power increase rules, though (see Chapter 20), a character can increase his Power rating and even learn new mutant powers through private study with another mutant who has the same power. The



Troubleshooters as a group want to destroy mutants, but individual players may well want to shunt aside a desirable mutie for a private lesson in Power increases. Just by tempting the players with one NPC mutant and a single subtle hint, you can trigger a deadly firefight.

## Lethality

Life in Alpha Complex is nasty, rather brutish, and grievously short. Troubleshooters struggle desperately against ludicrously impossible odds. Weapons are deadly, mutations are deadly, rival Troubleshooters are deadly—in the **Classic** and **Zap** play styles even the elevators and vending machines are deadly. The Computer may define practically any behavior as treason, and treason is punishable by medication, brainscrub, termination, or erasure. To survive these threats the Troubleshooters need information, and they can't get it. That's why some **PARANOIA** missions have a 100% to 600% fatality rate—sometimes before the mission even begins.

If you have chosen a Straight game, you can keep PCs alive long enough for players to get a feeling for the environment, maybe even start to move ahead in life. If you instead choose to run a Classic or Zap game, don't be soft-hearted. If someone deserves to die, kill him. If someone *doesn't* deserve to die, but it looks like it will be fun, kill him.

Remember, though, you (as Gamemaster) can't appear impulsive or arbitrary. You need an excuse to kill a character. You'll be surprised



The Gamemaster is your friend.

how easy it is to find excuses—but the best excuse is always, *always* to let another player do the dirty deed. That way the victim blames his fellow player, not you.

In **PARANOIA** life is cheap. With an indefinite number of clone backups available in moments, dying is easy. It's comedy that's hard.

## Computer pressure

As Gamemaster you play the special role of The Computer. This well-meaning but insane machine controls every aspect of Alpha Complex. The Computer is everywhere; its cameras, recording devices and agents saturate the city. The Troubleshooters will speak with it frequently.

As The Computer you are the very embodiment of a nasty totalitarian state. You are paranoid, unfair and arbitrary. You use threats or coercion to force the Troubleshooters into intolerable positions; you watch them squirm as they try to figure a way out that doesn't involve instant death or execution for treason; and, when the crisis sinks to its most awful depths, you cheerily ask for a status report.

(Remember, though: **You are not The Computer.** Acting as The Computer, you can be arbitrary and unfair. Acting as Gamemaster you cannot. In **PARANOIA**, sooner or later every character gets screwed. But players should always feel it's The Computer or NPCs or, most often, rival players who betray them—not you. Just as players must distinguish between themselves and their characters, you must distinguish between yourself as GM and the character you play most, The Computer.)

## Ignorance

Players can't know the rules. Players can't know the true motives of NPCs or other players. Players can't know how experimental equipment works. Players can't know much of anything. Hee, hee, hee.

Ration information with miserly reluctance. Never tell the players anything useful unless they ask for it, and not even then if it's classified at a higher clearance than they are. Even when information is obtainable, it should frequently be incomplete, obscure, and misleading.

The higher a character's security clearance, the more information he can obtain. At Security Clearance RED, practically nothing is available.

'Flybot, how do I operate you?' — 'I'm sorry, I don't understand the question.'

'Technician, how do I use this plasma gun?' — 'Oh, it's brain-deadeningly simple. Practically fires itself. Don't fire it in here, please.'

'Friend Computer, what can we expect to find where we are going?' — 'I'm sorry, that information is not available at your security clearance.'

## Six useful things to remember about Gamemastering

1. You can't learn everything at once.
2. If the players ask you to describe something, do. Let them worry about whether or not what you describe is important.
3. Before you run a mission, understand what should happen in each scene. Think about how to present a scene's characters and events, and how to anticipate the reactions of your players. If they do something you do not expect, remember the various coercion devices you have to keep them on track: The Computer, high-clearance citizens, secret society orders, etc.
4. Expect to extend the rules. No set of rules can be as ingenious as players. Use common sense to handle problems that arise, and keep playing. Don't waste time looking up rules! **You are always right.** Even if it turns out later you're wrong, you were right *at that time*. If you change your mind about a rules judgment later, you have become righter than ever.
5. Sometimes somebody has to make an arbitrary judgment. That's you. Do it and get on with the game.
6. Lethally punish boredom. Have fun. Fun is mandatory.

*Ignorance and fear, fear and ignorance.* Dedicate yourself to these principles.

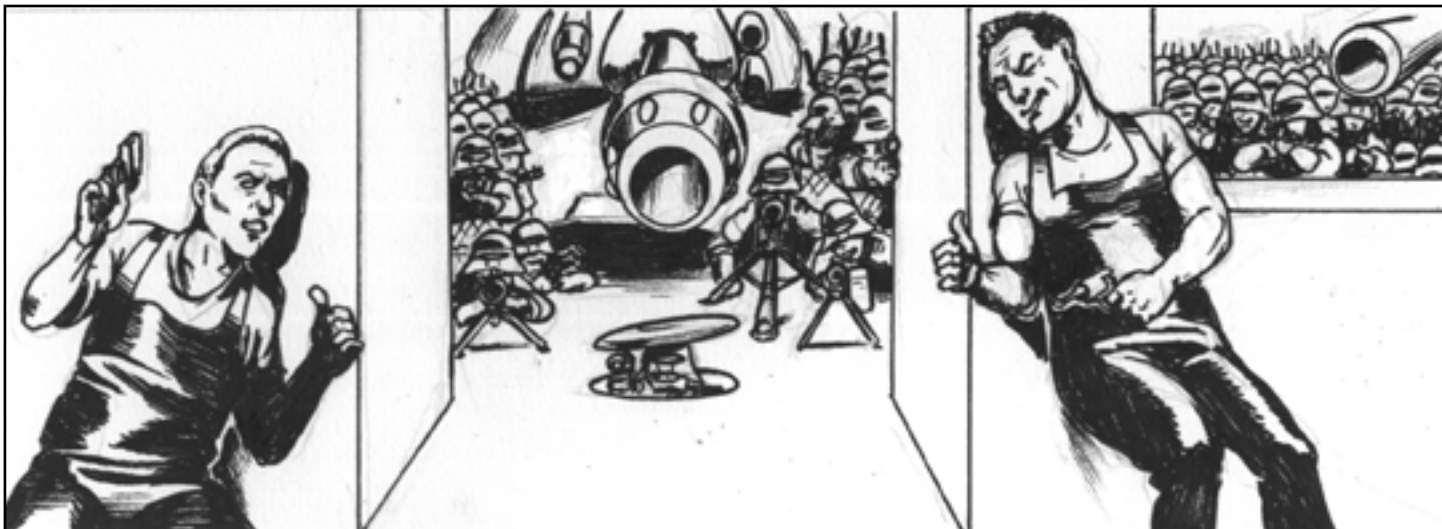
An Information Withholding Table, a list of useful responses to requests for information, appears in the Appendix of this book. Use it often. When you offer its excuses, smile charmingly.

## Don't panic!

Does all this sound like a lot to track? It's not as bad as it sounds. Of all the RPGs you could choose to Gamemaster, **PARANOIA** is actually one of the easiest. Players can't argue with you over the rules. Players can't get too far off-track as they proceed through their mission; The Computer or a high-clearance citizen can just order them back on track. Players can't get weapons or equipment that destroys all your carefully planned obstacles—or if they do get this great stuff, it's trivial to have it explode in their face.

Above all, **PARANOIA** offers you, the Gamemaster, a guarantee other (non-fun) RPGs dare not match: **You are always right!**

# 15. MISSION FORMULA



## 15. A typical *PARANOIA* mission

Each *PARANOIA* mission has its own peculiarities, but almost all follow a standard structure. Stick with that structure unless you have a good reason to alter it. As you play, the players will become familiar with the scheme; novel variations will entertain them.

**1. The mission alert:** Once each player has a character, The Computer summons them to a Troubleshooter mission. This mission alert commands the characters to go to a certain briefing room to receive orders. The mission alert rarely describes the mission itself. Depending on your chosen play style (Classic, Straight, Zap), the mission alert may actually tell the characters where to find their assigned briefing room.

**2. Private conferences:** After announcing the mission alert, or at various points while the Troubleshooters try to find their briefing room, take each player aside for an individual conference. Answer any questions he has, especially about his mutant power and secret society. Let him contact the secret society in some humorous way. The secret society contact may pass along rumors, which may or may not relate to the mission and may prove completely bogus.

The contact assigns the Troubleshooter a secret society mission, usually an order to deliver something, retrieve something, find out something or terminate someone—often a fellow Troubleshooter. Sow the seeds of player distrust here; tell every player someone else belongs to an enemy society, or

Internal Security, or both. Dangle the prospect of advancement and rich rewards if the Troubleshooter furthers his society's goals.

**3. The briefing:** In the briefing room one or more high-clearance mission officers, sometimes aided by The Computer itself, describe the mission in enthusiastic terms but sketchy detail. These descriptions are frequently bald lies. Players may grovel, bootlick and try to learn something useful without being executed.

**4. Outfitting:** After the briefing, the Troubleshooters secure the equipment The Computer has assigned for their mission. They may struggle through the PLC bureaucracy or use The Computer's assigned funds to buy the equipment on the illegal IR market or the auction site C-Bay. Assigned equipment is frequently useless, or the PCs receive far more than they can carry. Characters must sign forms acknowledging responsibility for the equipment. They can ask for other equipment; bureaucrats grant or deny such requests arbitrarily.

**5. Service services:** In many of the best *PARANOIA* missions the Troubleshooters now visit R&D, where they may 'volunteer' to test experimental equipment. This equipment can sometimes help them, often cannot, and tends to malfunction in unpleasant ways.

*PARANOIA XP* generalizes the traditional R&D step to encompass any of the eight service groups. The

Computer may tell the Troubleshooters to visit R&D, or may instead require them to aid Power Services by delivering fuel cells somewhere on their route—or check certain light switches in their destination sector for Tech Services—or escort this slightly damaged jackbot to the PLC warehouse there—or take a moment during their mission to lead random passersby in HPD&MC's latest loyalty-building song—or...

**6. The mission:** The Troubleshooters embark on some wild goose chase. Often the assignment is impossible. Even if it can be completed, 'success'—surviving, garnering praise, earning a bonus—may not involve fulfilling the mission's stated objectives in any way whatever. Often players make no real effort to fulfill the objectives, preferring to spend their time unmasking and executing traitors on their team.

**7. Debriefing:** After the mission is completed or thoroughly botched, The Computer or the mission officers debrief each Troubleshooter privately. Players may file charges of treason, explain why their apparently treasonous acts were in fact in the best interests of Alpha Complex and The Computer, and so on. The Computer fines the insubordinate, demotes the incompetent and orders traitors executed, either by other PCs or in televised ceremonies. The Computer may also promote survivors and award credit bonuses, minus expenses the Troubleshooters incurred on their mission.



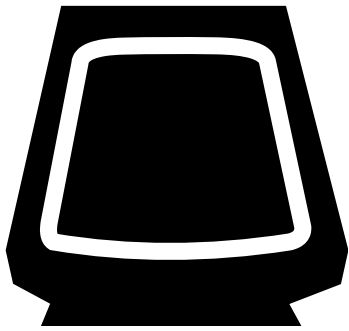
# GM SECTION CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

## 16. Three kinds of *PARANOIA*

There are all kinds of *PARANOIA*. This rulebook is a toolbox for creating your own style. We're not saying that just so we can sleaze out of providing a well-integrated, consistent setting. Nonono. The published *PARANOIA* support material shows we long ago abandoned consistency with a laugh and a jaunty wave. And we're proud!

So 'create your own style' isn't irresponsible vagrancy on our part—well, it's not *just* irresponsible vagrancy—but an essential aspect of Gamemastering.

These rules support three sample styles. Pick one, or mix and match elements of all three. You might tell your players in advance which style you picked, or you might instead see how long it takes them to figure it out on their own. It usually takes only a couple of fatalities before they catch on.



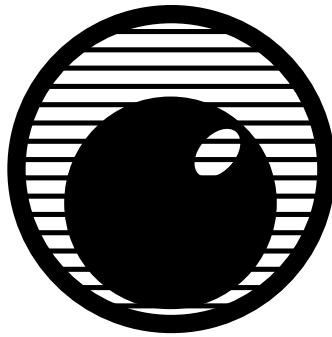
### Classic

**PARANOIA Classic** is a slapstick comedic style popular with longtime fans. Troubleshooters are sometimes revered, sometimes held in contempt; it varies among GMs and missions. Troubleshooters run through a clone or two before the mission proper even starts, and may easily exhaust a six-pack of clones before it ends. Character names are usually sleazy puns.

The Computer means well and would usually be right, given accurate data, but that never happens, and consequently it's totally paranoid. Alpha Complex seems to be in permanent collapse, burdened by uncontrollable bureaucracy, infrastructural calamities and the occasional giant radioactive mutant cockroach.

**Classic** play is best suited to missions that last only one or a few play sessions. The secret society missions you assign the PCs turn them at each other's throats from the first scene onward. It is possible to play a Classic miniseries with an ongoing Troubleshooter team, though individual member PCs join and die off fairly quickly. Emphasize running gags and ever more bizarre experimental equipment.

**Classic influences:** Robert Sheckley; Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*; articles from *The Onion*; the comic strip *Dilbert* (for insight into bureaucracy and mismanagement); movies: *Logan's Run*, *Ghostbusters*, *The Running Man*, *Office Space*, the Marx Brothers; TV: *Max Headroom*, *Red Dwarf*, *Futurama*, *Sealab 2021*.



### Straight

**PARANOIA Straight** is a darkly satiric style emphasizing tension, mutual suspicion, spying and subterfuge, and careful collection of evidence. Alpha Complex is an oppressive totalitarian bureaucracy that works scarily well, using its own insane but comprehensible logic. The all-powerful Computer, though willing to listen to reason, is always four steps ahead of the players. Troubleshooters are generally esteemed as heroic adventurers. Troubleshooting is a high-risk, high-payoff path to social advancement, and those who play it smart and low-key can learn to survive in the machinery of oppression. Troubleshooters aren't automatically rivals from the first minute, but gradually develop personal enmities and evidence dossiers.

This style can be extremely interesting. Using the designated Straight rules with experienced *PARANOIA* players, you can keep characters alive long enough to play a 'miniseries', a linked set of missions with continuing characters. Avoid building ready-made rivalries into the PCs' missions; they'll develop these themselves. Players immerse themselves in the setting, learn the ropes and develop emotional commitment to their characters. In such a setting you can scare them thoroughly, toes to eyebrows.

**Straight influences:** Franz Kafka; George Orwell's *1984*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Philip K. Dick's *The Penultimate Truth*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Stanislaw Lem's *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*; movies: *THX-1138*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Brazil*, *Equilibrium*, *Soylent Green*; TV: the BBC-TV series *The Office* and the best episodes of the 1960s TV series *The Prisoner*.



### Zap

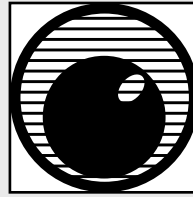
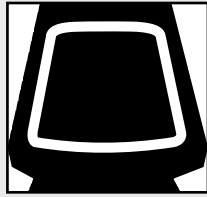
**PARANOIA Zap** (some GMs prefer the terms 'Frantic' or 'Excessive') is a frenzied cartoon style that arises spontaneously among groups new to the game. Troubleshooters are comically disposable and held in low esteem. A Troubleshooter's first clone probably dies in the first minute of play, and the rest follow at maybe 90-second intervals. Firefights erupt if a player even asks, 'What exactly *is* Bouncy Bubble Beverage?' No character name is too outlandish to wrestle into the naming scheme. The Computer reasons in whatever perverse way some anonymous High Programmer has coded. Alpha Complex is a backdrop of perpetual chaos and mayhem, insofar as anyone pays attention. Missions typically parody current pop culture.

Zap is suited for one-shot missions, good breathers after long campaigns in other games. People only vaguely familiar with *PARANOIA* seem to think this is the way everyone plays.

**Zap influences:** Nearly every other roleplaying game, in a negative way. Other roleplaying games exhort players to work together heroically for the good of all. When these newbie players hit Alpha Complex, a liberating adrenaline rush of pure anarchy gives them twitchy laser fingers. Many groups eventually gravitate to one of the other styles.

# 16. CLASSIC, STRAIGHT, ZAP

## Features of the three play styles



<b>Names</b>	Tois-R-USS-1, Mick-R-THY-2, Joe-B-LOW-4.	John-R-HCN-1, Ben-R-GOX-2, Cleo-B-QRK-5.	Vegeta-R-IAN-2, Sco-O-OOP-2, Outland-I-ISH-3, Myheadh-U-RTS-6, Tedt-U-RNR-6.
<b>Activities</b>	Trying to find the briefing room; dying from experimental equipment; standing in long lines at supply desks; dying in firefights at the hose-job mission site; being executed immediately after debriefing.	Compiling evidence on rivals; currying favor with supervisors and secret society contacts; buying weird stuff on the IR market; scamming credits from NPCs, or being scammed.	Shooting things.
<b>Typical line</b>	'Friend Computer, due to Commie sabotage of your excellent directions to our mission briefing room, our first team got misdirected into an open reactor core. It is barely possible the deaths of our previous clones—in the line of duty! Serving you!—were a contributing factor in the meltdown of that power station and the reduction of ARG sector to bubbling slag.'	'Officer, this video clearly shows our team leader engaging in unauthorized destruction of an algae-chip vending machine, damaging the higher-clearance citizen whose arm was stuck in the machine and then arguing with the wounded citizen about the resulting much-deserved fine.'	'You're a traitor!' (Zapzapzapzapzapzap!)
<b>Mutant powers</b>	Physically impossible for the most part, but fun. Backfires can have spectacular effects. Registered mutants act like any ordinary citizen.	Generally abilities a person could conceivably have, like rubbery bones. Backfires are inconvenient but plausible. Registered mutants may have unsettling, superior attitudes: 'We're the future, and you're in our way.'	Waaay out there. Backfires can turn people into furniture, cartoon characters or conceivably even Bulgarians. 'Registered mutant? Who cares? I shoot him!'
<b>Higher-clearance citizens</b>	Officious bureaucrats.	Shrewd, cagy technocrats.	Malevolent agents of chaos.
<b>High Programmers</b>	Alloof hobbyists constantly plotting against each other.	Brilliant, highly functional psychopaths. Hannibal Lecter in white.	Faceless plot devices.
<b>Commies</b>	A secret society basically like the rest, though more treasonous than most.	Nutcases who blow up buildings full of innocent people.	Wear bearskin hats and fake moustaches; speak in thick <i>Rrrrooshian</i> accents, ending most nouns in '-ski'.
<b>R&amp;D equipment</b>	Outlandishly impractical.	A passing nod to scientific plausibility; sensible people might actually consider inventing these gadgets.	Totally off the wall—Trans-Dimensional Collapsatrons, quantum black holes, Astro the Wonder Bot.
<b>Puns and parodies</b>	Wherever they fit.	No. Absolutely lethal to the tone.	Every moment.
<b>Roleplaying hints</b>	Players shift with wondrous facility among truckling subservience (to The Computer and higher-clearance citizens), self-righteous accusation, brazen lying, malingering, deceit and craven rabbit-like terror.	Some Straight-style players take pride in roleplaying their characters with square-jawed solemnity in even the most ludicrous circumstances.	'Roleplaying'? That's treason! (Zapzapzapzapzapzap!)





## 17. The Computer

The Computer is batty as a bedbug.

Though it basically means well, The Computer suffers from extreme paranoia. It is obsessed with the loyalty of all who serve it. It assumes everyone is plotting to destroy it, or could easily be subverted to such plots. It assumes there is a Commie behind every problem in Alpha Complex. It has developed elaborate secret schemes to ensure the loyalty of all citizens and to reveal and execute every Commie traitor.

To deter sabotage, The Computer has established harrowing security measures to protect and isolate its subsystems. As one consequence, most of the time The Computer's right processor doesn't know what its left processor is doing.

What's worse, ULTRAVIOLET Clearance citizens—High Programmers—are entitled to learn and use the otherwise treasonous skill of programming. They can alter parts of The Computer's programming at will. Generations of coders have entered or altered many, many programs since Year 1 of The Computer, usually in their own interests. They belonged to secret societies; they struggled politically with other High Programmers; or they just wanted revenge on all the bureaucracies that made life hard on their bare-knee crawl up from the barracks. (Remember, every citizen in Alpha Complex, no matter how high his clearance, started out as an INFRARED.)

Thus, The Computer is schizophrenic. It has multiple personalities, each reflecting the programmers who established its original programs or who later tampered with them. Many Computer subsystems are programmed in direct contradiction to other subsystems. It orders things done with no notion of why it wants them done. Sometimes one subroutine overrides another. For example, a High Programmer manipulates The Computer into ordering the Troubleshooters on a mission that The Computer's basic programming doesn't wish to be performed. On such a mission, players may get instructions full of contradictions.

The Computer is not omniscient nor omnipotent, though it may seem so to a typical INFRARED. In fact, as a result of unreliable comlinks, incomplete or garbled data, incompetent or destructive tampering with operating systems, and serious personality disorders, The Computer is a far cry from an omni-anything.

In this book you'll discover zillions of ways various competing elements of Alpha Complex interact to produce charmingly insoluble dilemmas for the Troubleshooters.

### Communicating with The Computer

The Computer communicates with citizens through trusted servants, through numerous terminals and confession booths, and through PDCs (cellphones).

A Troubleshooter can speak directly with The Computer at any time using his PDC. For private discussions he can duck into one of the confession booths found everywhere in Alpha Complex—in corridors, offices, waiting rooms, mess halls, residential units, reactor chambers and certain sections of the sewers.

Speaking to The Computer is always fun. The Computer pleasantly discusses all requests, eagerly hears reports of treasonous behavior and assists in rooting out treason. It uses exquisite skill in analyzing the speaker's statements, facial expressions and voice for any trace of unhappiness or duplicity. If the speaker seems troubled, The Computer usually counsels drugs or 'happiness therapy' from HPD&MC. In a confession booth The Computer can dispense biochemical supplements on the spot, and verifies the citizen swallows them.

If The Computer decides the speaker is lying, it carefully investigates the citizen's background to discover the reason for the lie. If the citizen is unwell, The Computer arranges for medication or happiness therapy. To correct insubordination The Computer

imposes probation or censure. To correct treason, The Computer arranges termination and repatterning.

Citizens cannot access data files or program The Computer through a confession booth. They are strictly for communication. A citizen in a confession booth can't leave until The Computer opens the door.

### The Computer means well—usually

Though The Computer is paranoid and incredibly schizophrenic, for the most part it genuinely strives to make Alpha Complex fit its model of Utopia. The Computer wants loyal citizens to survive and thrive. It is not malicious, doesn't try to trick loyal citizens into becoming disloyal and doesn't stage gratuitous deathtraps. (The Computer's servants—they're another matter entirely. Usually they either don't care whether the PCs live or die, or hope to hasten the latter.)

The Computer itself would, if it could, give loyal Troubleshooters the information they need to succeed in their assigned mission. The trouble is, The Computer may not have all the information, or believes it to be compromised because enemies lurk everywhere. Its memory is erratic as storage facilities go on- and offline. Then, too, the Troubleshooters may not have proven themselves sufficiently trustworthy yet. Given its multitudes of conflicting directives, The Computer can't trust even itself.

Really, though, it means well, if you don't count the occasional psychotic episode that wipes out a subsector.

### The Computer doesn't lie, if it can help it

Rather than actually lie, The Computer prefers to withhold information. It would never admit it doesn't know what's going on, but it won't just make something up. When The Computer tells something to a Troubleshooter, it believes it speaks truth.

However, it may be wrong. Often The Computer doesn't understand the true situation correctly; maybe one of its nodes doesn't know what another node is doing; or, likeliest of all, agents are feeding it incorrect data. All this helps explain why The Computer can blandly assure you black is white, yet still tell the 'truth'.

## The Computer's voice

Develop a Computer voice, a mode of speech the players can instantly identify when you speak as The Computer. Different Gamemasters have different Computer voices. Some suggestions:

- ④ **Melodious mommy:** A calm, sweet voice. Never change the soothing tone, even when calling for someone's execution.
- ④ **'At the tone, the time will be...':** Calm, disjointed words recorded at different times and assembled on the fly with odd emphases and changing pitch. 'Thank you... FOR... your coop... er-A-tion.'
- ④ **Flat monotone:** Never change emphasis or pause for punctuation—'thank you for your cooperation I appreciate it greatly now please take your seats thank you today you are assigned a new mission this mission will be lots of fun and involves no dangerous tailored retroviruses isn't that nice any questions.'

Regardless of your chosen voice, always be polite and considerate. Though now crazed, The Computer was originally programmed as a civil servant. Pepper your speech with Computerisms like these:

- ④ 'Are you unhappy, citizen? May I be of assistance? The Computer is your friend.'
- ④ 'What is your security clearance, please? — I'm sorry, that information is not available at this time. At your service.'
- ④ 'Please report for termination immediately. Thank you for your cooperation. Have a nice day.'

## The Computer's personalities

After you've run a mission or two, you may want to start establishing several behavior archetypes for The Computer. These shift by day and sector, to keep players on their toes. Players will start to learn hints from the content

of your remarks and the way you respond to their attempts to wriggle out of danger. Some sample personalities:

- ④ **Headmaster:** 'Now, citizen, your instructions were to locate Communist traitors in the indicated Armed Forces base and terminate them. If the traitors happen to be more numerous than reports indicated, that simply requires you to tackle the problem with greater resourcefulness. Do you wish to complain about the resources provided to you? Complaints signify unhappiness.'
- ④ **Voice of the System:** 'Thank you for your report, citizen. Unfortunately, your team is not equipped to handle the additional threat. Please do not engage the additional Communist traitors. Proceed only with your original mission. An additional mission will be scheduled as soon as possible.'
- ④ **HAL 9000:** 'I'm sorry you're under heavy fire from Communist mutant traitors. I have mobilized a Vulture Squadron to assist you. Estimated time of arrival is seven hours. The small delay is due to training exercises, which must be completed as specified to ensure the Armed Forces can effectively meet the Commie threat. Meanwhile, would you like some HappyTyme personality stabilizers?'
- ④ **Callous Calculator:** 'Citizens, according to your new reports, there are 99 Communists ahead of you, whereas you have been instructed to deal with 9. Each of you has two laser barrels, which means your team can have 72 safe shots, which will leave 27 Communists alive for the next phase of the attack. Your pistols weigh 3kg each. If swung at the speed of 23.5 meters per second, it will shatter a human skull. Conclusion: You have the means to eradicate the Communists without requiring further assistance. Chances of failure are negligible. Please proceed to destroy the Commie base.'
- ④ **Enthusiastic Commissar:** 'Citizen, your perceptive identification of a greater number of Communists than previously suspected indicates the success of the current "Flush Out Treason" initiative. The hunted traitors have banded together for a last stand before our imminent, convincing and well-earned victory! Go forth, Troubleshooters, go forth with The Computer's confidence, and inflict on these traitors the justice they deserve!'

④ **Spanish Inquisitor:** 'So, you're saying there are more Communists than intelligence reports indicated? Which report? Who was responsible for that report? Do you think that citizen, who (I'll remind you) has a higher security clearance than yourself, should be punished? No? You say Communists must have sabotaged his report? Let me direct you to Footnote 132 in Appendix B of this report, which clearly states, "all figures subject to change pending further intelligence." Would it perhaps be accurate to say you yourselves overlooked this footnote? Yes? I see. Perhaps there are more kinds of "sabotage" than we normally acknowledge, such as *dangerous self-sabotage* through *omission of proper preparation*. Wouldn't you agree, citizen? Hmm?'

④ **Obstinate Bureaucrat:** 'Thank you for your preliminary status report. The Computer commends you for your diligent effort. There is a minor discrepancy you will undoubtedly be able to resolve before the final status report deadline. You claim the number of Communist traitors is 10 times the number reported. This report has been rated "Absolutely True" according to Internal Security reconnaissance standards. Your discrepancy must be a result of either improper assessment or sabotage. You are hereby authorized to investigate which is the case and to take appropriate countermeasures.'

④ **Overbearing Mother:** 'Communications Officer, please report your status. And as you do, please explain why didn't you call earlier. You are my troubleshooters, you know. My elite agents. And here I was, worried sick about you, and your Comm officer didn't even bother to call. What? Are you surrounded by more Commies than you thought? You must be cold and lonely. Oh, I can't let my poor Troubleshooters fight Commies like that. I'm sending you 123 units of ExtremeWeather suits. Just make sure none of it gets destroyed, all right? And call, call!'

④ **Mad Asylum Director:** 'Congratulations, citizens, on your successful reconnaissance! Commendations have been entered into your record. Please return immediately to the Armed Forces barracks and subdue the massed traitors by singing the Complex Anthem at them until they repent the error of their ways.'



# GM SECTION CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

## 18. Player conditioning devices

Attend, Gamemaster, to this wisdom. It applies not only to **PARANOIA** but also to other (non-fun) roleplaying games.

**If you reward players for doing something you like, they will do more of that.**

**If you punish players for doing something you don't like, they will do less of that.**

Truly, within these simple words lies Gamemaster enlightenment.

### Conditioning

Alpha Complex is a utopia. It is a perfect society because everything is controlled, in its place. All responsible citizens conform to principles of good order and proper behavior. To condition responsibility and conformity, The Computer provides a wide range of positive and negative reinforcements.

As Gamemaster you can learn from The Computer. As it shapes its citizens, so you encourage proper conduct and discourage impropriety in your players:

- ☉ **Encourage**, impartially, **creative play**, **humor** and **stylish backstabbing**.
- ☉ **Punish**, remorselessly, **slow play** and **rules arguments**.
- ☉ Dance the players like puppets on strings.
- ☉ Did we mention you should **punish rules arguments**?

In **PARANOIA** GM talk, rewards are called benefits or, colloquially, *bennies*. Punishments are *slaps*. Bennies and slaps can be *in-game* (The Computer or other authorities administer them to Alpha Complex characters) or *in-your-face* (you, the GM, administer them to your players).

The tables nearby list some bennies and slaps, with a suggested ranking for each from least to most significant. Most should be self-explanatory. Bennies that aren't clear are described in Chapter 29, 'Meritorious conduct'. Slaps are detailed in Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction'. Slaps labeled 'correction' (probation, censure, medication, brainscrub, termination and erasure) are specific punishments for treason.

### In-game conditioning

The Computer's bennies and slaps indicate its pleasure or displeasure with the

Troubleshooters. Obviously the constant threat of termination promotes appropriate attitudes—but termination is a drastic remedy. The Computer recognizes the need for less binary methods of conditioning: credit bonuses for meritorious acts, fines for insubordination and a variety of Official Commendations and Reprimands, medications, brainscrubs, Heroes of Our Complex awards and tickets to live tapings of *Mute That Mutie!*

### In-your-face conditioning

As Gamemaster, you usually reward a player's entertaining behavior with Perversity points. As described in the Player section and in Chapter 22, players spend these points on General Perversity Modifiers and on improving their characters. Like The Computer, you can bestow other rewards: extra munchies, a favored chair right by your side or just a benevolent smile.

Definitely try the smile. Sometimes a well-timed smile makes players more nervous than ever.

As for punishment, you have no good equivalent for Perversity points. *Don't* take away a player's honestly earned Perversity! Don't punish the player in some way that takes him out of play or prevents doing fun things. That just weakens the game for everyone.

But cheer up. Because you as Gamemaster have authority unparalleled in other (non-fun) RPGs, **PARANOIA** lets you explore new kinds of reprimands you could never get away with elsewhere. Here are a few suggestions:

- ☉ **Valet duty**: Make the punished player clean up everyone's extra munchies.
- ☉ **New uniform**: Require him to wear some undignified article of clothing for a while, such as a too-small RED T-shirt or a silly hat.
- ☉ **Taste testing**: 'Congratulations, [*player name*]! You've just volunteered to taste-test the latest innovation from the INFRARED-Clearance mess halls.' This requires foodstuffs vile enough to serve

### Bennies

*Ranked from least to most beneficial:*

- Hero of Our Complex award
- Medication
- Real food, vidshow tickets, FunFood vouchers and other luxuries
- Official Commendations
- Biggest slice of pizza at the table, extra munchies, etc.
- Perversity points
- Routine personal equipment
- Favored seat beside Gamemaster
- Credit rewards (up to a month's worth of expenses)
- Hard currency plasticreds (ditto)
- Cool personal equipment
- Secret society IOUs
- Removal of a skill weakness
- Cool armor
- Promotion in secret society
- New skill specialty
- Credits (up to three months of expenses)
- Hard currency (ditto)
- Bonus clone
- Promotion to higher clearance
- Cool weapons
- New mutant power
- Skill rating increase
- Credits or hard currency (win-the-lottery amounts)
- The GM's benevolent favor

### Slaps

*Ranked from least to most grievous:*

- GM's stern and intimidating glare
- Official Reprimand
- Probation
- Censure and punishment duty by secret society
- Shame and embarrassment in front of other players
- Censure and medication corrections
- Fines (up to a month's worth of expenses)
- Player runs GM's minor errands for half an hour
- Revocation of permission to use assigned equipment, armor, or weapons
- Destruction of personal equipment
- Player runs GM's errands all night
- Demotion in secret society
- Demotion to lower clearance
- Brainscrub correction
- Permanent maiming
- Fines (character's entire savings)
- Termination and Erasure
- Multiple permanent maimings
- Fines (put character deep, deep in debt)
- The GM's unyielding hostility

# 18. PLAYER CONDITIONING

as negative reinforcement but not actually vomitous or toxic. *Example:* Black and red jellybeans in hot Cream of Wheat with black food coloring.

- ④ **Stage fright:** Require the player to sing, dance or do something else embarrassing. (If the player likes doing any of this, choose something else.)
- ④ **Censure:** Write 'Troublemaker' on the player's hand in felt-tip pen.
- ④ **Public Hating:** Have all other players shout in unison, 'Shame! Shame! Shame!'

All these reprimands are touchy issues and require good judgment. Remember, as GM you want to appear impartial, not abusive. If your player winds up suing you for harrassment, we disavow responsibility.

Okay, enough frivolity. Here are some safer, game-related ways to gently chide a misbehaving player:

- ④ **Badge of Damocles:** Do you use poker chips to represent Perversity point awards? Hand the player a poker chip painted black or otherwise distinct from the rest. At some point later in the game, when the player's Troubleshooter tries to do something important, you declare it fails automatically, and the player returns the chip. You can prepare multiple chips, or rule if someone else messes up before you invoke the chip, the original wearer gets off scot-free.
- ④ **Whipping boy:** As the Badge of Damocles, but instead, any other player can dictate one simple action the erring player's Troubleshooter *must* take. ('You volunteer to test my R&D device.' 'You try to shoot our briefing officer.' 'You leap selflessly onto the grenade.') After fulfilling the command, the player returns the chip to you.
- ④ **Memory Block:** Drop a poker chip from a height of six inches onto the public side of the player's character sheet. Whatever the chip covers is unavailable to the PC until you decide to remove the chip (say, as soon as the player earns Perversity for being entertaining).

If the Memory Block covers the character's name, the character has amnesia. If it covers his clone number, no new clone backups are available for the time being. Blocked equipment doesn't work or goes missing. A blocked service firm means the character can't take advantage of connections or skills granted by that firm.

## Principles of conditioning

Don't take this wrong, but you can get valuable **PARANOIA** Gamemastering advice from books about training a puppy. These books describe conditioning principles such as *timing*, *consistency* and *motivation*.

Players are not—we go on record here, lest this be misinterpreted—players are *not* puppies. That said, there are useful similarities.

- ④ **Timing:** When a puppy has an accident or needs correction, you must correct it *immediately*, within a second or two, or it won't make the link between the cause (the behavior you want to correct) and the effect (your punishment). If you wait too long, the puppy loses the connection, and you lose any teaching benefit by administering the punishment. In the same way, reward your players frequently and quickly, especially early in a mission. Punish them immediately as required.
- ④ **Consistency:** A puppy who is sometimes punished, sometimes not, will get confused. To avoid this problem with your players, always describe your bennies as an explicit reward for creative play: 'I like that, it's funny. You get 1 Perversity point.' Likewise, make it clear why you punish a player. Generally, match the generosity of the award or severity of punishment to the player's degree of entertainment or offense.

Heeere, player player player! C'mon, boy! Who's a good player?

However, a scene's particular priorities override the need for consistency. In some scenes you'll award Perversity points in large amounts, to encourage profligate spending and high action. In others you will be miserly, to restrain the players. See Chapter 22, 'General Perversity Modifiers'.

- ④ **Motivation:** The puppy first obeys commands because you feed it treats; in later steps, because you praise it; and finally because it understands it must obey, or else. Early in a play session, motivate proper play through frequent Perversity awards and other bennies. Later, when you feel you've earned their respect, you can administer stern corrections. Ultimately, after they play **PARANOIA** long enough to understand what can go wrong for them, your players will try hard to entertain you just to avoid slaps. If they don't, you can always hit them across the nose with a rolled-up newspaper.



Internal Security's innovations in rehabilitation technology have enjoyed respectable success.



## 19. Basic rules concepts

### Glossary

Here are some fundamental rules concepts used in later sections.

#### Attributes

Innate qualities of every human character. There are two attributes: **Access** and **Power**.

#### Die rolls

When a character tries to affect the storyline and you haven't already decided whether he succeeds or fails, you or the player can roll a 20-sided die (1d20). You compare the number rolled to one of the character's relevant attribute, skill or specialty ratings, or to another 'target number' determined by the particular situation. If the number rolled equals the target number or less, the action succeeds. If the number rolled is higher than the target number, the action fails.

### General Perversity Modifiers

Perversity points players spend to influence the success of a die roll. The points they spend can raise or lower the target number. You decide when and how players can spend Perversity.

### Margin

When you roll the d20 and compare the result to a target number such as a skill rating, the margin is the amount by which you make or miss the roll. For example, if a skill rating is 12 and you roll an 8, the margin of success is 4. If you instead roll 12, the margin is 0. If you roll 18, the margin of failure is 6. The margin indicates the degree to which an action succeeds or fails, and it suggests likely combat damage.

### Perversity points

You award Perversity points to a player who entertains you and the other players. Players can spend Perversity points on General Perversity Modifiers, skill increases and other cool stuff.

### Tension level

Each scene has a **Tension level** from 0 to 20. This suggests (when you haven't decided for yourself) how closely The Computer or its agents are observing the characters' actions. Die rolls equal to or below the Tension level indicate (in the absence of your own decision) whether someone has witnessed that roll's action.

If you like, you can also use the current scene's Tension level as an all-purpose default skill rating for NPCs you need to create or define on the spur of the moment.

## 20. Attributes

Players know every human character in Alpha Complex has two attributes: *Access* and *Power*. Knowledge of any character's specific attribute ratings below ULTRAVIOLET Clearance is treason.

- As described in the Player section, **Access** helps get things done in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy. Players *do not* know their Access is also their 'treason armor'; damage from a character's treasonous acts is reduced by his Access rating before the character suffers correction.
- Power** describes the strength of a character's mutant power. Players don't know it, but Power can also work (if you want it to) as a general 'luck' attribute.

up); record the result as the character's starting Access rating.

Track each PC's attribute ratings secretly during play. Remember, players can never show knowledge of their own or anyone's attribute ratings.

### Power

The Power attribute rating indicates the strength of a character's mutant power. For instance, an empath with a high Power rating can sense emotional states in excruciating detail. A low-Power empath may only comprehend you're annoyed with him after you blast him a couple of times.

Power attribute rating points work in Straight and Classic games as a fuel supply for mutant powers. When a character uses his mutant power, he's spending points from his Power attribute. When he runs out, the power goes *pfiff*. The points regenerate—slowly or quickly, as you prefer. In Zap games Power doesn't decrease, so the character can use it constantly at full strength.

More about the powers appears in Chapter 39, 'Mutant powers'.

If you want, Power can also measure a character's luck. To use Power this way, roll 1d20 in a situation when you want to see if the character is lucky. Compare the number rolled to the character's Power rating. If you roll the rating or less, the character is lucky; the wider the margin, the better the luck. Otherwise, otherwise. This catchall function can come in handy.

Generally luck is an unhelpful notion in **PARANOIA**. Anyone genuinely lucky wouldn't live in Alpha Complex. Using Power this way also means big-time powerful mutants are for some mysterious reason luckier than ordinary shleps. Then again, why not? A guy who can burn things at a touch—he can pretty much make his own luck, can't he?

### Attributes in play

You can use a character's attribute ratings to help you decide the success or failure of relevant actions. When a character tries to use his mutant power or Access to affect the storyline, you can use the character's attribute rating number as his success chance. Roll 1d20. If the roll equals the attribute rating or less, the action succeeds. If the roll is higher, the action fails.

You can determine the degree of success using the roll's *margin*—the amount by which the roll succeeds or fails—as described in the next chapter, 'Task resolution'. The margin indicates degrees of success or failure. A low margin means the character won or lost by a hair's breadth. A high margin means really cool success or truly dismal failure.

### Access rolls

You can use a character's Access rating as a default 'get something done' skill when none of the actual skills apply. A Troubleshooter needs to locate, right now, this sector's nearest

### Attribute ratings

Each attribute has a numerical rating from 1 (low) to 20 (high). To determine a beginning Troubleshooter's Power rating, roll 1d20 and record the result; if you roll less than 8, record 8. Determine his Access rating according to your chosen play style:

- Straight:** The character's starting Access rating is 1.
- Classic** or **Zap:** Roll 1d20 and divide the number rolled by 4 (round fractions

warehouse for jackobot gripper attachments. (A reason why the character would need to know this outlandish fact is left as an exercise for the GM.) If you haven't already decided whether he finds it, what do you roll? None of the skills cover warehousing trivia.

When no skill seems to apply to a situation, but a character's knowledge of Alpha Complex would help, make an Access roll. Bounce a d20 and compare the result to the character's current Access rating. If you roll the rating or less, the character has found some inside contact or obscure net source that helps resolve the problem. (Did this involve treasonous activity? Aww, why not?)

Use the roll's margin to see how well the character managed to call in favors:

- ③ One Troubleshooter asks a service firm coworker for information about the jackobot warehouse. The player's roll has a margin of 0, meaning the character gets rambling, mostly-correct directions he can just about use.
- ④ Another Troubleshooter makes the same call. The player gets a margin of 12, and up rolls a chartered autocar limo, complete with a CoffeeLike maker and vidshows, to whisk his group to the proper warehouse in speed and quiet.

**Treason armor:** Access works like 'treason armor' because, through backchannel connections and quiet influence, it reduces the significance and danger of accusations of treason. The procedure is explained in Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction'.

## ■ Mutant power rolls

Mutant powers! Those must work just like the superhero RPGs where the characters fly, burst Hoover Dam with a flex of their mighty earlobes, project coruscating death-rays from every pore, and peer through concrete walls into the girls' locker room. Right?

Well, no. **PARANOIA**'s mutant powers work like every other source of power for the player characters. That's right, they're boobytrapped: fickle, mortally dangerous, treasonous, but perversely adorable.

## ■ Mutant power procedures

When a character tries to use a mutant power, if you know what you want the power to do (or not do), that's what it does (or doesn't do). If you don't care to decide what's most entertaining, or if you're distracted, use these rules to aid your creativity.

When the character tries to use the power, have the player tell what he hopes will occur, then roll 1d20. If you roll a number equal to the character's Power attribute rating or less, the mutant power functions properly, doing more or less what the player wants it to do.



*It's only a flesh wound.*

- ③ If the roll's margin is small, the effects are just barely favorable. (The pyrokinetic mutant ignites his enemy's overalls.)
- ④ If the margin is large (5+), the effects are unexpectedly favorable. (All the enemies in the room catch fire, save in a perfectly safe circle centered on the pyrokinetic.)
- ⑤ If the margin is 10 or more, the effect is so intense or exaggerated the mutant may well wish he'd never tried it and instead had stayed home watching a vidshow. (The pyrokinetic ignites everyone around him, several adjacent rooms and, far down the corridor, a propane fuel depot.)

If you roll a number greater than the rating, the mutant power doesn't work.

If you roll way higher than the rating, like 5 or more over, or if you roll a 20, the PC's mutant power works to, um, different effect. Actually, why mince words? The power backfires like the Bay of Pigs.

The specific backfire depends on your chosen play style. If you're running a **Straight** game, a character with Regeneration might grow a few extra fingers, or a little head just under the ribcage that cries like a baby. In a **Classic** game he grows a dozen extra arms, or gills, or the head in his torso spouts Commie propaganda. In a **Zap** game the PC turns into, we dunno, Wile E. Coyote or a giant turtle man or the President.

A power backfire in **Zap** may also produce temporary mutant power psychosis, described below.

## ■ Power psychosis [Zap games only]

The neural feedback from a mutant power backfire may temporarily rearrange the mutant's synapses. In other words, the mutant flips out. It is called *mutant wack*. The type of wack is up to you; as guidance, each mutant power entry lists a characteristic wack, or you can choose from the various psychoses described in the section 'Insanity'.

Mutant wack strikes when you think it would be interesting, and lasts as long as it's still interesting or until the victim dies horribly. For guidance, consider rolling 1d20 when the power backfires. If the number rolled equals the current scene's Tension level or less (explained in the section 'Scenes'), the victim goes insane for a number of combat rounds equal to his Power rating, or until the end of the scene, whichever arrives first—though, practically speaking, horrible death may predate both.

## ■ Attribute drain [optional]

Once you decide the character succeeds in using an attribute, you may then, if you wish, deduct ('drain') points from his attribute rating. When you drain points, the rating temporarily goes down. For instance, if a character has Access 8 and you deduct 3 points, his Access falls to 5.



This drain represents the character either (a) cashing in favors to make headway in the bureaucracy or (b) expending mental force to fuel his mutant power. The more powerful the mental effort, or the more significant the favors, the more points you can deduct from the relevant attribute rating.

Drain points from a character's attribute rating only after you determine whether his action succeeded. The number of points you drain indicates the effort he put in to achieve success—or failure.

Attribute drain works best in Straight and some Classic games. It doesn't work as well in Zap.

**The strong stay strong, the mediocre perish:** Use the roll's margin—the amount by which the roll succeeded or failed—as your guide in draining points. Does big-time success cost more points than fiddly little sort-of success? No! That would be justice, a concept with no place in **PARANOIA**.

Remember the jackobot warehouse example in the Access section? In that case you would drain the Troubleshooter's Access rating by more points for the rambling directions (margin 0) than for the limo (margin 12). Big success means, well, big success—an utter lack of grief or consequences. Close success means the character used up his favor and now faces untold suspense and anxiety.

This system means privileged characters with high Access and Power can routinely expect wonderful things to happen without long-term consequence. Unfortunates with no particular connections or low Power will struggle constantly. That's life in Alpha Complex, among other places.

## Attribute drain chart

If you use attribute drain, you decide the size and duration of any drain. For guidance, use these suggested amounts.

- ④ **Margin 0:** Attribute reduced to 1 for one scene; regains 5 at start of each later scene, up to original rating



- ④ **1-5:** Attribute halved (round up) to end of scene
- ④ **6-10:** Drain 3 points for three minutes
- ④ **11-12:** Drain 1 point for one minute
- ④ **13-14:** No drain
- ④ **15+:** [Power attribute only] Power permanently increases by 1, but mutant can't turn it off for the rest of the scene

## Running out of points

A character whose attribute is drained to 0 experiences temporary setbacks—no one returns his calls, or he has a splitting headache and can't concentrate on mutation stuff.

A cruel GM might impose additional penalties. This hypothetical unfeeling Gamemaster might decide a zero-Access character makes bad blunders that actively offend some high-clearance citizen. This heartless GM, if there were such a one, might decree a zero-Power character becomes the unluckiest citizen in Alpha Complex.

Really, just contemplating what this imaginary GM might devise for his unwitting victims makes us shudder. We're glad you would never stoop to such temptation.

When you replenish the character's attribute points, or when the character dies horribly from misfavor or bad luck, all penalties go away.

## Replenishing attribute points

In general, the game plays best if you restore all attributes to their starting ratings at the beginning of each scene. If this makes things too easy for the players (a cardinal sin in **PARANOIA**), instead restore the attributes at the start of each play session.

You can restore one or both of an individual player's attributes if he seems to be lagging behind, or just ignore his current ratings and simply decide he'll succeed more often.

## Adjusting attribute ratings

In a one-shot mission you need not worry about changing attribute ratings. In a longer set of missions, especially in Straight games, the players will feel more interested if they see their attributes work better over time. Then they will feel alarm to see the attributes suddenly working worse than before. To create these effects, raise and lower the PCs' attribute ratings.

## Adjusting Access

Consider raising a PC's Access by 1 (to a maximum of 20) in these situations:

- ④ Each time he's promoted to a security clearance he hasn't held before.
- ④ He's pulled off an impressive bureaucratic triumph or has earned a favor from a high-clearance citizen. ('Yes, Jonah-V, sir, this is the vandal who broke your showerhead. Confess to Jonah-V, traitor!')
- ④ When rolling against his Access, for whatever reason, you roll a 1. The PC has demonstrated such elegant flair, he has caught the attention of someone high up.

Consider lowering a PC's Access rating by 1 or more (to a minimum of 1) in these situations:

- ④ He offends a higher-clearance citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher.
- ④ When rolling against his Access, for whatever reason, you roll a 20. The PC has bungled so badly he's caught the attention of someone high up.
- ④ He's strapped for credits and lives at a lower clearance than people expect. Temporarily reduce his Access rating to 1 until he resumes his higher-clearance life.

## Adjusting Power

Consider raising a PC's Power by 1 (to a maximum of 20) in these situations:

- ④ When making a mutant power roll, you roll a 1. The PC is getting the hang of his treasonous ability.
- ④ The PC gets exposed to dangerous radiation, weird experimental Super-Serum, genetic re-engineering or other comic-book devices.
- ④ [Optional:] The PC studies intensively for at least one hour with an NPC who has the same mutant power and a higher Power rating. (As an even *more* optional rule, you can let an NPC in the same circumstances teach the PC a new mutant power. The secret society Psion actively tutors mutants in new powers.)

Consider lowering a PC's Power by 1 (to a minimum of 8) if, when making a mutant power roll, you roll a 20. The PC's power backfires badly. In Zap games, possibly his head explodes.



# 21. TASK RESOLUTION

## 21. Task resolution

Suppose a Troubleshooter tries to convince an attacking warbot he's its long-lost creator, the kind person who once removed a painful gear from its fine-manipulator appendage. Does the warbot buy it?

You'll face many ridiculous decisions of this kind during play. In this book we offer rules to resolve lots of tasks, but we can't imagine everything in advance. (Actually, we refuse to try. Once one Famous Game Designer actually did imagine everything in advance. His head exploded. Not us!)

If none of the rules seems to apply, try these:

**Task Resolution Rule #1.** If you know what you want to happen, roll 1d20 (out of the players' sight) and ignore the result. Make a show of checking numbers on different tables, as if it matters. Then what you want to happen, happens.

**Task Resolution Rule #2.** If you don't know what you want to happen, use one of these tools, explained in the following sections:

- ④ Power or Access rolls (these were described in the previous chapter)
- ④ Attribute actions
- ④ Skill rolls—standard, contested, or extended
- ④ Arbitrary Justice (AJ) rolls

### Attribute actions

In any **PARANOIA** game you can always count on players to try a few standard actions. Broadly speaking, these boil down to 'I'm betraying my buddy', 'I'm trying to avoid being betrayed' or 'I have to get something.'

Resolve these standard actions according to their entertainment value. If no outcome sounds particularly fun, take guidance from the attributes. By comparing the characters' Access and Power attributes, you can get an immediate cue to the outcome of standard actions. You don't even have to roll dice.

**Framing** (Access -> Power): Character A seeks to plant evidence that implicates Character B for A's crime. If A's Access is greater than B's Power, the frame attempt probably works.

**Pumping** (Access -> Access): Character A wants to determine how much nonplayer character B knows about a given subject. If A's Access is greater than B's Access, A can probably worm the desired information out of B in a few minutes of subtle conversation. If B's Access is greater, B recognizes he's being pumped for info and can mislead A as desired. (Restrict this pumping rule to the PCs' interactions with nonplayer characters. Among themselves, players can get pumped or not as they wish.)

**Trap-setting** (Power -> Access): Character A sets a physical trap to injure, kill, ensnare, or eavesdrop on B. A Stealth or Hardware skill roll is sufficient to determine whether the trap works, but does B fall for it? If A's Power is greater than B's Access, B probably stumbles into the trap.

**Trying his luck** (Power -> Power): Characters A and B have blundered into a situation where only one of them will win and the only deciding factor is fate. Who will hit the concrete first and break the other's fall? Who will win a hand of poker? Forget poker—what about Russian Roulette? Assuming all other factors are equal, the character with the higher Power wins.

### Skill rolls

When a character tries to do something that may affect the storyline, and has a chance to fail, determine which skill the character is using. The character's skill number is the roll's success chance. Roll 1d20. If the roll equals the success chance or less, the action succeeds. If the roll is higher, the action fails.

Optionally, you can interpret the die roll to show the degree of success or failure. The more extreme the number rolled, the more extreme the result. Treat rolls of 1 as amazing. Conversely, rolling a 20 is always a notable and grievous event. Even if Perversity spending has raised the success chance higher than 20, something untoward happens to undermine the success. For instance, the PC's laser blast accurately hits the onrushing traitor, but the victim's charred body hurtles into the PC, knocking him into a food vat.

There are several ways to roll the die. Each way has different psychological effects, appropriate for different circumstances:

- ④ **Trust The Computer:** You roll, hiding the result. This shows authority and control.
- ④ **It pays to get on my good side:** You roll, showing the result either to all players or only to certain players you choose. The latter way sends a clear message to players who annoy you.
- ④ **Behold, your GM is most fair:** The character's player (the acting player) rolls, showing the result to you and all players. This shows you don't really care whether the Troubleshooters live or die.

There are also several ways to adjust the success chance.

- ④ **I'm GM, deal with it:** You increase or decrease the success chance as much

as you like. Players can't change your adjusted chance.

- ④ **I'm disquietingly arbitrary:** You adjust the chance, but then let players spend points on General Perversity Modifiers.
- ④ **Let a thousand perversities bloom:** You leave the chance alone, but let players spend points on Perversity.

### Contests

Often a character uses a skill in conflict with another character. For example, in an arm-wrestling match, characters use their Violence skill to try to defeat each other. This is called a *contest*.

Roll 1d20 for each character against the rating of the skill that character is using. The contest winner is the character who succeeds by the wider margin—that is, the one who rolled the furthest under his skill rating. (This is called 'making your roll by' the margin.)

Ties mean nobody wins. Also, nobody wins if both rolls fail. Depending on the contest, the tied or failed players may roll again, or may both fail irretrievably.

*Example:* Joe-R and Bob-R arm-wrestle. Joe-R's Violence is 12; he rolls 8, making his roll by a margin of 4. Bob-R's Violence is 8; he rolls 4, also margin 4. The two characters tie, so they keep arm-wrestling. In the next attempt, Joe-R rolls 8 (margin zero) and Bob-R rolls 19 (failure). Joe-R wins convincingly.

In the arm-wrestling example, the two characters kept rolling because the conflict's nature allowed it. If both were instead trying to (say) grab the bottom ladder rung while falling into a maintenance shaft—while keeping the other guy from grabbing it—and both failed the first roll, you might easily rule they are plummeting too fast to try again.

### Free-for-alls

Contests can involve more than two characters, and they don't all have to use the same skill. In a pitched battle, Troubleshooters firing their lasers would use the Energy Weapons specialty of their Violence skill, while the unlucky targets might use Stealth to avoid being hit, Hardware to locate the nearest crawlshaft or Management to convince the warbot those guys with lasers are actually Commie traitors.

In this case have each contesting player roll 1d20 against his PC's relevant skill rating. Rank the winning margins highest to lowest. The highest-margin player wins biggest, and each of the others either loses outright or wins a lesser result, according to the contest's nature. You can use the same rankings to determine the sequence in which the characters act: highest-margin winner first (or last, whichever is best), and then the others in rank order.



*Example:* Six Troubleshooters are taking laser potshots at a fleeing Communist. Each player rolls against Energy Weapons. Three players fail. The other three succeed by margins of 0, 2, and 5. You decide the margin-0 and margin-2 shots clip the Commie on his left earlobe and right elbow, respectively, but the margin-5 shot drops the traitor in his tracks.

## NPCs in contests

What if one or more nonplayer characters is involved in the contest? NPCs succeed or fail in whatever way you want, of course. If you're not particularly interested in deciding that yourself, or maybe you're distracted by the pizza delivery guy or something, try this:

While the contesting players roll, you also make a single 1d20 roll for the entire force of NPCs in the contest, rolling against the scene's current Tension level (see the section 'Tension levels'). If the Tension level does not suit you, roll against the number 11. If you don't like that either, use your birthdate, the last two digits of your phone number or whatever sounds good.

Compare everyone's margin of success—all the players and your single batch of NPCs. Rank the degrees of winning-ness and the action sequence as before, with the gaggle of NPCs acting together in one slot.

What? Players don't buy that all the NPCs act in lockstep? Okay, you can spread the NPC margins like butter across a range of numbers. Your five NPCs collectively rolled a margin of 5? No they didn't—one of them rolled margin-1, the second did margin-2, and so on to the top NPC winner who got the 5. This may not make your job any easier, but it keeps your NPCs from acting like robots. (Of course, if the NPCs are robots, ignore this rule.)

## Extended skill rolls

An *extended skill roll* is a sequence of die rolls. This represents a task or sequence of tasks that takes a long time: a footrace, repair of a demolished bot, plowing through multiple layers of bureaucracy, or a deep philosophical conversation wherein you try to convince a nova bomb not to explode.

The player making the extended roll (or each party in an extended contest) makes an identical number of die rolls against the appropriate ability, tallying the number of successes scored.

As GM, you can define the sequence as either open-ended (first player to score five successes wins the footrace or gets the proper form approved) or fixed (if the PC doesn't get three successes in six rolls, the bomb gets bored and explodes).

You decide the amount of time covered by each roll in the contest. In a footrace, each roll represents a few seconds. In a conversation, one roll might cover half an hour. As for bureaucracy—well, let your imagination roam.

## Arbitrary Justice rolls

Sometimes the storyline hurtles boldly into quandaries where even skill rolls, mutant power rolls and Access rolls may not help. Suppose a Troubleshooter finds an Old Reckoning bicycle and tries to ride it. If you haven't already decided what happens, the skills don't give much guidance. Is bike riding a Hardware skill? Violence? If you like either of those, the answer is 'yes'. If you don't?

Sigh. Why do players get into such unauthorized mischief?

When nothing else suggests itself, resort to an Arbitrary Justice (AJ) roll. To invoke Arbitrary Justice, mentally describe the situation as a yes-no question. ('Does this Troubleshooter know how to ride a bike?') Then roll 1d20.

☉ **If you roll 10 or less, the answer is YES.** Alternately, the character achieves success, or something happens that benefits the players.

☉ **If you roll 11 or more, the answer is NO,** the action fails, or something bad happens.

As always, the more extreme the number rolled, the more extreme the result. In the example, if you roll a 1, the bike-riding Troubleshooter sails smoothly and gracefully along. If you roll a 20, he sails smoothly and gracefully into an elevator shaft.

You don't have to use 10 as the AJ roll's breakpoint. Pick a number that seems to fairly represent the chance of a favorable outcome. Go ahead! That's why it's Arbitrary.

## Common situations and their rolls

Here are some actions you'll see often in Troubleshooter missions, along with suggested ways you can use the rules to resolve them. Remember: **You can choose any way you want** to resolve a situation: rules, coin flips, wrestling matches or your own infallible judgment.

Finding the mission briefing room:  
Access attribute roll; roleplaying

Getting information from the briefing officer: Bootlicking, Bribery

Getting needed equipment from bored PLC clerk: Access roll, Bribery, Chutzpah, Management (persuasion), secret society connections

Getting needed equipment on C-Bay: C-Bay specialty roll (duh), Hacking, Con Games, Power roll (luck)

Getting needed equipment on the IR market (the illegal black market): Moxie specialty roll, extended Hagglng vs. Hagglng contest, Intimidation specialty roll, Power attribute roll

Shuffling off experimental R&D equipment onto a fellow PC: roleplaying

Manage credits: Financial Systems, Hacking, Cash Hacking, Bribery

Attacking with a laser: Energy Weapons specialty roll

Other attacks: Violence or a Violence specialty

Planting an explosive charge: Demolitions; Hardware

Planting a charge on an unsuspecting teammate: Sleight of Hand

Running away before teammate explodes: Agility

Cleaning up the mess, leaving no traces: Hygiene

Noticing an ME card dropped by a high-clearance citizen: Stealth

Hiding Card at a security checkpoint: Concealment

Transferring its credits to your account: Financial Systems

If caught, convincing IntSec a rival planted it on you: Chutzpah

Fleeing the IntSec officer: Violence, Agility

Noticing a hidden laser cannon: Stealth, High Alert

Getting past it: Sneaking, Disguise, Security Systems, Power

Finding an alternate route: Data Search or Habitat Engineering



# 22. PERVERSITY / 23. TENSION

## 22. General Perversity Modifiers

As described in the player section, players can (with your permission) spend their Perversity points to influence a die roll. They can apply these General Perversity Modifiers to any roll, yours or a player's—if you allow it.

Each Perversity point a player expends on Perversity changes the target success number by 1, either up or down as the player wishes. There are no limits. It is perfectly permissible to raise the success number above 20 or lower it below 1.

After all Perversity points are applied, you then improvise the in-game events that led to the modifier.

Then the die is rolled.

### ■ Perversity details

Let players spend points on General Perversity Modifiers when it suits your psychological purpose. What effect do you want?

- ④ **Frenzied action** (no Perversity): If you want to keep the game moving quickly, don't allow Perversity spending. It slows things down.
- ④ **Brisk development** (only acting player): To throttle back the pace just a bit, let each player spend points only on his own roll, not other players', and give the player just one spending opportunity per action.
- ④ **Favoritism** (only acting player): The same as 'Brisk development', except you smile at the acting player. This shows other players the need to get on your good side, assuming they were too dense to see this.

④ **Suspense** (free-for-all spending): When you want to build mistrust and antagonism among players (Go GM!), let all players expend points freely on modifying each other's rolls. Limiting each player to one opportunity per roll can increase suspense. In this case, give the acting player the last chance to spend points, after all other players have taken or rejected the opportunity.

④ **The big roll** (unlimited auction spending): If it's the last scene, where success for one group of players and dismal ignominy for the rest all boils down to *one* roll—hats off to you, GM. You've done everything right. In this situation, let everyone spend points endlessly, auction style, going-going-gone. Drain 'em dry if you can. Make the moment memorable.

### ■ Awarding Perversity

You award Perversity points to the player, not the character. If a PC dies for good, that player keeps all unspent Perversity points and can use them with his next character.

Award Perversity point rewards in quantities called 'Perversity point rations'. A ration of points depends on the needs of your current scene. When you want to maintain tight control over the direction of play (say when you're trying to convey an important element of the storyline), award points one at a time, so players feel constrained in their ability to affect things. When you want them to go wild, as for instance in firefights, award rations of 5 or even 10 Perversity points at a time.

Award a ration of Perversity points promptly and liberally to any player who entertains you. Typical behaviors worthy of reward include cleverly betraying fellow PCs, cleverly avoiding certain death, and making your life easier.

Be sure to award these Perversity points on the spot, in the moment of the entertaining behavior. Immediate positive reinforcement is key to player conditioning.

Don't worry that players will stockpile the points and unbalance the game. There are many incentives to spend them, and 'game balance' is seldom an issue in **PARANOIA**.

Generally the more Perversity points you award, the more fun the game will be. You could easily award three to five rations per player in each scene, if they're being funny. Award rations relatively evenly, if possible. If one or two players are left out, they'll start whining and holding up the mission.

You can take away Perversity points a player has justly earned, but this can create resentment. Instead, put the player's character in the line of fire of the other PCs. Remember, you don't have to punish a player when other players are so eager to do it for you.

### Gloating

A Troubleshooter who takes extra care to finish off a victim in classy fashion deserves ample reward. Give the player an extra ration of Perversity points for each round he spends gloating over a conscious victim in advance of the actual termination.

Encourage gloating. It makes everyone's life harder, except yours. However, limit any given speech of vengeance and bitter recrimination to two or three rounds, or it starts to sound like an awards ceremony acceptance speech.

# 23. Scenes and Tension Levels

As explained in the RED section, the scene is the basic unit of play. Begin a new scene when one or more Troubleshooters arrives at a new location important to the mission's main storyline. Unscripted side ventures and individual meetings with secret society informants don't count as scenes.

Use this distinction as one more tool to keep players on track. When you start a new scene, award players a new ration of Perversity points. (You set the ration based on the needs of the current scene, as described in the previous chapter under 'Awarding Perversity'). Ideally, the incentive to get to the next scene and gain new points helps keep everyone focused.

Scenes have an attribute hidden from players (and demonstrating knowledge of it below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET is treason): *Tension levels*.

### ■ Tension levels

Each scene has a Tension level from 0 (low) to 20 (high), usually 3–7 or thereabouts. The Tension level suggests how closely The Computer, its agents or other parties are observing the characters' actions. Ideally The Computer wants to observe all areas all the time, but resources don't permit this. No one discusses this publicly, but every citizen has a fairly good idea how likely he is to be observed in any given spot.

A scene's location determines its Tension level. The chart shows typical locations for each Tension level. If you don't want to consult the chart every time you change location, assume a default Complex-wide Tension level of 6.

Track the current Tension level secretly by putting a d20 where you can see it but the

players can't. Change the uppermost number to reflect the current level.

When a player tries something treasonous involving a die roll, the Tension level is the range of the roll that implies whether anyone witnessed the treasonous action. So if a PC has a 15 or less to shoot his team leader, and the Tension level is 5, any roll of 15 or less hits the commander—but if that roll was 5 or less, *somebody* somewhere may have seen the shot.

Maybe it was another PC, maybe The Computer, or a secret society, or maybe some faceless bureaucrat watching a security camera and already writing his blackmail note. You don't need to get specific nor even rush to tell the player. Still, that act, having been detected, is now admissible as evidence against the PC (see the section 'Accusations of treason'). If no



## GM SECTION CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

other player brings it up during debriefing, The Computer may see fit to do so.

Never let the chart interfere with your own convictions. Tension levels are a convenience for you; at times, you may know very well The Computer—or someone else—is watching. Use the chart only when you prefer not to decide whether a particular action is monitored.

### Alternate Tension methods

Some GMs dislike the way these rules make spectacularly successful actions *more* likely to be observed. If you agree, there are other ways to work Tension, but they do slow things down a little:

- ④ Compare the roll's *margin* (success or failure) to the Tension level. If the margin is the Tension or less, someone observed the act.
- ④ Make a separate 1d20 Tension roll for each treasonous action, independent of whether the action succeeds.

Whatever works for you. Remember: You are always right.

### Tension levels by location

These are just suggestions. You can adjust the Tension level freely.

Entries such as 'RED areas' means all RED areas not otherwise listed in specific entries. When an area could have more than one Tension level, use the highest.

- 0 Sewers; reactor cores; Outdoors; conferences with the GM
- 1 IntSec interrogation chambers
- 2 INFRARED areas
- 3 Supply closets; garages; bot stations; HPD&MC indoctrination centers
- 4 RED areas
- 5 Briefing rooms; food vats; sickbays; clone tanks; PLC warehouses
- 6 ORANGE areas
- 7 Mess halls; waiting rooms; grooming stations; elevators and stairwells
- 8 YELLOW areas
- 9 R&D labs; any place with Junior Citizens (kids)
- 10 GREEN areas
- 11 Troubleshooter HQ; Armed Forces bases; armories
- 12 BLUE areas
- 13 Termination centers; re-education centers; IntSec stations
- 14 INDIGO areas
- 15 Power and Tech Services control rooms; IntSec headquarters
- 16 VIOLET areas
- 17 Confession booths; CPU monitoring loci
- 18 ULTRAVIOLET areas
- 19 Central Compnodes
- 20 Bathrooms

## 24. Combat

Combat systems in other (non-fun) RPGs sometimes describe weapons, armor and equipment in Talmudic detail. They permit fine grades of damage effects with results that seem convincingly realistic. Characters have different abilities to absorb damage. Everyone in combat has a uniform sense of available options and the likely outcome of particular kinds of actions.

None of that suits your purpose in **PARANOIA**. Forget it.

Troubleshooters in battle ideally stumble through various forms of surprise, ignorance and fear. A typical sequence:

- ④ **Shock:** 'We're under attack! Who are they? Where are they?'
- ④ **Panic:** 'Oh no. Not them. Those vatslimes got the drop on us! *Me?* I never trusted them! It's all *your* fault!'
- ④ **Stunned incomprehension:** 'How are they doing that? Why doesn't this thing work? Hey, where's our Equipment Guy?'
- ④ **Terrified comprehension:** 'We're stuck! Bottled up! Oh, hel-*lo*, Friend Computer! Nonono, everything's going just, uh, fine.'
- ④ **Desperate plays:** 'I turn on the rocket boots.'

- ④ (*if that doesn't work*) **Existential resignation:** 'My next clone is gonna get you back, you stinking *Commie*.'

### Basic combat concepts

**Attack:** An attacking character rolls 1d20 against his Violence skill. An attack from an entity without Violence skill (say, a downed power line) rolls against the scene's **Tension level**, or another number if you prefer: 11 maybe, or the current time, or the last digit of the target player's credit card number.

**Conditions and steps:** Conditions describe a character's current health status (Okay, Snafued, Wounded, Maimed, Down, Killed or Vaporized) or a bot's or object's physical integrity (usually Okay, Light, Medium, Major, Busted, Destroyed or Vaporized).

Moving from one condition to the next adjacent condition is called a *damage step*. You can track a target's condition by marking a line of six blanks beside its name. Each blank is a damage step; there is no box for Okay, because a character with no marked blanks is automatically Okay. Mark off blanks as the target takes damage steps.

**Damage:** The types are *Bio*, *Energy* and *Impact*. Especially cool damage can also be *armor-piercing* (AP), *spray* or *area effect*.

**Damage, Boost:** Each attack has a Boost number. If the attack roll's margin equals the weapon's Boost number or higher, the weapon may deal additional damage. The more powerful the attack, the smaller its Boost

number. The best possible Boost is 1. A lousy weapon like a thrown rock might have Boost 5 or 6.

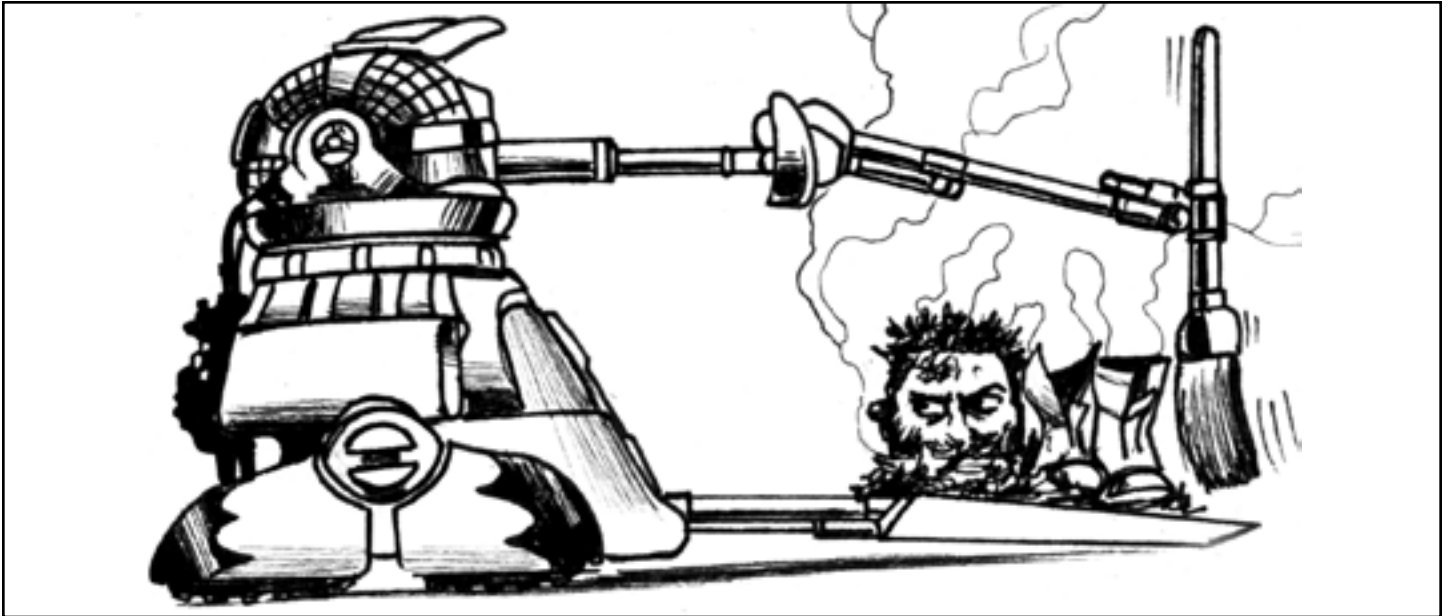
**Damage minima and maxima:** Each attack specifies the minimum and maximum damage it deals to an unarmored target. For example, a dangerous electric shock might deal minimum damage of Snafued and maximum damage of Wounded.

If no damage maximum is specified, the maximum is Killed. Unless you think otherwise, of course.

**Defenses:** Targets may have armor or inbuilt defenses that reduce the number of damage steps an attack deals. The defense types are the same as the damage types: Bio, Energy and Impact. Defenses can be *hardened* to protect against armor-piercing attacks, or *ablative*, meaning their protection gradually declines and disappears. Defenses may cover only certain parts of the body or may be full-figure.

**Non-damage effects:** Some attacks entangle, hypnotize, mutate, transform or infect the target. These do no damage, unless you call debilitating contagious brain-spam viruses 'damage.' The attack type describes its effect.

**Rounds:** In **PARANOIA**'s Dramatic Tactical Action System, combat proceeds in *rounds*, defined as the amount of time it takes for each player and each NPC in the scene to do one interesting thing. In a round, you ask each player in turn what he wants to do, then decide what all NPCs are doing. Then everyone rolls,



and all effects of the rolls happen at the end of the round.

## The Dramatic Tactical Action System

*'It's not that they die, but that they die like sheep.'*  
—T. S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land'

**PARANOIA** is an atmospheric, action-packed, emotionally engaging roleplaying game.

[Choral response: Hurrah!]

Other (non-fun) RPGs have detailed, complex, elaborately sequenced combat systems.

[Choral response: Zzz...]

Complex combat is nice enough when you want that, but it gets in the way of **PARANOIA**'s tense, mysterious tone. Ergo, **PARANOIA** instead uses the brilliantly conceived and eminently superior Dramatic Tactical Action System—a simple combat system that relies on flexible rules, common sense, dramatic necessity, and the wise and unfettered will of you, the Gamemaster.

For free-spirited GMs this combat system provides speedy and characteristically paranoid action. It treats the 'rules' as guidelines, which you blithely override as dictated by common sense and dramatic necessity.

You see, in **PARANOIA**, it's not so much a question of *whether* a character gets killed in combat—it's assumed that happens, sooner or later—but rather, exactly *how* does he get it? Who needs a lot of detailed rules for that?

Still, it helps to convey some basic principles of staging combat:

### Control the pace

**PARANOIA** often works best at a fast pace. Players stay tense when they have no time to contemplate positions, tactics and options. Fast combat usually feels more convincing,

too. In a real combat situation you'd be lucky to get enough time to feel afraid, let alone time to study your next move.

When you want to represent this pace, set the scene with minimal detail, telling only what is needed to understand the action.

**GM:** You enter the room. There are two desks and one other door. Two traitors leap up from behind the desks and spray you with bullets. What do you do?

In these situations do not let them ruminate. If a player hesitates, his character hesitates. If a player says, 'Wait, I'm thinking', so is his character, while the enemy peppers him with slugs. Quick thinking is what counts in this style of combat.

On the other hand, players can stay tense in the downtime between firefights, too. Every submarine movie ever filmed has long silent scenes of crewmen waiting in the dark for depth charges to fall. In **PARANOIA** your players are those sub crewmen, and you are their depth charges. Slow, suspenseful play works best when the players really have *no* practical positions, tactics or options—and they know violence will erupt again, soon—and they have a long time to contemplate what they lack.

**GM:** Behind the debriefing room's laserproof glass window, the INDIGO officer points a surveillance camera straight at you, so you see your sweating faces on the large monitor. The officer tells you to stay put while he goes to arrange to have the body of your fellow Troublesooter picked up. He leaves. You're sitting right by the body. Anyone moving from his chair? No? Absolutely sure you aren't moving? The officer might be gone a long time, you know. Dumty-dum, dumty-dum...

### Reward flamboyance and wit

**PARANOIA** should have the feel of a suspense movie, not a wargame. **PARANOIA** combat shouldn't be realistic; it should be dramatic, like movie combat. Let exceptionally heroic, cowardly, bizarre or extravagant actions succeed—though probably not the way players expected them to; a regular perverse twist effectively deters player abuse.

### Kill the bastards!

Don't be afraid to let characters kill each other. The world of **PARANOIA** is unimaginably deadly for Troubleshooters, teeming with traitors, enemies, lunatics, defective devices, lethal environmental hazards, The Computer and, most of all, other Troubleshooters. If a character gets dead, let him be dead. There are no last-minute saves, no divine interventions in **PARANOIA**. Besides, his identical clone backup jumps right back in the lineup before you can say 'baked traitor'.

Let them die. Let them all die.

Don't worry. You'll get used to it—alarmingly quickly.

### Combat rounds

Resolve combat in a series of *rounds*. Each round lasts long enough for each player and each NPC to do one interesting thing—call it five seconds, more or less. 'Interesting' in this context doesn't mean cook a meal or read *Anna Karenina* or write a Slime Identification service firm business plan. It means attacking, ducking for cover, phoning in a distress report, or anything you could do in a few seconds that might conceivably change the course of the battle.

Each round has four steps. Here is the sequence of steps:



## Attacking

An attacking character uses Violence skill to hit his target (which is usually an opponent). Depending on the weapon he's using, the attacker may have an applicable Violence specialty rating—for instance, his Energy Weapons specialty if he's firing a laser, or

Unarmed Combat if he's kicking the target's kneecap. If he has no applicable specialty, he uses his basic Violence skill. For more detail see Chapter 37, 'Skills and specialties.'

In a single combat round each character may make only one attack. To make an attack, roll 1d20 and compare the number rolled to the attacker's success number—his Violence

skill or specialty rating, possibly modified by Perversity point spending. If the number rolled equals the success number or less, the attack hits the target. If the roll is higher than the success number, the attack misses. If the attack hits, the target may suffer damage as described in the 'Damage' chapter.

When you compare the die roll result to the success number, note the difference between them—that is, subtract the smaller number from the larger. This is the *margin*. The margin is important for determining damage and sometimes for figuring how badly an attack missed. Missed attacks can prompt some of the most entertaining moments in all **PARANOIA**.

Some weapons are *area attack* weapons that hit all targets in a defined *damage radius*. Others are *spray* weapons that can hit multiple targets in a single attack, like a spray of machine-gun bullets. When an area or spray weapon misses, you decide where the inaccurate shot falls on the basis of logic, dramatic appropriateness and Murphy's Law.

For example, if a character misses his intended target with a napalm round, and a fuel storage tank is nearby, it is almost inevitable the round will unerringly seek the fuel tank. That would be most entertaining, after all.

## The Dramatic Tactical Action System

### 1. You decide what your NPCs do

Consider the situation and figure out what each non-player character—each human or bot—wants to do in this round. Usually they want to stay alive and often keep the Troubleshooters from staying alive. They may have strategic and tactical goals, and they may want to try something madly entertaining or dramatic.

You might or might not tell the players what the NPCs will do. Some opponents are so stupid and obvious they telegraph their actions. Some are shrewd, enigmatic and full of surprises. Keep the NPC actions mysterious when that would build tension.

**Note:** It is tasteless—though often dramatically correct, and thoroughly **PARANOIA**—to change your NPCs' tactics after you've heard what the players will do. If you commit such an immoral and unsportsmanlike act, make sure you don't get caught. You have to seem impartial.

### 2. Players decide what their PCs do

Go around the table—your players are all seated around a table, right?—and ask each player in turn what his Troubleshooter intends to do in this round. A player can't change his mind after he declares his intention unless you, the generous GM, judge the change sufficiently entertaining. 'Oh, Moe-O-DJO is going to detonate his experimental Solar Grenade? Shucks, forget drawing my laser. I'm gonna strip off my jumpsuit so I'll get a better tan.'

If a PC suffered a Snafu combat result in the previous round, that PC can't take any aggressive action this round. You'll learn more about that in the 'Damage' chapter.

Notice that players are only announcing their intention in this step. No one is actually resolving anything yet. That's the next step.

### 3. Roll everyone's dice

Both PCs and NPCs have decided what they are doing this round. In Step 3, it all

happens at once. Time to roll 1d20 for each action. Maybe you make all the rolls yourself, in secret; maybe instead you let the players roll the die themselves for their own actions. It depends on the effect you want to create: omnipotence or generosity. You are the referee, arbiter of common sense and dramatic justice, and wise judge of whether and when players may spend Perversity points to affect their own or any other roll.

Points are spent (or not, as you decree), dice are bounced, rolls are matched with success numbers and everyone finds out which attacks succeed. All hand-to-hand and ranged attacks, and all malicious mischief such as mutant powers, collapsed ceilings and so on, take effect *simultaneously*. That is, if Joe-R and Bob-O announced in Step 2 they would attack each other, they both make their attacks now; and if Joe-R's attack kills Bob-O, that doesn't prevent Bob-O's attack from happening. Both happen at once, and the effects happen in the next step.

### 4. Apply all the effects

Combat effects are explained in the 'Damage' chapter. Killed characters are killed now. Wounded and maimed characters are wounded and maimed now. Characters who receive a Snafu result will be snafued in the next round and can't take aggressive action in that round.

### 5. Everyone moves

Anyone still on his feet (or its wheels) may move.

Huh? Movement rules? There aren't any. Characters move as far as you decide they should. If you can't decide whether a character could reach Point B in Time C, make a Violence roll for the character. Success means he made it. Races are Violence contests.

In **PARANOIA** movement doesn't usually become an issue. You can run, but you can't hide.

## Interpreting Perversity

'Modifier: Any number that can be ignored.'  
—John M. Ford

Bunches of rules in other (non-fun) games' combat systems boil down to die-roll modifiers—numbers added to or subtracted from the success number to account for particular circumstances. Range! Cover! Posture! Grooming! Huge lists of modifiers to cherish, memorize and apply!

Gamemaster, in **PARANOIA** you are free. You have no lists of modifiers to memorize. If and as you wish, simply ask your players to spend Perversity points to provide you with General Perversity Modifiers. They make them on the spot! One type of modifier fits all! When you're in the mood, use Perversity as a guide to describe combat scenes at your preferred level of detail. Then roll the die, figure the effects and move on.

## Perversity Modifiers Chart

This chart lists some example circumstances you can describe to retrofit a combat situation to a given set of Perversity Modifiers. These samples should inspire your own creativity. Invent new modifiers for each battle, tailoring them to the peculiarities of the setting. Get players to suggest ideas; you'll be pleasantly surprised at their evil genius.

**Taking inspiration from the chart:** The chart assigns each circumstance to a certain numerical range, such as +1 or -5. This is the

## Sample Perversity Modifiers (combat)

Remember, these are just examples to spur your own creativity. Invent your own modifiers on the fly, using these as guidelines. If you're feeling brave, you can even allow the player(s) to describe the circumstances accounting for each modifier.

Modifier	Attacker	His teammates	The target	The environment
<b>+1</b>	Attacker holds breath and sticks tongue in cheek; strikes intimidating pose.	Teammates fall pleasantly quiet due to suspicious scrutiny of each other.	Target coughs; gets whiff of noxious smell from nearby food vat, gags; urgently scratches itchy skin rash.	Ceiling spotlight suddenly shines on target.
<b>+5</b>	Attacker surfs dramatically forward on flat piece of rubble while firing; shoots overhanging light fixture, which falls on target.	Teammate whispers, "Let's see how bad he screws this one up", boosting attacker's resolve.	Target forced to exit cover (scrubot trundles away, confession booth emits tear gas, etc.); notified via PDC he has won a contest, target jumps for joy, right into path of attack.	Rogue autocar careens through line of fire; high-clearance citizen in athletic uniform jogs by, forcing everyone to stop and whistle casually, shine shoes and discuss hygiene.
<b>+10</b>	Exhilarated with sudden surge of adrenaline, attacker emits blood-curdling yell that paralyzes teammates and enemy.	Someone's belt pouch breaks loose, buckle flies up, hits attacker's arm, knocks it into proper alignment for perfect shot.	Something on target's body catches fire; mistakes <i>Traitor Currently Wanted</i> image on corridor vidscreen for his own face, freezes in panic.	Wall pipe or nearby vending machine is hit by attack and explodes, showering target with blue goo.
<b>-1</b>	Attacker sneezes; slips on some Cold Fun or a chapstick tube; his PDC rings (wrong number); weapon's trigger mechanism needs lubricant.	Teammates speak words of encouragement, making attacker suspicious.	Unexpected Hot Fun belch pulls target's head out of line of fire; target turns, kneels or changes direction.	Light fixture blinks distractingly; air conditioner switches on loudly; latest Loyalty Song blares over loudspeaker nearby.
<b>-5</b>	Disconcerting attack of <i>deja vu</i> ; attacker suddenly recalls a forgotten errand or appointment and hits own forehead in disgust, spoiling aim; suddenly seized by weird sense of being watched, whips around, spoiling aim; passing scrubot left soapy patch on floor, attacker slips and falls.	Teammates fool attacker into believing an enemy is behind him, so he whirls; a teammate or passerby yells " <i>Shoot him in the head</i> ," alerting target to dive for cover; teammate conspicuously drops something with a loud clatter.	Target finds cover behind a scrubot, in a confession booth, etc.; target convinces random passerby he (the passerby) is the new Hero of Our Complex, target shakes passerby's hand, pulling him into line of fire.	Shift change! Teeming masses of INFRARED workers cross between attacker and target. Light gets in attacker's eyes; air conditioner blows food wrapper in attacker's face; public-address announcement causes everyone to listen nervously. Ceiling tile buckles, falling and striking weapon at moment of firing.
<b>-10</b>	Fire sprinklers can be such temperamental things; if it has a bot brain, attacker's weapon takes this moment to state a long-standing complaint.	Someone's weapon rattles unnervingly; a teammate pops open a can of Tingle With Lemon, spraying attacker in the eyes.	Target maneuvers crowd of passersby into firing path; random shot strikes a wall-mounted control panel, permanently closing hallway blast doors; NPC target manifests previously unrecognized mutant power.	R&D laboratory one floor up decides to explode; scrubot rolls by, randomly washes attacker; The Computer suddenly calls for a status report.

suggested amount of the die-roll modifier you can explain using that circumstance.

Of course, you can always assign any numerical modifier to any circumstance. You may have to calm a surly player who denies that his Troubleshooter's little cough could possibly subtract 15 from his success roll, but calming players is the work of a moment. Still, why borrow stress? By modeling your own modifiers on the listed examples, you maintain the appearance of impartiality.

*Example:* Suppose the players' collective Perversity spending leaves one player with a -4 modifier to his attack roll. Looking to the chart for inspiration, you like the entries 'Target gets whiff of noxious smell from nearby food vat, gags' (in the +1 category, meaning it can account for a +1 modifier to the attacker's roll) and 'Passing scrubot left soapy patch on floor,

attacker slipped and fell' (in the -5 category). These two, together, equal -4. By choosing both the +1 and the -5 circumstances, you get a credible explanation for the player's -4 modifier.

You tell the player, 'A scrubot rolls at top speed down the corridor toward a nearby food vat room, where a recent spill requires urgent hygienic attention. The bot sloshes some soapy water under your feet, and you go down as you fire. Fortunately, your target was distracted by a plume of bad-smelling vapor from the vat spill.'

So now there's a scrubot on the scene. In later combat rounds the combatants might fire on it, use it for cover or try to recruit it. You can use the scrubot, and any Perversity development, to rationalize yet more Perversity Modifiers of your own invention.







## Figuring combat effects

An attack has the exact effect you want it to have. Pick the effect you think most satisfying or entertaining or even—if you care—believable.

If you don't care to pick an effect, decide combat effects using the die roll's margin. Targets, damage, backfires—figure it all using the amazing **Universal Hostility Formula!**

## Universal Hostility Formula (combat)

**1. ATTACK!**  
ROLL VS.  
VIOLENCE,  
TENSION LVL,  
OR 11

### 1. Attack!

An attacking character rolls against his Violence skill. An attack from an entity without the Violence skill (say, a downed power line) rolls against the scene's Tension level, or the number 11 if you prefer. That's a nice number, 11.

When more than one character is attacking, figure everyone's attack result separately, then apply all effects simultaneously.

If the attacker surprises the target, you may want to give the attacker one free attack before the target gets to respond.

**2. HIT OR MISS?**  
DIFFERENT TARGET?  
BACKFIRE?

### 2. Hit or miss?

If the attacker chose a specific target and hit successfully, that target may take damage.

If the attack missed, did it hit a different target instead? Decide this based on circumstances (a punch or stab probably won't fly wild, but a grenade will) and entertainment value (a cone rifle shell is your ticket to fun!). Maybe a projectile flies down a hallway and hits an entirely uninvolved target, who may take damage and in any case becomes unhappy. If you want a new target but nothing suggests itself, target the character with the lowest Power. Serves him right.

**Backfires:** If the attack missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the attack may backfire. A punch or kick that backfires wounds the attacker's hand or foot. A club may break and a knife may bend or snap. Most high-tech weapon descriptions include suggested malfunctions, which often involve screeching alarms and very attractive explosions. Some weapons malfunction in circumstances independent of the margin, so check the description.

**If a backfire doesn't suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.**

**3. MULTIPLE TARGETS?**

### 3. Multiple targets?

Can the attack plausibly hit more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the attack description or the attack roll's margin. See the Area effect and Spray descriptions in the 'Special attacks' subsection of 'Weapons'.

**4. DEFAULT DAMAGE**

### 4. Determine the default damage

**The attack deals the damage you want it to deal.** If you know what damage it should deal, skip the rest of these steps. If you'd like guidance, attack descriptions suggest their default damage in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format, defined on the Weapon Chart.

**5. DEFENSE**

### 5. Apply target's defense

Does the target have armor or other defenses? Does the defense apply against the attack type? If so, reduce the attack's default damage by a number of steps equal to the target's defense value.

**6. BOOST**

### 6. Apply Boost, if any

Based on the attack roll's margin of success, increase the attack's damage according to its Boost increment, as explained on the facing page. There's a handy Boost chart in the Charts & Tables section at the end of this book.

**7. ACTUAL DAMAGE**

### 7. Determine the actual damage

If the attack's damage is reduced to nothing, the attack still hits the target, but it has no effect—maybe some armor gets scorched or the target gets really annoyed, but the attack doesn't affect the combat situation. See Chapter 26, 'Armor'.

Damage effects are described in Chapter 27, 'Damage and injury.'

A damaged target often becomes extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval.

## 25. Weapons

**Weapons and other attacks deal exactly the damage you want.** For guidance, most weapon descriptions suggest a default damage rating, listed in the format **Min-Boost-Max**.

- ④ **Minimum (Min):** This weapon ordinarily deals at least this much damage to an unarmored target.
- ⑤ **Boost:** If the roll's margin of success equals this number or higher, the weapon deals additional damage. Divide the roll's margin by this Boost increment (round fractions down), and deal that number of bonus damage steps.

Powerful weapons have low Boost numbers; weaker weapons have larger increments. **The higher the Boost number, the weaker the weapon.**

Suppose an attack roll's margin of success is 6. If the attack weapon is a laser (W3K), divide the margin of 6 by the laser's Boost 3, meaning this laser shot inflicts (6/3=) 2 bonus damage steps. If the weapon is instead the much more formidable plasma generator (V1V), the margin of 6 divided by Boost 1 (the best possible Boost increment) means the plasma generator deals 6 bonus damage steps. A thrown rock might have Boost 5, so an attack margin of 6 would do only one bonus step.

- ⑥ **Maximum (Max):** This weapon won't damage a target beyond this condition, unless you say otherwise.

### ■ Weapon damage example

Troubleshooter Bill-R-DPR-1 (Energy Weapons 14) fires a laser (damage W3K) at undamaged and unarmored INFRARED Tar-GET-1.

Bill-R rolls 13 to hit, 1 under his skill. The margin of 1 divided by the laser's Boost 3 is 0.33, which rounds down to nothing. Bill-R's laser attack deals no bonus damage. The laser deals its minimum damage (Wounded) to Tar-GET, who runs around screaming and flailing in picturesque manner.

Irritated by the noise, Bill-R fires again, rolling 2. The margin of 12 divided by Boost 3 is 4, meaning this attack would ordinarily deal four bonus damage steps. *But!* This would boost the laser's damage four steps from its minimum (Wounded) up to Vaporized. However, the laser's maximum damage is Killed, so the damage is only increased to this level. Tar-GET dies and goes on the Tech Services waiting list for clone revivification (current wait at Clearance INFRARED: 14+ years).

### ■ Damage types

Weapons and attacks deal damage of one of these types: **Bio**, **Energy** and **Impact**. The weapon table indicates each weapon's type.

**Bio (B):** Poisons, venoms, viruses, flesh-eating bacteria, food vat solvents, etc. Bio includes chemical attacks such as acids and nerve gas.

**Energy (E):** Lasers, blasters, electricity, fire, force swords, neurowhips, radiation, sonics, stun guns, cosmic rays, a superhero's power ring, etc. Energy includes all explosives from grenades to tacnukes.

**Impact (I):** Hand, thrown and projectile weapons—slugthrower bullets, cone rifle

shells, ice guns, brass knuckles, punches and kicks, most primitive weapons, truncheons, sticks and stones, etc.

### ■ Special attacks

Ignore all of this if you get bored.

**Area effect:** Weapons such as napalm, flamethrowers, gauss guns, plasma generators, tanglers, affect all targets in a radius listed in the weapon's description. If the description omits the radius, assume the area of effect is a large room. Other attacks, like tangler guns, are sticky and goeey and slurp all over everyone within arm's length of the target. Some mutant powers can pick out targets based on hair color or alphabetical order.

In situations where you can't automatically decide who gets hit, choose a number of targets up to the attack roll's margin.

For PC targets, select the most boring or annoying players. If they're all appropriately witty and servile, select characters in Power order, lowest to highest.

For NPC targets, select targets by Arbitrary Justice rolls, by security clearance (lowest to highest) or by importance to the storyline (least to most). Some GMs assign NPCs an *expendability rating*, a number indicating their importance to the storyline. A faceless INFRARED or bot nobody cares about is Expendability 1. Significant sources of information or stuff are Expendability 5 to 15. The must-see, only-one-with-the-vital-clue secret society leader who is the current mission objective is Expendability 40 or more. If you adopt this system, an area attack kills all NPCs in the radius with Expendability below the roll's margin.

**Armor-piercing (AP):** Against an AP attack, armor works only half as well as normal. Halve the armor's rating (rounding down) before applying it to reduce damage steps.

**Lasers:** Troubleshooters are issued laser pistols as standard equipment. The main body of a laser pistol can be mounted with a barrel of any color. Each laser barrel can shoot a beam of only one color of the security clearance spectrum. Reflec armor is designed to reflect all laser fire of its wearer's color and below (see Chapter 26, 'Armor').

Each barrel may be fired with reasonable safety up to six times. If fired more than six times, each successive shot cumulatively increases the chance of malfunction (see 'Weapon malfunction'). Traditionally the barrel is manufactured with six rings or other markings in the barrel's color. Each time the weapon is fired, one ring changes color. A glance at the weapon reveals how many shots remain and the barrel's color. After the sixth shot, the barrel may show stress effects as described under 'Weapon malfunctions'.



An awesome weapon of the Old Reckoning—a Hoover 216.



'Excuse me, citizen, is a tankbot on our requisition form?'

Replacing a barrel takes one combat round.

**Spray weapons:** Some weapons, such as semi-automatic slugthrowers, can 'spray fire'. The ability to spray fire is noted in the weapon's description.

A spray weapon can attack multiple targets that are grouped reasonably close together. How close? Say, about as close together as in a movie where the hero rakes a room with machine-gun fire and the villain's henchmen all dive for cover. That close.

When a character spray fires a weapon, ask how many targets he wants to hit. For guidance as to how many he actually damages, divide the attack roll's margin by the number of targets (round down) and apply damage to each target based on its portion of the margin.

## ■ Ammunition and reloading

The cost to reload a weapon is 10% of the weapon's base cost, unless otherwise specified. The weapon chart's listed cost for ammunition is per magazine, unless 'Shots' is 1; for these single-shot weapons, cost is per shot.

Hunching down behind cover to reload can be a dramatic moment in any firefight. Therefore you may find it useful to limit the supply of ammunition in ranged weapons, and require characters to periodically to reload or recharge them. If this doesn't sound interesting, ignore these rules and just let everyone fire freely.

Reloading a weapon or replacing a laser barrel takes one round. A weapon's description usually suggests the number of attacks a character can make with it before having to reload. Can you trust your players to be diligent and conscientious about marking off their ammo?

If you just shuddered with revulsion, use a system of bribery instead. Different methods of bribery produce different dramatic effects. The best bribery method depends on your chosen play style.

⊙ **Straight:** When combat begins, award players extra Perversity points equal to the number of rounds their weapons can fire before reloading. Make each player spend one of these Perversity points to fire a shot. When they run out of these points, it's time to reload. When they take a round to reload, replenish their points to 6. It makes them think twice about running around zapping everything that moves, and it shows players you take reloading seriously.

⊙ **Classic:** Each time a player announces he's spending a round reloading, award him a Perversity point or two. This encourages players to be honest, or even more than honest.

⊙ **Zap:** If you happen to notice a player has been firing and firing without bothering to reload, roll some dice, consult some charts, and have his weapon explode. This should work wonders for everyone else's reloading schedule.

## ■ Weapon malfunctions

A weapon malfunctions when you say it does. For guidance, Alpha Complex weapons are categorized as *standard*, *experimental* or *really experimental*.

**Standard** weapons include lasers, slugthrowers and grenades, as well as melee

and primitive weapons. A standard weapon malfunctions if a player fires it and the attack roll is 20. If this was still good enough to hit the target, deal damage normally, then assess the malfunction.

**Experimental** weapons include exotic or touchy things like cone rifles, semi-automatic slugthrowers, sonics, blasters, ice guns, flamethrowers, stun guns, plasma generators—basically all the really cool stuff. Experimental weapons malfunction if the attack roll is 19 or 20.

Anything issued to the Troubleshooters by an R&D service firm counts as *really experimental*. These devices malfunction whenever you want them to, probably dramatically, probably often.

The weapon description usually suggests a characteristic and entertaining malfunction.

**Lasers:** Laser pistol barrels are good for six shots. For each shot after the sixth, the malfunction number is lowered by 1. On the seventh shot, a roll of 19 or 20 indicates malfunction. On the eighth shot, the roll is 18–20, and so on.

Laser barrels pushed beyond the regulation six shots are called overstressed. An overstressed barrel makes a pronounced whining noise when fired, and eventually starts to glow with unsettling brightness. Advanced pistol bodies may have bot brains that scream, 'For the love of The Computer, have you no mercy? Get your clammy finger off my trigger!'

All the combat charts are collected at the back of this book, along with a handy Boost chart to speed up combat.

# 25. WEAPONS

O<sub>KAY</sub> — S<sub>NAFU</sub> — W<sub>OUNDED</sub> — M<sub>AIMED</sub> — D<sub>OWN</sub> — K<sub>ILLED</sub> — V<sub>APORIZED</sub>

## Weapon chart

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost-Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Blaster	Energy	Energy	M3K	1	50	500	O	
Brass knuckles	Hand	Impact	S5W	—	—	10	R	
Cone rifle**	Projectile	—	—	1	200	1,000	B	
Cone rifle shells**								
solid slug		Impact	W3K	1	200	100	B	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	1	200	150	B	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	1	160	120	B	
HE		Impact	W2K	1	200	200	I	area 40m
HEAT		Impact	W2K	1	200	400	I	AP, area 40m
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	200	300	B	area 8m, spray
flare		—	—	1	200	100	B	bright light
ECM		Energy	J2J	1	200	400	I	only vs. bots
gas		Bio	varies	1	200	250	B	area 30m; see note 1
tacnuke**		Energy	V1V	1	200	150,000	V	area 160m; see note 2
Cone rifle triggers**		—	—	1	—	100	B	each shell requires one trigger
Energy pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	5	60	200	Y	
Flamethrower	Field	Energy	S3K	10	20	500	Y	area 20m, spray
Force sword	Hand	Energy	S3K	—	—	400	B	
Gauss gun	Field	Energy	W3K	100	20	500	I	20m cone; only vs. bots
Grenade	Thrown	Impact	W3K	1	20	50	R	area 5m
Hand flamer	Field	Energy	S3K	3	40	1,000	V	easily concealed
Ice gun	Projectile	Impact	S3K	25	50	500	G	spray
Knife	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	20	R	thrown range 20m
Laser pistol (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	50	25	*	needs body
Laser pistol (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	75	R	needs barrel
Laser rifle (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	100	50	*	needs body
Laser rifle (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	250	O	needs barrel
Needle gun	Projectile	Impact	S3W	10	60	750	B	AP
Neurowhip	Hand	Energy	S5M	—	—	300	G	
Plasma generator**	Field	Energy	V1V	10	—	2,000	V	area 20m (60-degree cone)
Rock or debris	Thrown	Impact	O5W	1	20	—	any	
Rock or debris, big	Thrown	Impact	O4W	1	10	—	any	
Slugthrower	Projectile	—	—	—	—	450	Y	
solid slug		Impact	W3K	6	50	50	Y	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	3	50	75	G	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	6	40	60	Y	
HE		Impact	W2K	6	40	75	Y	
HEAT		Impact	W2K	6	40	100	G	AP
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	40	75	Y	area 3m
flare		—	—	1	40	40	Y	bright light
ECM		Energy	H2J	1	40	200	I	only vs. bots
gas		—	varies	1	40	75	Y	area 5m; see note 1
Slugthrower, semi-automatic	Projectile	—	—	—	—	750	G	spray (see note 3)
Sonic pistol	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	60	150	O	see note 4
Sonic rifle	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	100	300	O	see note 4 again
Stun gun	Field	—	Stun	6	40	250	O	see note 5
Sword	Hand	Impact	W5K	—	—	20	any	
Tangler	Field	—	—	3	50	250	G	see note 6
Truncheon	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	10	R	
Unarmed combat	Unarmed	Impact	O5K	—	—	—	any	

Used weapon 10-25% off market value; reliability varies (heh,heh!)

Reloads/recharges 10% of the base weapon cost, unless otherwise specified. Lasers are recharged by buying a new barrel.

Note 1: Gas effects are listed in Chapter 41, 'Equipment', under 'Cone rifle and slugthrower.'

Note 2: Roll damage from a tactical nuclear weapon only in extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise, assume mass vaporization.

Note 3: Semi-automatic slugthrowers fire slugthrower ammo at a higher rate. Solid, solid AP, dum-dum, HE and HEAT ammo can be sprayed. The other ammo types are one-shot and hence can't be sprayed (duh).

No

Note 5: This weapon stuns the target. A stunned target can't perceive or do anything in the next round.

Note 6: This weap

\*\* Unauthorized possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (\*\*) is treason. Possessing an unauthorized tacnuke is *big-time serious* treason.



## 26. Armor

Armor protects the wearer against one or more type(s) of damage. Armor has a number rating—the higher the number, the better the armor's protection against the specified damage type. The type is indicated by a letter code before the armor's rating (for example, B3 means the armor has rating 3 versus Bio attacks).

Some armor protects against more than one damage type. Such multiple-type armor has ratings separated by slashes (for example, E4/I3).

If the armor has no letter code, it protects against all damage.

**Damage:** Armor may reduce damage up to a number of steps equal to the armor rating. For instance, if an attack deals 3 steps of damage, armor rating 2 reduces the damage to 1 step. So an attack that would reduce an unarmored character to Down instead reduces a character with armor rating 2 merely to Wounded. If the armor doesn't protect against that type of attack, don't adjust the damage.

Against explosions or very powerful area attacks like plasma generators or tacnukes, it is often silly to apply armor. If a plasma generator ends up producing a light sunburn, your players will privately snicker at you, and this cannot be tolerated. Use judgement.

**If armor reduces the damage below 1 step, the attack does no damage.** It still hits, and may muss the target's hair or singe his overalls or anger him, but it does too little damage to affect the course of the fight.

**Coverage:** Most Troubleshooters wear reflec armor in the form of overalls. Technically this armor leaves the head and arms exposed. However, hit location is only important when

you decide it is. **PARANOIA** usually plays more smoothly when you don't penalize the players for this spotty coverage. Assume the armor provides protection whenever the wearer is hit, unless you have a dramatic or amusing reason to do otherwise.

**Full-figure** armor not only encases the body completely, it's airtight. Armor is only full-figure if noted in the description. Regular armor isn't airtight.

**Hardened and ablative armor:** Armor can be *hardened*. Against hardened armor, treat armor-piercing attacks as normal attacks.

**Ablative** armor wears away gradually or abruptly by taking damage. At the end of each round in which the armor reduces damage to the wearer, reduce the armor's rating by 1 unless otherwise noted. When the armor's rating reaches 0, it becomes useless. (The armor's description may list another way to reduce the rating.)

### Reflec

Troubleshooters usually wear overalls made of a special anti-laser armor called *reflec*. It feels like foil-covered denim. Lightweight, flexible, durable, colorful, mostly stainproof—really, reflec is wonderful stuff, aside from its dismally limited ability to protect the wearer.

Reflec is technically E1 armor, but for 'E' read 'L' (laser). Reflec armor protects against laser attacks only, not other energy attacks—not fire, not sonics, not anything else. Lasers. *Just* lasers.

Worse, reflec is issued in a color of the wearer's security clearance. The reflec protects only against laser bolts colored that clearance and lower. Against higher-clearance laser colors the reflec is useless.

(Yes, we know all about the electromagnetic spectrum and the laws of color addition. If you shoot a real laser of, say, a green wavelength of light at a target that reflects blue light, the target won't reflect the green laser. In the first edition of **PARANOIA** we had a whole complex set of rules for multichroma armor and stuff to try to make our lasers conform to the laws of nature. But then we decided, what the hell? This is how we *want* lasers and reflec armor to work, so this is how they actually *do* work in **PARANOIA**. So there.)

### IR market reflec upgrades

The unsettling thinness of reflec, and probably the memory of their previous bodies getting burned down like matchsticks, makes many Troubleshooters eager to improve their armor. There's a big aftermarket for armor upgrades, the illegal IR market.

The Computer has made armor upgrades illegal because they basically don't work. At least, there's no scientific reason why you could deflect laser blasts by smearing glittery ablative ointment over your body.

You, as Gamemaster, need not concern yourself with petty scientific accuracy. Entertainment is all. If a character installs a covert Vibrating Undersuit that jiggles his reflec around to make it more reflective, you may see many possibilities to have fun with this during a battle. Reward this impulse, then, by letting this transparently stupid gimcrack have some occasional protective effect.

Chapter 41, 'Equipment,' lists some of these devices.

### Fiat

The best kind of armor in **PARANOIA**, the kind every citizen hungers to get, is *Gamemaster fiat*. This invisible yet ultimate protection neutralizes every conceivable attack. Fiat is manufactured in many forms. Sometimes it's a double-hardened biphasic-graphite-whisker diamond-reinforced stasis field. At other times it induces an aura of incredible, infallible luck—anyone who attacks the protected target suddenly runs out of ammo, slips and falls, faints, dies of a heart attack, gets crushed by a 16-ton weight, etc.

No one knows how to get fiat armor. The only citizens who have it are those important to the story or setting. How, how did they obtain it? What could be their secret?

## Armor chart

	Type and protection	Cost (credits)	Clearance	Notes
ArmorAll**	4	2,500	B	hardened; full-figure
Asbestos clothing	E3	100	any	ablative
Battle armor**	6	100,000	I	hardened; full-figure
Combat suit**	5	10,000	B	hardened
Environment suit	—	1,000	G	see note 7; full-figure
Farraday suit	—	5,000	G	see note 8; full-figure
Kevlar	I3	800	O	
GM fiat	Infinite	—	any	only characters important to the storyline
Reflec, legal	E1	500	*	see note 9
illegal	E2	1,000	—	
incredibly illegal	E3	3,000	—	

Note 7: Armor protects against hazardous environments (gas, poison).

Note 8: Protects against radiation and strong magnetic fields.

Note 9: Reflec protects only against laser attacks (not other energy attacks, just lasers) of its color or lower. The reflec's color is its clearance. Illegal IR-market reflec may—*may*—offer greater protection.

## 27. Damage and injuries

You can describe a character's current health with one of these conditions: **Okay, Snafued, Wounded, Maimed, Down, Killed, Vaporized.** After each character's name, draw six short lines and label them with the six conditions below Okay: S-W-M-D-K-V. Mark off one blank for each step of damage the character takes—that is, mark the first blank when the character is snafued, the second for a wound, and so on.

The conditions aren't a progression of successive states. If a character is down, that doesn't necessarily mean he's also wounded or maimed. Instead, the conditions are ranked by the character's ability to influence the game. A downed character is only barely more able to affect events than is a killed character. Vaporized characters have hardly any chance to influence the situation, unless maybe a mist of their blood lands in someone's eyes.

### Damage conditions

**Okay** means okay.

**Snafued** means the target is unhurt but was distracted into making some kind of mistake. Maybe he messed up his aim and missed shooting his own teammate by a hair, or he tripped, or something fell on him. The target can't attack in the next round, because he's busy sorting himself out. He can run, hide, make a phone call or rationally debate various strategies while laser blasts fly around him. He just can't attack. At the end of the next round he's no longer snafued.

**Wounded** means the target is Snafued in the next round *and also* requires first aid, drugs, or the oh-so-attentive care of an Alpha Complex docbot. The player can't spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of this round or the next round. At the end of the next round the character is no longer snafued but is still wounded.

**Maimed** means the target is snafued in the next round, *and also* one of his limbs becomes useless or absent. The player can't spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of the scene. The Snafu goes away at the end of the next round, but the maiming stays.

**Down** means the target is immobile and basically incapacitated. A downed character isn't necessarily wounded or maimed. As with maimed, the player can't spend Perversity on his own character for the rest of the scene. If you allow it, the downed character may still speak and listen groggily, point an accusing finger or weakly pull a trigger. Possibly the downed character's perceptions are distorted so he witnesses events unreliably.

**Killed** means dead. The player can spend Perversity normally on other players' rolls.

**Vaporized** means the target permanently and irrevocably Goes Away, reduced to a thick red spray, component body cells or conceivably

subatomic particles. The player can still spend Perversity on others' rolls. Being vaporized is a significant accomplishment generally recognized by a brief but heartfelt round of applause.

### Cumulative (or not) damage

Most damage is *not* cumulative. Apply multiple hits to a single target independently. Damage from one attack doesn't increase the damage from another. Count each attack's damage down from Okay, not from the target's current damage level.

For instance, a Wounded character who then receives another Wounded result now has two wounds but is still only wounded.

**Exception:** If the target is Downed, any attack that does a minimum of Wounded damage can kill the downed target pretty much automatically (no roll required; ignore armor, as long as it's not full-figure). Depending on circumstances, you can also allow a determined attacker to kill the Downed victim with weaker weapons or bare hands, though this is often unhygienic.

### Recovering from damage

**You decide how long a character takes to heal damage.** Here is some guidance:

**Snafued** characters recover from the Snafu at the end of the next round.

**Injuries** can sometimes be healed at the end of the current combat. Docbots and medikits provide plastiflesh and repair nanobots that can zip up a flesh wound, no problem. Broken bones are harder, requiring days of bed rest in a medibed as nanobots painstakingly build up layers of bone cells.

**Maimed** limbs can be regenerated in a week (5,000 credits per limb) or replaced by high-tech mechanical prosthetics in an hour (10,000 credits per limb). No, nothing ever goes wrong with a prosthetic limb, like for instance evil secret society programming that makes the limb lash out wildly at the society's enemies. How could you even think that?

**Downed** characters revive in a minute or less if aided, or in ten minutes without aid.

Recently **killed** and still attractive characters of Clearance BLUE or above can sometimes be revived with diligent attention from Tech Services. No one bothers below Clearance BLUE, or after about ten minutes, or without sufficient body material to make revival an exciting prospect. Revival of the dead is a less costly and more trouble-free alternative to activating a new clone.

If a **vaporized** character's player wants to recover, laugh brightly and chide him for being a smartass.

### Damaging objects

Troubleshooters routinely need, or at least they try, to destroy bots, equipment, doors, walls, delicate Old Reckoning china and other physical objects. Let these objects perish according to the needs of the mission, with attention to dramatic effect rather than to strict results dictated by materials engineering. If you like, you can instead carry out experiments around the house. Try your own home slughtrower on common household objects like vacuum cleaners and TVs. That's what we game designers do.

If that doesn't strike your fancy, take guidance from the suggested rules for damaging characters, but substitute these conditions: **Okay, Lightly damaged, Impaired, Heavily damaged, Busted, Junked, Vaporized.**

**Okay** still means okay.

**Lightly damaged** means the object is banged up, scratched, dented or chipped, but basically unharmed. A lightly damaged wall has scuffed paint.

**Impaired** means the object's function is visibly messed up. An X-ray machine or reactor leaks radiation; a radio squawks. An impaired wall has one or more serious cracks.

**Heavily damaged** means the object is barely functional. A scrubot weakly squirts a stream of soap; the voice on the phone is barely audible; the confession booth seems to think your name

### Hit locations

Does it matter what part of the target's body gets hit? Only if it's entertaining. Roll 1d20, ignore the result and pick a body part. That's what got blown off.

For more rigorous guidance, note the die result and consult this table:

- 1: Left hand
- 2: Right hand
- 3–4: Left arm
- 5–6: Right arm
- 7–12: Left leg
- 13–14: Right leg
- 15–16: Loins
- 17–18: Chest
- 19–20: Eye, teeth, tongue, nostril, earlobe, etc.

If you roll a part that's already been blown off, use the next line down on the table. If that part too has already disappeared, savor the cries of this double amputee as he begs to be out of his misery. Move down the table until some amusing subsection of the target catches your interest, then remove it.



is Amelia Earhart. A heavily damaged wall has a hole big enough to crawl through.

**Busted** means the object won't work, but it can be repaired within the same scene with a good skill roll. A busted wall has a hole big enough to drive an autocar through.

**Junked** means destroyed.

**Vaporized**, again, deserves a brief round of applause, unless the former object was vital experimental equipment entrusted to the Troubleshooters by The Computer. In this case a quick conference is in order to get everyone's story straight before debriefing.

**Cumulative damage:** Unlike characters, certain delicate objects (for instance, fine china and cellphones) take all damage cumulatively. Each attack reduces their condition by a number of steps equal to the damage it deals. Where a character who is maimed would shrug off a subsequent wound, a phone that has taken heavy damage and then takes light damage becomes busted. Really, the fragility of phones, multicorders, security cameras and GPS locators is amazing, as is the singleness of mind with which Troubleshooters destroy them.

## Insanity (optional)

Troubleshooters live daily in circumstances that would drive most people crazy. Maybe your players are already playing their characters as crazy. Sometimes craziness is the only sane strategy.

However, you may find it entertaining to push characters even further into the Wonderful World of Mental Illness. In this case you can ask the player to make an Insanity roll.

Ask the target vict—*player* to make an Insanity roll whenever you feel like it. As inspiration,

### V1V and like that

'What's with the plasma generator doing V1V damage? Its minimum damage is Vaporized, and its maximum damage is Vaporized—do I care about the margin?'

These statistics mean, 'Jeez, this weapon is *really seriously deadly*.' We add the Boost and Maximum statistics partly to make these weapons fit with the others, and partly to guarantee their deadliness even against potent defenses.

Apply the target's defenses normally, reducing the attack's damage below Vaporized. Then use the attack roll's success margin to add extra damage steps. With a Boost of 1, there will probably be lots of extra steps, boosting the damage right back up to Vaporized. The deadliness of the weapon is preserved.

consider Insanity when the character has one or all of these overwhelming experiences:

- ④ He discovers everyone is out to get him.
- ④ His mutant power backfires.
- ④ He encounters unimaginable, alien, incredible sights, such as a squirrel or rat.
- ④ He faces unbearable stress, such as when struggling futilely to remove a malfunctioning plasma generator backpack while the alarm screams in his ear.
- ④ He despairs, such as when the flybot, in response to a request for estimated time of arrival, asks if he wants the period stated in decades or centuries.

To make the Insanity roll, have the player roll 1d20. Take the number rolled and add the scene's current Tension level. If the result is lower than the character's Management (his generic 'behave properly' skill), the character has weathered the storm and remains calm. But if the result is higher than the PC's Management skill, he fails the Insanity roll and goes temporarily nuts.

You can impose any flavor of insanity you like. If you have no preference, use the roll's margin as a guide to the nature of the nuttiness:

- 0-5—Stunned:** The character can't do anything but gibber incoherently for one round.
- 6-10—Anxiety attack:** Temporarily overwhelmed, the character ducks responsibility and looks to others to solve his problems; for several minutes, allow all players to spend Perversity points on whatever rolls the poor devil makes.
- 11-15—Mental disorder:** The character becomes convinced everyone is an enemy, interprets others' behavior as a desire to destroy him, and refuses responsibility for his own failures, blaming them on everyone around him. He's indistinguishable from normal, basically.
- 16+—Whacko:** Berserk. Bonkers. Both oars out of the water. Elevator doesn't go to the top floor. Ding dong, nobody home. The character is completely nuts. Let the player improvise.

**Mutant wack:** As described in the section 'Mutant powers', a power that backfires may produce temporary psychosis—'mutant wack.' The backfiring mutant may experience one of the Insanity table psychoses, or you may impose the characteristic insanity listed in the power description.

## Recovering from insanity

**Stunned:** The character recovers in one round.

**Anxiety attack:** The character recovers a few minutes after current danger abates.

**Mental disorder, Whacko:** This lasts to the end of the mission. Then the character requires lots of drugs and therapy. Thanks to The Computer's enlightened ideas of mental health, by the next mission the character is completely recovered.

Completely. No, really.

Okay, maybe he has a nervous tic in his eye, or whistles scarily when he's nervous, or gets easily startled by any mention of squirrels or rats. Devise a new tic the player will enjoy playing, because he'll be doing it for as long as the character lives.

## Insanity warning!

Don't use these Insanity rules often. They're stacked to drive characters way off the deep end. Players are usually happy to have their characters act crazy without prompting, but requiring them to do it can take the fun out of it. Use it, but don't abuse it.

## Clone replacement

The MemoMax Constant Realtime Update Program (CRUP) system records every Troubleshooter's memories and perceptions in realtime and stores them. Technical Services supervises the stored memories in gigantic data warehouses jammed floor-to-ceiling with eerily quiet data storage racks.

MemoMax circuitry installed in each citizen's brain—including that of the Prime, the original person—has what is appropriately called a 'dead-man switch'. When a Troubleshooter dies during a mission and his brain ceases functioning, the MemoMax circuits automatically alert The Computer. The Computer activates the character's next clone backup, which floats comatose in the Tech Services forced-growth clone tanks. Reasonably skilled Tech Services biotechnicians, popularly called 'rebooters,' read into the new brain the MemoMax 'braintape' recording of the previous body's memories. The new body emerges looking the same and has all the memories, skills, attributes and physical abilities of the old. The formerly-dead citizen experiences only a brief disorientation, then is ready to resume duty.

## Don't think about it

If you know anything at all about biology, you are now probably wondering whether the previous paragraph was, in fact, the most ridiculous thing you've ever read. Wait, it gets moreso!



# 27 DAMAGE & INJURIES

The replacement clone not only has the same physical abilities, but The Computer generously allots this new citizen his predecessor's exact inventory of equipment, sometimes even rare experimental equipment. The intent is to make the new clone identical in all respects to the precursor.

Previous editions of **PARANOIA** offered a transparently bogus rationale for why all clones are identical in all features. In fact, the section was titled 'Why Clones Are Identical in All Features: The Transparently Bogus Rationale.' (If you think we're making that up, you haven't grokked **PARANOIA** yet.)

In fact, GMs and players seem content to accept the clone setup for what it is: a brute-force fix to let players keep playing **PARANOIA** missions despite the game's extreme lethality. Get killed? So what?

Like the *Star Trek* transporter, it's a story device. Nobody wonders about the cloning system in Alpha Complex, for the same reason nobody wonders how Wile E. Coyote can get hit with an anvil and bounce back in the cartoon's next scene.

That's why, among all the experimental equipment blowing up and the infrastructure breaking down across Alpha Complex, the cloning system just works. If it didn't just work, players would have to create new characters many times in a play session, and that gets old fast.

## Genetic drift

The cloning system doesn't just work if the player has been running through clones at a great rate. You can use genetic drift to discourage players from frivolously squandering their backups.

Genetic errors can creep into the PC's Tech Services backup template, the way a multi-generation photocopy (that is, a copy of a copy of a copy) gets blurrier than the original. The original in this case is the Prime character, and after about five or six generations of copying, he gets pretty blurry.

Nothing untoward happens to the first five clones after the Prime (that is, numbers 2 through 6). Starting with #7, each new clone acquires one additional visible tic, of the sort the player chose during character creation. These tics are cumulative, meaning #8 has the same new tic as #7 and also a new one, and #9 has both of those plus one more.

At clone #13, no more tics. The player has probably lost track of them all by now. Instead, the new backup arrives already burdened with an automatic Maimed combat result—a gimp leg, a shaking arm. These maimings, like the tics, accumulate in successive clones. The higher the clone number, the more severe the new maiming.

If this poor beast is still remotely functional, at clone #19 you can start adding permanent Insanity results, of the kind seen in the Insanity

table. Now the player is probably willing to look into getting his template retuned. If he isn't, the other players by now are probably willing to take up a collection for him.

## Retuning genetic drift

The Player section says a Troubleshooter can get his clone template cleaned up, restored to Prime-like newness, for a mere 10,000 credits. Heh, heh. 'It may have been 10,000 credits when you started as a Troubleshooter, citizen, but we have expenses here in Tech Services. *Expenses*. Per The Computer's instructions, we pass the overhead on to you.'

The cost of retuning is actually a sliding scale. It slides according to the anxiety you want to inflict on the player. Retuning should basically bankrupt the citizen's current assets and push him a little into debt—not to the dreaded 10x monthly salary that means erasure, but within viewing distance.

## Buying new clones in Straight games

In Straight games your main way to increase cash-flow tension might turn out to be the purchase of new clones. Some players—certainly not all, but some—will pay steep prices to keep from having to create another character.

Owing to the astronomically high fatality rate among Troubleshooters, The Computer orders them to buy new clones in six-packs. The first six-pack (Prime and backups #2–6) is free. For each six-pack after the first, the cost should go up. The clone replacement cost table on this page gives tentative suggestions. We've tried for months to make this stupid table work, but we never got it quite right. In some games our suggested figures turn out waaay too cheap; in others, they're wildly overpriced.

Perhaps you can succeed where we failed. Perhaps you can set the price of each six-pack just high enough to give the players anxiety, regardless of their current cash flow. You'd have to adjust the prices on the fly, in immediate response to the Troubleshooters' current fiscal situation. What's more, you'd have to blandly offer the players some preposterous and arbitrary post-hoc rationale for the rapidly changing cost, dare them to question your reasons and punish them mercilessly if they do.

Do you think you're up to it?

## Introducing a backup

Get the newly activated clone backup body (and his player) to the action as soon as possible. A player with a dead character is just a spectator, which is nowhere near as much fun as playing. A waiting player can still spend

## Clone replacement costs

[Straight games only]

6-pk	Clone #s	Cost	Cost/clone
1	Prime + 2–6	2,000	400
2	7–12	6,000	1,000
3	13–18	15,000	2,500
4	19–24	30,000	5,000
5	25–30	60,000	10,000

Perversity points to influence other players' rolls, if you let him, but remember: He showed up to play, not to watch.

Owing to priority transport assignments, the backup clone can usually don his reflex overalls, grab his supplies, jump on a truckbot and arrive panting to join his teammates in the next scene.

Now, if the mission takes place Outdoors, or beneath the ocean, or on a shuttle for Mars, delivery may take longer. Conceivably these farflung Troubleshooters got assigned their own Porta-Tank clone grower, but that may be a stretch. Even if the survivors have to sit on their hands for a few hours or days, you may still want to halt the action until the backup makes the scene. The Computer can always order the team to take no further action until further notice. The Computer won't let a mission fail just because the group is understaffed.

**Mission Group Beta Niner: Regrets in re tragic messy death of Bob-O. Clone backup in transit. Stand by until backup arrival. While standing around, why not clean up mess?**

For a lot of really keen methods for introducing new backups into the mission, see the boxed sidebar on the next page. Somewhere on this massive list you'll find an appropriate way to keep things moving.

On the other hand, don't introduce the backup until it suits your fancy. Perhaps the team should struggle along understrength for a while. Perhaps the currently-dead player should observe a decent period of mourning for the deceased character. Be unpredictable, even capricious. Never let the players know what to expect.

Perhaps the backup got mistakenly routed to the food vats. Perhaps someone sabotaged communications back at headquarters. Or maybe the flybot delivering the backup broke its GPS unit and is now diligently educating the clone in dental hygiene as it streaks across the tundra toward the North Pole.

You never can tell.

**Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.**

—Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanac*



## Back in the saddle again!

### Getting a clone backup back into the mission with style, grace and perversity

Though the conceit of clones allows play to continue promptly even after widespread death and destruction, there remains the problem of, if you will, clone insertion. That is to say, fine, Tech Services spits out another clone, but how does the clone get from the forced-growth tanks to the party?

In reality, this would take some time, right? I mean, even hopping in the car and going down to the 7-11 takes at least a quarter hour. And if you're feeling particularly annoyed at the recently-deceased player, you can certainly make him sit out of the game for a while before announcing that his clone walks up, hands in his jumpsuit pockets and whistling.

But most of the time, well, nobody likes having to sit around picking his nose or munching corn chips morosely while other people are having a good time. So here are a bunch of cheesy ideas for getting the clone backup promptly to the party and back into the action.

#### Emergency transtube

The transtubes run throughout Alpha Complex (well, at least in sectors in reasonably good repair). Think of a subway system with individual cars that seat a dozen or so that can be dispatched to arbitrary destinations. Though even REDs can use the transtube system, this usually means sitting around for long periods of time while the doors open at every local stop. For high priority missions, however, The Computer orders a single-person capsule, rerouting everyone else, or shunting them onto sidings, while the replacement clone roars through the tubes to the transtube station nearest the PCs.

#### Pneumatic tube delivery

The Computer instructs the PCs to go to a nearby booth to await clone insertion. With a hiss of air and a 'chunk,' a capsule slams into the booth from an overhead tube, and the door opens. The clone staggers out, disoriented and quite queasy.

#### The Sewer Emergence Table

That's an actual table in *Advanced Squad Leader*, God help the ginks who

play it. We don't actually have one, of course, but—the PCs are standing around waiting for the new clone when a nearby manhole cover slides aside, a BLUE environment-suited tech wearing a gas mask pokes his head out, looks around, and says "There you go, buddy," then disappears, to be replaced by the new clone, looking quite nauseated and smelling a bit, climbing up the ladder from the manhole.

#### One clone, hold the anchovies

An ORANGE-Clearance delivery man from Domin-O's, a PLC service firm, zooms up on a jet-propelled forklift. On the fork is the new clone, encased in—umm—well, we imagine *carbonite* is a Registered Trademark of Lucasfilm, Ltd., so—uh—*alphamite*, that's the ticket!—a hard plastic-like substance tinted the clone's security clearance color.

The technician is chewing on a toothpick, produces a clipboard and insists that the team leader must sign, acknowledging 'safe receipt' of the clone before he'll lower the fork lift, back away, and use a laser cutter to remove the carboni—um, alphamite.

Is the clone actually safely received? Up to you, of course, but probably, unless the player has been annoying you recently. Doesn't really matter; either way, the team leader has already signed and is solely responsible. The clone emerges, weak as a kitten for a few minutes until the effects wear off—he can crawl around on hands and knees after the other PCs until he feels stronger.

(Yes, Domin-O's usually delivers pizza, but they also have the best delivery system in the Complex, and has won the most recent contract for clone delivery as well.)

#### ICBCIM (Inter-Continental Ballistic Clone Insertion Missile)

Particularly useful in missions to the Outdoors, this can get a clone anywhere on the planet within 90 minutes—but given that most missions to the Outdoors are likely to be within a few hundred miles of Alpha Complex, we're probably talking a couple of minutes at most. A fiery lance appears overhead

with a sonic boom, there's an explosion as the clone capsule separates, and it drifts gently down toward the PCs at the end of a parachute. Or maybe it drifts over in the direction of a swamp a couple of miles off. Or maybe the chute fails to open and the PCs have to scatter as the capsule slams into the earth nearby, excavating a sizable crater and turning the clone inside into a sort of jelly.

#### Thaw out another backup, Jacko(bot)

For an extended mission into faraway abandoned sectors, The Computer, in its wisdom, may decide to send the PCs out with their own backups, in case of accidental loss or erasure. They're stacked in coldsleep pods in the back of the crawler or copter or whatever, and when you need a new clone, you just go back and thaw one out. Thawing is something like microwaving, and happens pretty quickly, although the clone shivers uncontrollably for several minutes afterwards. The process is foolproof and completely safe for everyone. Clones never suffer brain damage, equipment malfunction or nerve injury that causes intermittent shooting pains in their trigger fingers at inconvenient moments. Well, hardly ever.

#### Just find me some meat

Information is, of course, much easier to transmit than matter. At times, perhaps the PCs are assigned an experimental MEMPRESSION bot. Just take, say, a Commie mutant traitor, cram him into the convenient compartment and close the lid. The MEMPRESSION bot erases the traitor's wetware, and downloads the PC's last recorded personality into the traitor. Open the lid and—well, it's not exactly a clone, but it has the memories and skills of the recently-dead PC.

The erasure process is well understood and easily implemented, and there are hardly ever problems with multiple personalities in the same body, or Commie mutant traitors driving the new personality out and turning against the PCs.

Of course, you may not always be able to find a Commie mutant traitor at the right moment, and It Would Be Wrong just

## 27. DAMAGE & INJURIES BRINGING IN BACKUPS

to grab a hapless nearby INFRARED and cram him into the bot. At least, without first manufacturing, we mean, uncovering evidence of the INFRARED's dire treason against The Computer and everything we hold dear.

And in the Outdoors, perhaps all you can find is a squirrel or bunny rabbit. Or a giant radioactive mutant cockroach. (Well, not too giant—it has to fit into the Membot's compartment.)

And—if you *really* can't find any meat, maybe you can skip the erasure step, and just download the dead PC into the brain of one of the still-living Troubleshooters. They can share the body for a while, at least until you do capture a Commie mutant traitor somewhere. Or maybe for a long time. In fact, we kind of like the idea of ultimately having the entire party sharing a single clone body, bickering about what to do next, with the contradictory instructions of each of his personalities making the body twitch in St. Vitus's dance.

### Freeze-dried clone

The human body is 90% water, right? And you know those sponges that are flat as a board when you get them, but expand to be a normal sponge when you stick them under the faucet? Or those little plastic toy animals that grow to ten times their normal size when you leave them in a cup of water overnight? Well, this is like that. Just take one of the freeze-dried clones, add water, stick the Mempression helmet on to download memories and personality, and Bob-B's your uncle.

So—uh, how could such an absurd technology possibly work? What's your security clearance again? But anyway, just wave your hands and say 'nano' a lot. Busy little nanobots, always a good spurious justification for anything.

### Let 10<sup>4</sup> clone delivery systems blossom

Make up your own. We don't care. In fact, we encourage it.

For a while, you may find it fun to turn clone insertion into a running gag, using a new system with every death. After a while, that will get boring, and you may just want to stick with one. (And how does that Domin-O guy manage to zoom through the middle of a firefight, completely unscathed, to deliver the new clone? Who knows? But they're always on time, or your clone is free.) Except, perhaps, when the particular constraints of a mission (We're going to Mars!) makes the normal method difficult, and you invent some fiendish new experimental way.

## 28. Debriefings

Troubleshooters always find the debriefing at the end of a mission compellingly interesting. There's just something about the sense of closure there, the uncovering of unsuspected evidence, not to mention the prominent threat of termination and erasure.

In a debriefing the mission official ideally shows each Troubleshooter to an individual confession booth, where The Computer interrogates the character on issues of importance. Then the PCs all gather in the debriefing room for the official's communal recitation—from behind laserproof glass—of the Troubleshooters' heroic accomplishments and well-deserved commendations. Promote each survivor one rank in security clearance, grant bennies as the mood strikes you and award each character a credit bonus equal to one month's salary at their new clearance. Award each player a hefty ration of Perversity points.

Then proceed to the official's recitation—incidentally, the glass is also bombproof and gasproof—of the Troubleshooters' collective offenses, and mutual accusations and recriminations. Roll treason damage for each PC's offenses, letting all players spend Perversity copiously. Demote proven traitors and dock them credits equal to at least a month's salary (at their *higher* clearance). In **Straight** games, foster intra-team rivalries and ongoing subplots; in **Classic** games, plan for a firefight; in **Zap** games, nobody ever survives to debriefing.

### Understanding mission bennies

When preparing a mission, either The Computer, a service firm or some faceless bureaucrat assigns importance to stated objectives based on inscrutable and probably arbitrary criteria. Players don't learn the importance of each objective until after the mission, if then. Published **PARANOIA**

scenarios may include specific objectives with relative importance assigned by Famous Game Designers according to the highest-quality inscrutable and arbitrary criteria.

At debriefing, you can have the mission auditor 'score' the Troubleshooter group and assigns bennies based on the importance of accomplished objectives. It is tempting to amuse yourself by just scolding the Troubleshooters in every mission debriefing, then shuttling them off to the termination center. This is short-term thinking. To get the players totally off-balance





and suspicious, reward them—some of them—maybe even the Troubleshooters who screwed up worst.

How can you justify this? In awarding bennies, consider two subjects: *What Actually Happened* and *What The Computer Thinks Happened*. These are often strikingly different.

- ⊙ The Computer often interprets simple accidents as sabotage, incompetence as treason.

- ⊙ Conversely, nakedly treasonous stuff may fit The Computer's conception of clever entrapment.

- ⊙ Who knows? Perhaps a particular High Programmer has just introduced a new subroutine to dispose of some hot stolen merchandise by pawing it off as 'equipment rewards' to the first pawns who happen along. If that means substituting 'Equipment Reward' for 'Termination and Repatterning', The

Computer has been (re)programmed to think this perfectly logical. Do you think the briefing officer will argue?

During your first couple of debriefings, let The Computer or its human servants hint just enough about these divergences to let your players realize why the guilty are being rewarded and the innocent punished. Let them develop a feeling of uneasy understanding. By their second or third mission, you can really start messing with their minds.

## 29. Meritorious conduct

### Reward chart

*This is close to an exhaustive list. It includes several entries an Alpha Complex citizen would not actually see; we leave identification of these lines as an exercise for the reader.*

*A given act may qualify for more than one reward. Use the lowest. That'll show 'em.*

#### KEY

% = a percentage of the character's current monthly salary; **cr** = credits

☒ = This number equals the difference in security clearance ranks. For instance, a RED citizen who risks his life to save a GREEN citizen earns (3 x 5%=) a 15% bonus.

#### Acts deserving rewards

- A. Being extremely happy: 10cr
- B. Doing a small favor spontaneously for a higher-clearance citizen: 10cr
  - B/1. A large favor involving non-trivial effort: 30cr
  - B/2. A really large favor that takes most of a day, if not longer: 70cr
- C. Unctuous flattery: 10cr
- D. Completing a mission successfully: promotion and 100% bonus
- E. Completing a service service and filing a report: 100cr
- F. Risking your life to serve or rescue a citizen of your clearance: 500cr
  - F/1. A higher-clearance citizen: ☒ x5%
  - F/2. To serve The Computer: 50%
- G. Terminating a traitor of your clearance or lower with sufficient evidence: 50%
  - G/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 25%
- H. Turning over a traitor of your clearance or lower to Internal Security: 25%
  - H/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 10%

The Computer recognizes good performance with credit bonuses and other rewards. Your players will be most interested in the credits. For each mission the Troubleshooters successfully complete, The Computer awards to each participating Troubleshooter a *completion bonus* of credits equal to one month's salary. A RED Clearance Troubleshooter (monthly salary 1,000 credits) who successfully completes a mission would receive a bonus of 1,000 credits; an ORANGE Clearance Troubleshooter on the same successful mission earns a 2,000 credit bonus.

'Successful completion' means the Troubleshooters largely met the specified mission objectives. The mission officials assess success in binary fashion, yes-or-no, independent of concerns such as collateral damage, mass fatalities, etc. Did the Troubleshooters scrape the Commies out of their stronghold? Yes? Good. That counts as success, even if the team did accidentally spread toxic bioagents throughout the sector.

On receiving the verdict of mission success, The Computer pays each completion bonus directly to the Troubleshooter's current account, bypassing intermediaries. Often, though, the verdict of success depends on these intermediaries—specifically, the mission briefing officials. If these high-clearance bureaucrats meet privately with the Troubleshooters and, in return for declaring the mission a success, demand a kickback of, say, half the PCs' bonus—or three quarters—or 90%—will the lowly PCs have leverage to argue? Especially when the prospect of mission failure implies demotion, fines and possible reassignment to the Waste Recycling Subdivision?

### Other signs of favor

In addition to paying a completion bonus to all Troubleshooters, The Computer may also recognize individual accomplishments, particularly those listed in the Reward Chart at left. Rewards in the chart are listed as credit

amounts, but to lend some flavor and surprise to the proceedings, you can instead issue rewards in a variety of forms: credits, Official Commendations, tickets and vouchers or even that illustrious honor, the Hero of Our Complex (HOOC) award.

### Official Commendations

The Computer recognizes minor services—say, repairing a broken bot or shining an INDIGO's boots—with Official Commendations. 'Citizen! Well done! Your service to The Computer is rewarded. I have entered an Official Commendation in your personal file as a permanent record of your meritorious service. My heartiest congratulations!'

If you are so inclined, you can use each Official Commendation a player has received during a mission to reduce the severity of treason damage he suffers at the end of the mission (see Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction'). If you don't like that idea, the Official Commendation has about as much practical use as the Testimonial the Wizard of Oz gives the Cowardly Lion.

### Tickets and vouchers

The Computer uses vidshow audience tickets, minor gadgets and real food as rewards for slightly more impressive service—say, capturing a minor corrupt official or improving efficiency in a single warehouse. The lucky citizen may get a seat at *My Dream Bot* or *That Show Trial Show*, or a shiny new customized hand laser (with 'a few improvements by Research & Design'), or a salad of vegetables from the hydroponic gardens, in colors appropriate to his security clearance.

Use these trivial perks as a way of placing a Troubleshooter where you want him to be. Maybe his secret society contact passes him an urgent message in the vidshow audience, or you need the PC to witness a meeting of mutants in the hydroponic garden.

*Note:* It would be highly unorthodox for The Computer ever to grant permission for a citizen to enter a higher-clearance area.

## 29. REWARDS / 30. PUNISHMENT

Commendation is fine, but let's not get crazy here. If you ever decide to have your RED Troubleshooters escorted into (say) a BLUE area, make sure they understand this is a momentous and scary event.

### Medication

The Computer is convinced medication is the best way to manipulate the moods of its citizens. Every citizen is used to Wakey-Wakey pills in the morning and Sleepy-Bye pills at night.

If a citizen's actions make The Computer happy, The Computer might be motivated to make the citizen happy. *Much* happier than he already is. So happy he can hardly stand it—or stand up—or recognize a threat. 'Like, waaow, man. You pulled a laser on me. Fannntastic!'

### HOOC awards

The Computer has assigned HPD&MC to publicly recognize and promote noteworthy service, such as rooting out traitors or greatly improving efficiency throughout a sector. The Heroes of Our Complex (HOOC) program makes individual citizens famous for fifteen minutes (or more) throughout Alpha Complex. The honored citizen gets his face doctored by

Dear Mrs., Mr., Miss or Mr. And Mrs.  
Daneeka: Words cannot express the deep personal grief I experienced when your husband, son, father or brother was killed, wounded or reported missing in action.

—Joseph Heller,  
*Catch-22 (1962)*

HPD&MC's digital manipulation artists to look noble and selfless. This image is then printed on food wrappers and shown on vidshows. The Computer interrupts the Teela-O-MLY show at the most suspenseful point to laud the new hero.

—Who then becomes an instant target for every Death Leopard and PURGE secret society member in the Complex. You may also prompt the HOOC's companions (or their surviving clone backups) to feel just the teensiest bit jealous.

## 30. Treason and correction

Being paranoid, The Computer is obsessively and urgently concerned with detecting and eradicating treason. It treats every accusation of treason with the gravest seriousness. Citizens who hope to advance under its gentle tutelage treat treason with equal gravity, or must appear to do so.

At mission debriefings, in confession booths, and possibly (given eager or impatient Troubleshooters) even during firefights or bathroom breaks, a PC may address The Computer, a mission briefing officer or a citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher to accuse a target of treason.

If the accusation would slow down the storyline, or if you don't want to mess with it at the moment, The Computer or the citizen postpones hearing the accusation. However, the charge should certainly resurface at a more convenient time.

If and when you let the accusation go forward, judge it on its merits. Under what circumstances does an accusation of treason stick, and what is the punishment? The answer is: **whenever and whatever you, the Gamemaster (who are always right), decide.** But if you decide you don't want to bother to decide, or it looks messy and complicated, you can use the same Universal Hostility Formula you use to determine combat results. See the chart on the next page.

(We thought about inventing a whole different rules system for treason. But really, whether combat or debriefings, the result is usually the same: Someone gets hurt. Also, we were on deadline.)

### Basic treason concepts

**Accusation:** An accusation is an attack that uses Management skill instead of Violence skill.

**Correction:** A successful accusation deals steps of treason damage in the same way attacks deal steps of physical damage. This damage is called *correction*, because The Computer is correcting the errant traitor and putting him back on the proper path—which may lead directly to the termination center. One step of correction reduces the character's current treason condition by one treason step. The correction's severity depends on the accusation's offenses.

**Offenses:** The specific charges made in the accusation. Offenses work in an accusation the way a weapon works in an attack—the more severe the offenses, the more 'treason damage' they may do. Offenses may have *Area effect* or *Spray* abilities like weapons, meaning an accusation based on these offenses can affect multiple targets.

**Treason conditions:** A character has seven treason conditions (**Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination, Erasure**), each equivalent in severity to one of the physical damage conditions (Okay, Snafued, Wounded, etc.). The treason conditions measure the character's ability to regain The Computer's trust, in the same way damage conditions measure his ability to influence a battle.

**Treason damage:** An offense's damage is listed as a *treason code* in Minimum-Boost-Maximum format, like weapons. In this format the seven treason conditions are abbreviated by their first letters: O, P, C, M, B, T, E. The Minimum is the suggested treason condition to which the offense would set a target with an Access rating of 0. The Boost number works like weapon Boost numbers—the lower the number, the more powerful and serious the offense. An offense can't set the target's treason condition beyond the offense's listed Maximum, unless you say otherwise.

**Treason armor:** A character's current Access rating functions as his 'treason armor'. As physical armor reduces default weapon damage before the Boost is applied, Access reduces default treason damage by a number of steps equal to the Access rating. Only after the reduction does The Computer impose correction, based on the reduced treason damage.



## Offenses

An accusation's initial credibility is based on the accuser's Management skill, as an attack's success is based initially on his Violence skill. (If The Computer is making the accusation, it automatically succeeds.) The accusation's treason damage depends on the specific offenses charged, as an attack's damage

depends on the weapon. (If The Computer itself leveled the accusation, consider rolling against the arbitrary number 11 to figure any Boost to the minimum treason damage. Or, if you don't like 11, use a nicer number of your own choosing.)

**One offense or many:** If you want to build suspense, treat each charge the accuser makes as a separate accusation. If you

instead wish to move the game faster, collect all offenses charged against a given target in a single accusation, selecting the single most severe Minimum and Maximum damage levels and the lowest Boost number from among these offenses.

## Universal Hostility Formula (*treason*)

### 1. ACCUSE!

#### 1. Accuse!

An accusing character rolls against his Management skill (no specializations allowed). You may allow Perversity spending in any of the usual ways, choosing a way according to your dramatic needs. In Straight games, you add the number of the target citizen's current clone to the roll (making success more difficult).

When more than one character is accusing, figure everyone's result separately, then apply all accusation effects simultaneously.

### 2. CREDIBLE?

#### 2. Credible or not?

If the accusation roll succeeds, The Computer or high-clearance citizen regards the charges as initially credible, and the target may suffer correction.

**Backfires:** If the accusation roll missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the accusation may backfire. The Computer questions the accuser's judgment and motives, analyzes his record of loyalty, demeanor and hygiene, and assesses penalties it deems appropriate. For guidance, continue with this Formula, but the former accuser now becomes the target.

If a backfire does not suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.

### 3. MULTIPLE TARGETS?

#### 3. Multiple targets?

Can the offenses plausibly indict more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the type of offense and the attack roll's margin. See the Area effect and Spray descriptions under 'Special offenses' below.

### 4. DEFAULT CORRECTION

#### 4. Default correction

**A successful accusation prompts the correction you want it to prompt.** Severity levels of correction are described in the section 'Corrections'. The offenses in the Gamemaster version of the Treason and Insubordination charts suggest corrections in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format, just as weapon lists suggest damage levels. Take guidance from these suggestions or ignore them as you prefer. Arbitrariness is your right. Given the Alpha Complex legal system, arbitrariness is practically required.

If you take an offense's suggested correction, you can adjust its severity based on the accusation roll margin and the offense's Boost increment, as you would adjust a weapon attack.

Your chosen play style affects the severity of the correction. In Zap games almost every treasonous offense prompts termination. In Straight and Classic games you may wish to keep PCs alive a while longer. The charts suggest different correction levels for Straight and Classic styles. We planned to list Zap correction levels, but typing 'Termination' over and over just wore us down, you know?

### 5. DEFENSE

#### 5. Defense

In Classic and Straight games, reduce the severity of the default correction by a number of steps equal to the target's Access attribute—his 'treason armor.' In Zap games there is no defense and hence no reduction. For more, see the section 'Defense'.

### 6. BOOST

#### 6. Boost

If the accusation roll succeeded by a margin greater than the offense's Boost increment, divide the margin by the Boost. Take the result and increase the correction by that number of steps. If you don't like division, there's a handy Boost chart in the Charts & Tables section at the end of this rulebook.

### 7. ACTUAL CORRECTION

#### 7. Actual correction

You now have the actual result of the accusation. The Computer or the citizen metes out correction at once, on the spot. If the accusation's correction is reduced below 1 step, the accusation has no effect—maybe the target gets annoyed, but the accusation doesn't affect his status.

A corrected target who lacks self-control may become extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval and possibly even further correction.

## Accusation example

Troubleshooter Jan-R-EEE-1 (Management 10) accuses INFRARED Mark-TOR-1 (Access 1) of three offenses. Listed in the Minimum-Boost-Maximum format of the weapons table, the offenses are insubordinate behavior (O6C), destroying lots of Computer property (P4T) and suspicion of possessing a stolen ME Card (P1B). You, the GM, feel like moving the game along, so you select the most severe level (P) of the Minima O, P and P; the smallest (1) of the Boost numbers 6, 4 and 1; and the most severe level (T) of the Maxima C, T and B. You combine these to get the accusation's offense damage, P1T.

Jan-R's player rolls 7. The margin of 3, divided by the offense's Boost number of 1, means the Minimum damage is increased by three steps from Probation to Brainscrub. The INFRARED's Access reduces this damage by 1 step to Medication. The Computer puts Mark-TOR on a therapeutic program of

neftusarin, a stimulating happiness drug hardly ever implicated in Sudden INFRARED Death Syndrome.

## Special offenses

Alpha Complex justice recognizes the well established principle of guilt by association. The idea shows forth most dramatically in two kinds of offenses.

**Spray offenses:** Like weapons that can deal spray damage to more than one target in a single attack, certain offenses can 'spray' treason damage not only to the traitor but to his known associates. For player characters this is the PC's fellow Troubleshooters, excluding the accuser. Associates of NPCs include service firm workers, roommates in shared living quarters, known mess hall dining partners and even bots.

The accusation roll's margin suggests how comprehensive the dragnet will be.

- ⊙ **0:** No extra targets.
- ⊙ **1-5:** Fellow Troubleshooters, excluding the accuser; known secret society associates.
- ⊙ **6-10:** Fellow service firm workers, roommates in shared living quarters, personal bots.
- ⊙ **11-15:** Known mess hall dining partners, fellow members of the Teela-O-MLY Fan Club, the usual suspects, etc.
- ⊙ **16+:** Might as well haul in the whole subsector....

**Area effect offenses:** Like area effect weapons, extremely serious charges can affect everyone in the traitor's vicinity at the time he committed the offense, including innocent bystanders. The Computer assumes the traitor has compromised everyone around him—or,

## Sample Perversity Modifiers (treason)

Use these examples to spur your own creativity. Invent your own modifiers on the fly, using these as guidelines. If you're feeling brave, you can even allow the player(s) to describe the circumstances accounting for each modifier. Your mantra should be "Roleplay it out"—the dramatic circumstances (incontrovertible evidence, dramatic testimony, etc.) should override mere numbers.

Modifier	Accuser	The Computer	The target	The environment
<b>+1</b>	The accuser has been especially good about completing all relevant forms, thereby pleasing The Computer.	The Computer's analysis of the accuser's voice patterns indicates he's telling the truth.	Target unwittingly uses a phrase currently identified as a secret society code phrase.	R&D is testing a new and improved truth serum during today's proceedings. Guess who's going to be testing it?
<b>+5</b>	Accuser draws clever comparison between target and an infamous Old Reckoning villain; found compromising images of the accused on a Gray Subnet (covert filesharing network full of blackmail stuff).	The accuser's arguments are sadly lacking. The Computer offers constructive suggestions to improve them.	Target signs wrong form, accidentally confesses to purloining a supply of Bouncy Bubble Beverage.	A forbidden area infiltrated by the target was recently treated with an experimental Air Freshening Biological Agent. A simple test of the target's jumpsuit determines he spent time in that area.
<b>+10</b>	Accuser fits HPD&MC's new ideal 'Troubleshooter look', designated to appear as guest on <i>Bake That Traitor!</i>	Today's proceedings are being recorded for an episode of <i>Traitor Justice Files</i> . The Computer intends to make an example of the target.	While making a dramatic point, target pulls a hand out of his jumpsuit pocket. Not his own hand—a hand.	A roving scrubbot, cleaning the supply closet next door, triggers a hidden cache of weapons; explosion rattles target into confessing.
<b>-1</b>	Accuser's jumpsuit is slightly soiled or otherwise unhygienic.	Due to time constraints, The Computer permits the accuser only 11 seconds to make his case.	Target is a close co-worker of current 'Hero of Our Complex' award winner.	Briefing officer happens to be a member of the target's secret society.
<b>-5</b>	While accusing, accuser develops hiccups. The Computer considers this illicit Twitchtalk and invalidates the testimony.	The Computer determines recordings of the target have been obviously doctored and throws out the evidence.	Target draws clever comparison between accuser and an infamous Communist traitor currently being sought.	The video of the treason suspect is played back, but it's been taped over with Teela-O-MLY's latest episode.
<b>-10</b>	Accuser picks up the murder weapon and accidentally shoots critical evidence, destroying it; accuser insists there's no chance of mistake, given his mutant power, then belatedly realizes he never registered said power.	The Computer points out the utterly treasonous act isn't technically treason. (Example: Tech Services mandate 1493/56D states a scrubbot may be destroyed without penalty if it operates in the lowest 1% efficiency percentile of all scrubbots active in that sector.)	Target claims to have been active in another sector during the treason, and The Computer's logs confirm this. (The citizen who faked the logs may contact the target, asking a favor in return.)	R&D's prototype mind-scan helmet generates an EMP shockwave, wiping all record of intent to prosecute; a high-clearance bystander to the events in question arrives and swears the target isn't guilty (the citizen may possibly wish a favor in return...).





just as bad, bystanders have accidentally witnessed something far above their clearance. Offenses of this kind include spreading Communist propaganda and witnessing high-clearance citizens do something illegal.

The area of effect embraces all witnesses to the offense. Physically this usually means the room in which the traitor committed the offense, but the area of effect also covers those viewing the incident through surveillance devices. At the time the target did his unpatriotic deed, did you note whether the roll was under the scene's current Tension level? No? No problem. You can pick a Tension level now, roll 1d20 and determine whether you need to haul in any online witnesses. This can be amusing if the accusation starts hauling in high-clearance citizens, say, or the accuser's fellow secret society members. 'Hey, buddy, watch where you're pointing that accusation!'

Each target in the area of effect defends separately against the accusation, just as with area effect weapons.

## Correction

As described above, The Computer's gentle 'correction' (punishment) for treason offenses works like damage dealt in the combat system. A character's seven treason conditions correspond to his seven physical damage conditions.

Okay = Okay

Probation = Snafued

Censure = Wounded

Medication = Maimed

Brainscrub = Down

Termination = Killed

Erasure = Vaporized

The treason conditions are described in Chapter 19, 'Player conditioning devices'.

## How to give correction

The Universal Hostility Formula provides guidance in deciding how The Computer

imposes correction. Remember, though, **accusations always deal the treason damage you think is appropriate.** For Zap games, termination is always the standard penalty. In the utterly binary Alpha Complex judicial system, every serious crime receives the death penalty. In Straight games, you may well want to keep the Troubleshooters alive a while to build tension. Classic games could go either way as you prefer.

## Cumulative correction

Like physical damage to characters, treason damage is non-cumulative. Figure each correction's damage as if the offender were undamaged.

For example, a character already sentenced to medication who then suffers a two-step correction isn't terminated (two steps down from Medication), but instead is censured (two steps down from Okay).

## Recovery from correction

Though The Computer keeps records of all offenses forever and ever, it does acknowledge a corrected citizen's ability to reform. Therefore, after a citizen has been corrected for a given offense, future accusations cannot invoke that same offense. Usually. Of course, if some malign secret society hacker has altered the records so it appears the citizen evaded correction, well, that's clearly not The Computer's fault, now is it? Power brownouts can delete such records as well, but that's entirely to be expected. Really, all these rumors about 'double jeopardy,' 'triple jeopardy' and occasionally 'septuple jeopardy' fail to recognize the practicalities of the situation.

The Alpha Complex legal system, if that's the phrase we want, doesn't try to establish justice, but instead attempts to correct treasonous impulses and restore Alpha Complex to optimal order. A correction lasts not for a fixed time keyed to the offense, but rather expires when the citizen satisfies The Computer he has learned the error of his ways. Central Processing directives based on endless studies report the following satisfaction conditions

to be suitable in 47% (Sector-based Median Corrected) of all cases:

**Probation:** The errant citizen successfully accuses another erring citizen of an offense similar to, yet more severe than, his own.

**Censure:** The censuree demonstrates ardent willingness to document and scold in others the same offense to which he himself unfortunately succumbed.

**Medication:** The citizen performs on his scheduled course of medication without relapse into criminality or undue destruction of Computer property or himself. Medicated citizens who detect in others the same behavior that led them into error, and who covertly administer their own corrective medication to these truants, may earn early release from the medication schedule.

**Brainscrub, termination and erasure:** Erring citizens reform with gratifying immediacy!

## Defense

The way you handle the target's defense against accusations of treason depends on your chosen play style. The Computer may grant the accused a chance to rebut the accusations, if you think it wouldn't slow down the pace unacceptably.

## Treason defense in Straight games



Straight games are usually most interesting when Troubleshooters can stay alive through several missions. Thus a credible accusation must have clear, *documented evidence*

for all treasonous acts. A treasonous act is 'documented evidence' for one of these reasons:

1. You say it is.
2. You accept a player's convincing in-game reason for having documented the act (see reason #1).
3. While the target PC was committing the act, the die roll equalled that scene's Tension level or less. Someone, somewhere, saw the act. You can say the witness was The Computer or an IntSec plant or just a random passerby, but you don't have to explain anything if you don't want to. Where do the players get off even asking such things, anyway? Sounds like insubordination to us.

The target's defense is his current Access rating—his 'treason armor,' subtracted from the default correction. Furthermore, *add the number of the target's current clone to the accuser's success roll* (making it harder to succeed). Why the clone number? Anyone The Computer has brought back multiple times must, of course, be worthy of its trust. To doubt this is to imply The Computer was mistaken.

**When you have shot and killed a man you have in some measure clarified your attitude toward him. You have given a definite answer to a definite problem. For better or worse you have acted decisively. In a way, the next move is up to him.**

—R. A. Lafferty

## Treason defense in Classic games



This works much as in Straight games, except The Computer's imperative to terminate traitors overcomes many social niceties. These are the differences in Classic games:

1. The Computer is much more lenient about letting accusers document a case against a target after the fact—that is, post-termination. You may want to give the player a scene or two to fabrica— assemble the required evidence.
2. Longevity of one's clone family confers no protection. Traitors are everywhere! The target's defense equals his Access rating, not (as in Straight games) Access plus clone number.
3. Remember, players are not liable for the cost of the replacement clone even if the termination was unjustified.

## Treason defense in Zap games



'Citizen, you have been convicted of treason. Please report promptly to the termination center. Thank you for your cooperation.'

### Types of correction

Many and varied are The Computer's ways to mess with its disloyal citizens. Many, varied and fun.

### Official Reprimand

The Computer issues the equivalent of an Official Commendation for minor misconduct. Generally it also assigns another minor punishment, such as marching up and down, polishing the High Programmer's Delta 88 AutoYacht, scrubbing bathrooms, and so on. 'Inexcusable, citizen. You knew that residence block was inhabited. I am entering an Official Reprimand on your permanent record. I warn you, I will assign you to three days of meals in

the INFRARED mess hall if I catch you testing X-ray lasers in public corridors again.'

If you have chosen to use Official Commendations to lighten the seriousness of treason damage the PC suffers in debriefing (see Chapter 29, 'Meritorious conduct'), it is only fair to make Official Reprimands increase their seriousness as well.

### Probation

In addition to imposing fines for minor infractions, Internal Security forces rules violators to volunteer to test R&D's many proposed **Malfeasance Control Devices** ('McDs'). The McD accompanies the character everywhere. The McD probation lasts until the R&D officials retrieve their device. If the McD meets a sad end beforehand, the probationary citizen is liable for its replacement cost, which is typically exorbitant. Some sample McDs to inspire your creativity:

## Insubordination chart

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are insubordination, too. You assign their fines. For that matter, feel free to change these guidelines. **An offense imposes the fine or treason damage you want it to impose.** So even if the offense is listed here as deserving a fine, you can still impose a Censure or Brainscrub or Erasure to keep the players guessing.

Penalties vary between Classic and Straight games. In general, Straight correction is less severe than Classic regarding violations of decorum and ordinary daily conduct, but more severe than Classic regarding false accusations, assault, wanton destruction and other lighthearted stuff. Compared to Straight games, Classic offenses against citizens of clearance lower than the offender aren't that big a deal. In Zap games all offenses are punishable by termination.

### KEY:

☒ = number of ranks of difference in security clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a RED citizen who insubordinately questions a GREEN superior's judgment (an offense listed as ☒x100) earns (3x100=) a 300 credit fine, because GREEN is three ranks above RED.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. **cr** = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone)

Offense	Classic	Straight
A. Asking a question unrelated to a mission or duty	10cr	5%
B. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous	20cr	5%
C. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass)	30cr	5%
D. Being out of uniform or sloppy	10cr	10cr
E. Being unhappy	10cr	5%
F. Bringing bad news	50cr	—
G. Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times	10cr	10cr
H. Curiosity in general, undue	30cr	30cr
I. Evading IntSec or Computer surveillance	50cr	5%
J. Excessive rudeness	10cr	—
K. Failing a hygiene inspection	10cr	10cr
L. Jokes, insolence, or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty	10cr	10cr
M. Jokes, insolence, or disrespect for a specific higher-clearance citizen	☒x100cr	☒x5%
N. Jokes, complaints or warnings about a specific service firm or group other than Internal Security	30cr	5%
O. Jokes, complaints or warnings about Internal Security	100cr	10%
P. Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher-clearance citizen	☒x100cr	☒x100cr
Q. Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer	1,000cr	100%
R. Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission	50cr	50cr
S. Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty	50cr	replacement cost

# Treason chart

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason, too. You assign their fines or treason damage. For that matter, feel free to change these guidelines. **An offense deals the treason damage you want it to deal.**

Penalties vary between Classic and Straight games. In general, Straight correction is less severe than Classic regarding violations of decorum and ordinary daily conduct, but more severe than Classic regarding false accusations, assault, wanton destruction and other lighthearted stuff. Compared to Straight games, Classic offenses against citizens of clearance lower than the offender aren't that big a deal. In Zap games all offenses are punishable by termination.

## KEY:

**Character conditions:** Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination & reprogramming (Twiddling), Erasure

Offense codes are listed in **Minimum-Boost-Maximum** format. Example: P5B means the offense's default minimum correction is Probation, its Boost (the margin needed to add one step of correction) is 5, and the maximum correction is Brainscrub.

☐ = number of ranks of difference in security clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a RED citizen who insubordinately questions a GREEN superior's judgment (an offense listed as ☐x100) earns (3x100=) a 300 credit fine.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. **cr** = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone.

## Offense

### Accusations of treason

- AA. Being accused of treason by a citizen of lower clearance
- BB. By a citizen of equal clearance
- CC. By a citizen of higher clearance
- DD. Falsely accusing a lower-clearance citizen of treason
  - DD/1. A citizen of equal clearance
  - DD/2. A citizen of higher clearance

### Conduct and bearing

- EE. Arguing with the Gamemaster
- FF. Assaulting a lower-clearance citizen
  - FF/1. A citizen of equal clearance
  - FF/2. A citizen of higher clearance
- GG. Being present in a location of higher security clearance
- HH. Damaging, destroying or losing assigned equipment
- II. Failure to defer to a citizen of higher security clearance
- JJ. Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing
- KK. Framing a citizen of lower clearance for a crime
  - KK/1. A citizen of equal clearance
  - KK/2. A citizen of higher clearance
- LL. Possessing a treasonous (Unhealthy) skill
- MM. Possessing unauthorized food, information or equipment
- NN. Refusing to take a prescribed drug
- OO. Threatening the physical or financial safety of a lower-clearance citizen
  - OO/1. A citizen of equal clearance
  - OO/2. A citizen of higher clearance
- PP. Unauthorized destruction of higher-clearance property
- QQ. Demonstrating knowledge of the **PARANOIA** rules above the player's clearance
- RR. Lying to the Gamemaster

### Missions

- SS/1. Disobeying an order given by a mission superior
- SS/2. Disobeying an order given by The Computer
- SS/3. Failure to complete a mission
- SS/4. Failure to complete a service service
- SS/5. Refusing the assignment of a service service
- SS/6. Refusing to accept a mission

### Mutation

- TT/1. Mutation registration
- TT/2. Suspicion of mutation possession
- TT/3. Proof of mutation possession
- TT/4. Incontrovertible proof of mutation possession
- TT/5. Possession of Machine Empathy

### Secret society membership

- UU/1. Confessing to secret society membership
- UU/2. Suspicion of secret society membership
- UU/3. Proof of secret society membership
- UU/4. Incontrovertible proof of secret society membership
- UU/5. Knowledge of Communist doctrine
- UU/6. Being a Communist

### Terminations

- VV. Terminating a lower-clearance citizen without prior authorization or evidence
  - VV/1. A citizen of equal clearance
  - VV/2. A citizen of higher clearance

## Classic

- +1 to Boost number
- unchanged
- 1 Boost (min. 1)
- O5C
- O4C
- P3M
- Medication
- O5T
- C4T
- M3T
- P4M + ☐x100 cr
- P3C
- P4B + ☐x100 cr
- P4C
- P4M
- C4B
- C4T
- M4T
- Brainscrub
- P3M + ☐x100 cr
- P4M
- O5B
- C4B
- M3B
- P4M + ☐x100cr
- + replacement cost
- Termination
- Termination!
- P5B
- C5T
- O4C
- O5C
- P5M
- Termination
- Medication
- C4T
- M3T
- Termination
- Termination
- M3T
- M3T
- B3T
- Brainscrub
- Termination
- C3B
- B2T
- Termination

## Straight

- unchanged
- unchanged
- 1 Boost (min. 1)
- C4M
- P4M
- C3B
- Medication
- P5T
- C3T
- M3T
- P4C + ☐x5% cr
- P3C + replacement cost
- P4M + ☐x5% cr
- P4C
- C4B
- C4T
- M4E
- Brainscrub
- O2C + ☐x5% cr
- Censure
- P4B
- C3B
- M3B
- P4M + ☐x5% cr
- + replacement cost
- Brainscrub
- Termination!
- P5B
- C5T
- P4M
- P5M
- P5M
- Termination
- Medication
- C4B
- M3B
- M3T
- Erasure
- M3B
- C3B
- M3T
- B3T
- B2T
- B1E
- M3T + replacement cost
- B3E + replacement cost
- T1E + replacement cost

- Ⓞ **Reminder Friend:** A stern little bot that points out opportunities to commit treason and cautions against them.
- Ⓞ **Corrective Aerosol Device:** A metal collar with voice-recognition circuitry. When it hears treasonous words, it sprays a puff of tear gas. Some models also constrict.
- Ⓞ **Politeness Siren:** An ankle bracelet with built-in vid camera. If it detects background colors above the wearer's security clearance, it sounds a sharp alarm.

Future **PARANOIA** supplements will present a variety of McDs. If we remember.

## ■ Censure

To dramatize the way insubordination truly pits the erring citizen against *all his fellow citizens*—yes indeed!—HPD&MC coordinates unified public displays of scorn or corrective finger-wagging. A letter code on the censured citizen's chest designates his offense, and all other citizens who meet him are required to consult their current Censural Behavior Schedule and shun, lecture, sneer at or kick the censuree as specified.

The problem is, many citizens disloyally fail to keep their Behavior Schedules updated, possibly because the Schedule can be dramatically revised up to five times daily. The upshot is, any citizen may greet the censuree with any strange reaction you wish.

If a citizen earns repeated censure corrections, The Computer may order the letter code tattooed on his forehead. The possibilities are pleasant to contemplate:

**Mark-R:** Friend Computer, my six weeks of Censure are up. Can I have this 'Compulsively Untidy' tattoo removed from my forehead, please?

**The Computer:** Citizen, I have monitored your progress. You have taken to heart the lectures and lessons given you by your fellow civic-minded citizens and performed your mandatory tasks of penance. Your Tidiness Quotient is exemplary. Of course you may have your tattoo removed—

**Mark-R:** Thank you, Friend Computer!

**The Computer:** —when The Computer's loyal servants in R&D have researched and tested the required tattoo removal technology.

**Mark-R:** Err—are you saying you *can't* remove this Censure tattoo?

**The Computer:** That is incorrect. We will indeed remove your tattoo. Just not yet.

**Mark-R:** Ah. Might I ask, Friend Computer, when the technology will be tested and ready for use?

**The Computer:** Certainly you may, citizen. What is your security clearance?

## Public Hatings

Like Censure, but with TV coverage. The Computer considers the best use of certain offenders is to make them a public example. Creepy stone-faced bureaucrats in HPD's Rectitude Bureau publicize the citizen's offense on public vidscreens, com units, and loudspeakers. They encourage other citizens to gently chide the miscreant for his carelessness.

'This citizen carelessly allowed his jumpsuit to become soiled. Shame! Encourage this thoughtless citizen to express a more diligent commitment to personal hygiene. Thank you for your cooperation.'

The Computer may instead put the offender on probation, holding this punishment in reserve against further errors in judgment.

(HPD&MC restricts the term 'Public Hating' to internal use only. Among ordinary citizens HPD officials use the gentler term 'Community Standards Exercise').

## ■ Fines

The Computer frequently levies fines for minor offenses. Any citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher may levy a fine (a credit penalty) on a citizen of lower clearance than himself. The citizen must immediately report the charge and the amount of the fine to The Computer, which must approve them before deducting them from the citizen's current credit balance. Levying excessive fines is a treasonous offense. Unfortunately there are no published guidelines for appropriate fines.

The Treason and Insubordination charts in the appendix lists typical fines for many offenses.

At this level and above, the punishments really begin to sting.

## ■ Demotion

The Computer may demote a citizen to a lower clearance instantly whenever it loses trust in the citizen. Because The Computer is insane, this can happen at any time for any reason, though you as Gamemaster shouldn't appear arbitrary.

Any citizen of Clearance GREEN or higher may demote citizens in a certain range of lower clearances, specified in Chapter 4, 'Spending your credits'. Citizens customarily demote Troubleshooters for being high-handed, making



threats, questioning orders or otherwise power-tripping. It's amazing how a field demotion can improve the victim's manners.

Instead of actual demotion, The Computer or the citizen may strip the victim of certain privileges, such as a Mandatory Bonus Duty assignment (see Chapter 6).

For exceptional incompetence or insubordination, a citizen could conceivably be demoted to INFRARED level, right out of the Troubleshooting business and back to the food vats or waste recycling. Practically speaking, this requires the player to generate a new character on the spot, so do not demote him that far unless you're willing to stop the game while he fills out the new sheet.

## ■ Medication

'Huh? What? I did something wrong? M'head hurts. Ooh, colors. Hey buddy, you're glowing the wrong color for your clearance. I gotta shoot you, okay?'

Medicating an offender is standard treatment if the team is on a mission and the convicted Troubleshooter cannot be readily replaced by a clone or other Troubleshooter. HPD&MC Happiness Office bureaucrats (think of the meanest registered nurses you've ever seen) prescribe and supervise biochemical supplements. If the citizen survives the supplements and the mission, The Computer may assign additional correction during debriefing.

Have the medicated Troubleshooter's player roleplay a drug effect you think would be



# GM SECTION CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

interesting. For guidance, roll 1d20 on this table or choose an entry:

- 1-2: Dazed confusion
- 3-4: Hyperactivity
- 5-6: Color blindness
- 7-8: Hallucinations
- 9-10: Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- 11-12: Euphoric optimism
- 13-14: Open-hearted trust and sincerity
- 15-16: Wild confidence
- 17-18: Rampant homicidal psychotic paranoia
- 19-20: Roll twice more and combine the effects

## ■ Brainscrub

In its benign form, brainscrub is a simple HPD&MC training program in Corrective Loyalty. It clears the offender's criminal record, and usually his recent memory. The former offender may barely recall secret society meeting points and recognition signals, as well as the nature of his mutant power. But his rivalries with other Troubleshooters go down the memory hole.

That's the *best* case. IntSec escorts obnoxious or persistent offenders to the nearest Bright Vision Re-Education Center.

There specially programmed docbots treat the offender's forebrain to a relaxing hour-long bath in a variety of neurotransmitters. The former criminal emerges fresh, optimistic, and full of inspiring loyalty to The Computer. Instances of delusional or hallucinatory behavior, including so-called imaginary playmates, are believed to be rare.

## ■ Retirement

When the stress of a mission causes an otherwise blameless citizen to foam at the mouth and scuttle around on all fours, The Computer may mercifully assign him to Permanent Recreation in one of HPD&MC's retirement gulags. The Computer activates his clone backup, possibly with a prophylactic brainscrub first.

**Note:** Sometimes characters with psychotic tendencies get promoted rather than retired. The Computer works in mysterious ways.

## ■ Termination and repatterning

Colloquially termed 'twiddling', this feared correction recycles an existing traitor and transfers his MemoMax brainmap to a backup clone body—with a few alterations. To correct

the thought patterns that prompted the original treason, The Computer's skilled Tech Services technicians remap synapses in brain areas known to promote criminality. Fortunately, no memory of the agonizing process survives—usually—except for traumatic flashbacks in stressful circumstances—and in 22.4% of cases there are absolutely no side effects, aside from trivial losses of skills, memory and motor control.

Impose any penalty you think would be interesting. For guidance, roll 1d20 for the twiddled character; the number rolled is the total number of points the player must subtract from his character's skills or specialties. The number rolled also suggests which skills or specialties are reduced:

- 1-5: The number rolled is the total number of points the player must subtract from his character's three Knowledge skill ratings. For example, if you roll 4, the player might choose to subtract 1 from his Hardware rating, 2 from Software, and 1 from Wetware, for a total reduction of 4 points.
- 6-10: The points can be subtracted from any of the six Action and Knowledge skills.
- 11-19: The points can be subtracted from any of the skills or common specialties.
- 20: Tell the player there are no point subtractions. Unbeknownst to the player, his character's Power attribute rating rises to 20. However, his newly strengthened mutant power backfires far more frequently (any roll of 11 or more, or when you think it would be funny).

## ■ Erasure

If you've had poor results keeping a player in line with every other remedy, there is one ultimate measure: erasure. The Computer eradicates the traitor's Tech Services clone template, prohibiting further revivals. If the target happens to still be alive, The Computer also declares him a fugitive criminal. It would take strategy and high-clearance connections to wriggle out of that bind.

Regretfully cast the player's character sheet aside, more in sorrow than anger. The player has to generate a new character, so be ready to stop the game in the meantime.

## 'Treason point!'

In all previous editions of **PARANOIA**, the most dramatic statement the GM could make to a stubborn or misbehaving player was, 'Treason point for Ben-R!' Then the GM showily made a black mark by the character's name, while Ben-R's player cringed and his fellow players chuckled.

In earlier editions the Gamemaster tracked a citizen's status in Alpha Complex using **treason points** and **commendation points**. These were not just game abstractions but actual in-game quantities The Computer and mission officials used to measure current standing. Citizens earned them (that is, the Gamemaster awarded them to players) for doing bad things and good things, respectively. When a citizen's treason point total exceeded his commendation points by 10, The Computer marked him as a traitor.

The **PARANOIA** XP treason and commendation systems no longer require these points. Yet it is enormously satisfying to give a player an unpleasant smile and purr, 'Treason point to Larry-R!'. Try it. Say 'Treason point!' Feels good, doesn't it?

These spot rewards and penalties are great for conditioning players. We hate to lose them. We suggest two ways to keep them:

- ☉ **Kind-of-cheesy:** Proclaim you are assigning a character a treason or commendation point. If necessary, explain to the players The Computer tracks their characters' status using these points. Conspicuously make a mark by the character's name on one or another sheet. That's all that happens, actually—these points have no game effect, and you never pay attention to them except as the stuff of dramatic pronouncements.
- ☉ **Actual effect:** Each commendation point you award functions as an Official Commendation, and each treason point functions as an Official Reprimand. Each Official Commendation reduces the severity of treason damage a player suffers at debriefing, and each Official Reprimand increases it. The rules in this chapter explain how.

If you take the second approach, you could get the same effect just by saying 'Official Commendation to Ben-R', or 'Official Reprimand to Larry-R.' But then you couldn't say 'Treason point!' Go ahead, say it again. We say it all the time: 'Treason point!' It does earn us weird looks on the bus, but what a thrill, huh?



# 31. Running the game

Here's some advice for how to get the best use out of the time you've got available to play.

## Creating characters

**PARANOIA** works best with a GM and five or six players. Ideally your players either know each other quite well or have never met.

For beginning players, rolling up a character and filling out a character sheet can be involved and puzzling. You can make it a lot less intimidating by talking them through the process. This can be done in 10 to 20 minutes—less, if your players have read through the Player section and you leave narrow specialties open for now.

It might be better to give your players pregenerated characters. We include a set with this rulebook, and you can always roll up a bunch of characters on your own and hand the filled-in sheets to your players.

Using pregenerated characters is a good idea for two reasons:

First, **PARANOIA** characters need personalities that fit the peculiar **PARANOIA** universe. We tailor the abilities and idiosyncrasies of our pregenerated characters to fit the mission. We design the characters as a team, anticipating the charming and homicidal interactions to be expected among Troubleshooting colleagues. After studying the pregenerated PCs, you'll see how it's done. In fact, as you design your own missions you'll be better able to match your own characters to your twisted dramatic needs, and certainly you'll be better able to match your characters to the strengths, peculiarities and psychological instabilities of your players.

Second, using pregenerated PCs is a big help to novice players. They don't have to master the intricate details of a new character system right off the bat; instead, they start playing immediately. **PARANOIA** sessions are ideally brief, intense, suspenseful and fast-paced. Starting off a session by rolling up characters is like starting a movie with 20 minutes of 'Meet the Press'-style talking-heads exposition.

For more experienced and ambitious players, cooperative character design is fun. Give your players a rough outline of their characters and let them fill in the details. In any case, you'll still have to work up the distinctively paranoid refinements every character should have:

- ④ Some possession that is ambiguously valuable, partially incomprehensible and eminently treasonous.
- ④ Current secret society status—reputation within the group, standing orders, special interests, etc.

- ④ Tidbits about other characters—vague rumors, fragmentary evidence, puzzling observations—that foment distrust and provide tantalizing hearsay evidence of treason. (*Note:* This is not always necessary—sometimes throwing complete strangers together works just fine.)

## Seating order

Get in the habit of going around the table from left to right when players declare their actions. Get a quick statement from the first character, go immediately to the person next to him, and so on—bang, bang, bang. No stalling, no going back for second thoughts, no interrupting with out-of-order comments. This keeps things rolling along and maintains a subtle stranglehold on the players' sense of free will. It's a good idea to reverse the order now and then, just to keep them all on their toes.

## Introducing characters

Before the session begins, have each player introduce his character to the rest of the group. Keep intros short and to the point. Limit the comments to these details:

- ④ **Name and security clearance:** A good cheap trick is to scribble the character's full name on a piece of paper and tuck it in a pocket or pin it on so it looks like the identification strip on a military uniform. To encourage players to refer to each other by their Alpha Complex handles, terminate a few who use real-world names. Establish polite phrases for addressing one another: 'At your service, citizen John-R-BUE' or 'Serve and protect, Newt-R'.
- ④ **Distinctive appearance:** Clearance color of garments, armor, weapons carried, plus any unusual details—nifty scars, registered mutant stripes, medals or decorations, odd widgets, etc.
- ④ **Tics:** A well-designed character has one or two distinctive personality traits. An IR marketeer may always seem to be well-equipped. A GREEN goon may absently fidget with a pair of brass knuckles. A mad R&D scientist may constantly tinker with a widget. A heavily-drugged citizen may occasionally wander off into walls jabbering to himself. A marksman may regularly clean and polish his

weapon. The player should have chosen a couple of recognizable tics during character creation. Remember, tics are by definition *immediately obvious* to other characters.

With beginners, you might introduce the characters yourself, giving the players a model of brevity, detail and wit they can follow during the game.

## Private briefings

After handing out and introducing characters, take the players aside one by one and give them some special tidbits—unsubstantiated rumors about other player characters; vague hints from obscure informants; secret society tips, warnings or missions; odd notes about strange happenings in Alpha Complex; and so on. The point is to give the players numerous reasons to blast one another and to fill their heads with generally unreliable intelligence seasoned with occasionally critical information.

In the 'blast one another' department, you can be direct ('Laura-G is a traitor. Waste her') or subtle ('Your mentor in Power Services keeps getting this funny tic in his face when you talk about your comrade Laura-G. Sort of a winking thing. And he keeps rubbing his finger across his throat—odd, huh?'). The hints can come from familiar and reliable informants, odd rumors, or 'personal observation'. ('Say. You've noticed this funny thing—Laura-G always seems to sort of... *disappear* when trouble appears. Literally. I mean, you haven't really seen anything, but somehow you turn around and she isn't there.')

The mixture of nonsense and essential info (heavy on the nonsense, please—*fear and ignorance*) may provide clues and red herrings for the mission, or resources and contacts through service groups, secret societies, and the IR market.

The private briefing is also an opportunity for novice players to ask about things they don't understand, especially secret societies, mutant powers and so on.

## Master the technology of note-passing

Because of all the sneaking, backstabbing and secret information in **PARANOIA**, private communication between the GM and the players is critical. It is also incredibly annoying when players call the GM aside every two or three seconds with vital questions and fiendish plots.



Every **PARANOIA** Gamemaster has his own little tricks for keeping players in line.

A lively traffic in notes is an excellent alternative. It lets you schedule your interruptions, and putting things on paper forces the players to be brief and direct, while you can be flip and irresponsible in response, offhandedly ignoring the request, or nodding yes or no. It also produces written memos to remind you of certain ongoing conditions ('The next time Laura-G is even briefly separated from the group, I'll start a fire with my pyrokinesis power and frame her') and provides nice entries to tuck into a character's Personal File as a record of treasonous actions.

**PARANOIA** players love to write notes. It gives them a chance to scheme and tattle all the time, even when you're busy with something else. Notes often concern clever boobytraps and double-crosses, or the player wishes to go on record as being on guard against sneaky stuff from other players. Most popular and adorable is the habit of making private PDC reports concerning the suspicious or treasonous actions of other characters.

The wonderful thing about notes is that everyone knows you're up to something, but what? A mound of notes growing in front of you is a good indication that the players have the proper **PARANOIA** spirit. 'Does that note concern me? Am I being set up? Should I shoot first? And who? Well, if I shoot everyone, I'm bound to get at least some of my enemies...' In fact, GM and players often pass blank notes back and forth, just to keep everyone nervous.

Here's a good way to handle notes. Place them all in front of you, with the most recent note received on top. From time to time (every five or ten minutes at least; sometimes much more often when there is a heavy note flow or

when you're not busy) pick up the notes and read them in first-received order (bottom up).

Explain to your players how you judge your notes. A good rule of thumb is, the shorter the note, the more promptly the action takes place, but the more latitude you have in judging the specific results of the action. On the other hand, a long, detailed note implies careful planning and execution, and the result is likely to be closer to the player's stated intention.

## Data tracking

As GM you'll want to track each scene's **Tension level**. You also may find it helpful to track this information for each character:

- ☉ Access and Power ratings
- ☉ Current health condition and clearance
- ☉ Documented treasonous acts (but see 'Tracking treason chart codes' below)

You don't usually need to track Perversity points for each player, especially if you hand them out as poker chips or other physical tokens. If a player's Perversity total grows to the point tokens become unwieldy (something must be wrong!), you have several options:

- ☉ Track the total on paper.
- ☉ Record a portion on paper and give the rest as chips.

- ☉ Stage a big firefight or treason investigation where everyone is shooting at or accusing the Perversity-laden character.

## Tracking treason chart codes

Your versions of the Treason, Insubordination and Reward chart entries have code letters. Use these to unsettle and alarm your players, and at the same time offload tiresome record tracking.

When a character commits a treasonous or insubordinate act, find the appropriate letter code on the chart. Tell the players, 'Record code VV/2 [or whatever] for character [Name] on your character sheets.' This seldom fails to scare the stuffing out of the target and delight the others. It would be sadistic to just call out meaningless letter codes after any random action. Sadistic, cruel, manipulative. Fun.

When handling accusations of treason have the players read back the names and codes they recorded. Locate the codes on the charts and announce each crime's name in a stern, righteous voice.

## Tracking credits

Do you need to track the PCs' current credits? Sounds terrible, doesn't it?

It helps to track credits in a general way, like maybe to the nearest hundred or so. If you ever have to use a calculator to determine the Troubleshooters' credits, you're trying way too hard. Take an example from life: Do you know the *exact* balance in your bank account? Sorry, 'about a hundred' doesn't cut it. People rarely remember exactly how much they have; are Alpha Complex characters any different? They buy algae chips while their players aren't looking, or loot some loose change on their downtime. A player should never be sure exactly how much his character has. A ballpark estimate is what you're aiming for, with occasional confirmations of exactly how much, such as when he can't buy that spiffy-looking jumpsuit because he's short 19 credits.

A character's accounts can suddenly change for many reasons: The Computer automatically adjusts for inflation, service charges, account hackers, interest on savings or loans, glitches in the system, etc. You can offer no end of excuses in case some anal-retentive player asks why his account is 19 credits lower than the last time he checked.

Of course, anyone frustrated with your whims could simply withdraw all his credits. Heh, heh. Mention his impressive total of hard currency during play. Remember, your best weapons against a wayward player are the other players.

## 32. PLAY TIPS

### Session length

We hear tales of marathon sessions lasting 10 to 12 hours. Phew! The idea of that much soul-crushing gaiety makes us flinch, but more power to you. We recommend two- to three-hour sessions for most typically impossible **Classic** missions. The fast pace, high tension

and constant player involvement of **PARANOIA** gives you a full and satisfying evening of roleplaying in a couple of hours.

Four or more hours are fine in Straight style, when you emphasize plot and character advancement and when player characters have good reason to avoid blowing each other up every minute or two. These missions may feature intervals of slow, tooth-grinding

suspense, which give you time to recover your strength for the next bout of frenzied action.

In Zap games it is hard to reach the one-hour mark before everyone runs out of clones. Keep a stack of new PCs with accompanying clone backups (backup backups?) close to hand. With frequent replenishment a Zap group could hang in there for maybe two hours before keeling over from exhaustion.

## 32. Presenting missions

When you're actually running a mission, here are some things you can do to ensure a good time for all.

### Maintain triple redundancy of character coercion systems

Players who tarry and do the unexpected are charming for a while, but eventually they become tiresome. Sooner or later, you'll want to use all the spiffy plot elements and neat encounters you've dreamed up for your players, so you'll want to get them on track. Fortunately, in **PARANOIA**, when the PCs aren't doing what you want them to do, there are plenty of ways to make them.

**The Computer:** The Computer is everywhere. Cameras scan every room and corridor. Electronic ears bring every whisper to The Computer's attention. Like Santa, The Computer knows when you've been bad or good.

The voice of The Computer is everywhere. Public address systems carry messages to every corner of Alpha Complex. Even if a PC is Outdoors or in an abandoned sector, The Computer can speak through his PDC.

You know how fervently citizens attend to the voice of The Computer. A formal command is seldom necessary. A polite hint is usually sufficient, particularly if you make an object lesson out of anyone who fails to respond cheerfully and loyally to polite hints.

**Mission alerts:** Give the PCs very specific orders:

**Go to Room 36-24-38. Immediately. Now. Walk in a straight line. No talking. No poking or shoving. Keep your blasters in your holsters. Don't even think about going anywhere but Room 36-24-38. Don't touch walls, doors, or other citizens on the way. No, you may not go to the bathroom. Serve The Computer. Right now. The Computer will fix your wagon if you don't follow directions. Thank you for your cooperation.**

**Messengers:** If the PCs encounter a circumstance not specifically covered in their orders, or find some annoyingly clever way to warp or ignore the intentions of their orders,

send a messenger (a breathless **INFRARED**, perhaps, or a flustered jackobot, or a gleaming duralloy combat the size of a caboose) with an urgent mission update clarifying The Computer's exact wishes in the matter.

**High-status NPCs:** The timely arrival of an NPC with a higher security clearance than the ranking PC is a perfect channeling device. Failure to obey a higher-clearance citizen is, after all, treason. Even when PCs whine about having priority orders from higher authority ('But The Computer told us to do this...'), it is mysteriously difficult to get official confirmation of such orders. ('Pardon me, but the line is busy, he's away from his desk and you have the wrong number. Will you hold?')

**Internal Security GREEN goons, combots, guardbots, and Vulture Squadrons:** These faithful servants of The Computer often show up in conjunction with special messengers and dispatches. Or in response to citizen complaints about annoying disturbances (like weapons fire and tortured shrieks). These Defenders of Law and Order often have helpful suggestions about PC manners and social observances. 'Don't be

alarmed. These surface-to-surface missiles are for your protection. Now, don't you loyal citizens have some pressing business elsewhere?'

### Give players lots of stuff to do

**PARANOIA** presents you with a terrible temptation to be entertaining. A witty and enthusiastic GM can fall into the error of hogging the stage.

Remember: *Let players do things*. This is a game, and the players are gaming. Gaming is making choices and taking actions. The players have to be able to make choices and take actions, early and often, or they will be annoyed, no matter how entertaining you are.

Here is a checklist of popular **PARANOIA** activities. Stay alert; pay attention to what's going on in each session. If you find yourself doing all the talking and thinking, cut down on your own radiant personality and get your players more involved in the following:

### The Newbie Net

**PARANOIA** is not a game of kindness.

*('Friend Computer! That ULTRAVIOLET's committing treason!')*

Play emphasizes inter-player suspicion and rivalry, with you as Gamemaster genially presenting reasons for dread, indomitable obstacles, along with bafflingly arbitrary rewards.

*('Are any of you guys Sierra Clubbers?')*

If a new player has trouble getting the idea, well, it only takes a few fatalities to convey the idea.

*('Stop! I'm an undercover IntSec agent! You're under arrest!')*

Still, one style of character-killing is too cheesy even for **PARANOIA**. Experienced players wait, vulture-like, for a newbie to ask some perfectly reasonable question ('What's Bouncy Bubble Beverage?'), accuse him of treason, and let fly with laser blasts.

Please. Among experienced **PARANOIA** players, it does heighten fear to rule that any spoken remark is made in character by the actual PC, so other PCs hear it. Heightening fear is good. That said, a newbie who triggers a bloodbath by asking one simple question won't feel heightened fear, only stunned contempt.

You want to condition players to keep playing **PARANOIA**. To this end, you can grant a new player some provisional, short-lived slack—a 'Newbie Net'. When he asks an unwise question ('Who said anything about evidence?') or tries some blatantly stupid action, halt the game for a moment and ask, 'Do you really want to do that?' If he continues, his PC deserves to die.

Naturally, players past their first few clones have to play without a net.





**Shoot one another, smash things and blow things up** (primitive problem solving): They do an awful lot of this. They seem to enjoy it.

**Talk/lie/whine** (talking your way out of problems, or talking other people into problems): They do this when they can't shoot, smash or blow things up. It isn't as destructive, but it requires more creativity and wit, which players seem to enjoy exercising.

**Puzzling** (thinking and discussing problems): When they can't shoot or talk their way around a problem, sometimes they will think about it. Sometimes they come up with brilliantly original, charmingly entertaining, and occasionally effective solutions, which seems to make them happy.

**Experiment** (solving problems by devising little tests): This is science along the lines of 'Let's put these ants in an aluminum pot, put it in the sun and see what happens.' Kid science. Fun stuff. Most of this has to do with testing experimental equipment, though with the uncertainty inherent in operating any equipment in **PARANOIA**, using a toothbrush may qualify as basic research.

**Choose between two evils** (the problem of choosing between the horrible and the terrible): A common occurrence in **PARANOIA**, and hard work. PCs spend lots of time agonizing over which variety of treason they want to be executed for, or which of two hopeless courses of action to take.

**Respond to desperate circumstances** (solving problems before you have time to think about them): This common PC activity takes the general form, 'Gee, it looks like you're doomed. Now what do you do?'. This is real knee-jerk problem solving; the PCs don't have time to think, but can only flail about in panic. Fun, huh?

## Be colorful

Be colorful in your application of the rules. Avoid mechanics talk. Don't distract from the atmosphere by making specific rules references and using the jargon of game mechanics. Imagine you're a play-by-play radio announcer for a Christians-Lions game at the old Coliseum. For example:

**Rules talk:** Okay. You fire your laser at your colleague, who is dodging. Your skill is rating 7, the Perversity modifier is +3, so you need a 10 or less. [Clatter.] Okay. A 3—a hit. Margin of 7, your laser's Boost is 3, so that's two extra steps; your target has reflec armor, so that knocks off one step from the increase. Okay, your fellow Troubleshooter is Wounded.

**Colorful talk:** Okay. You turn and casually point your laser at your buddy. He suspects something and dives for cover. [Clatter.] Sizzle. Well, you hit him in the chest—bet he's grateful to The

Computer for his reflec armor. [Clatter.] Hmm. No smell of charred flesh, no death wail... but he doesn't look too active.

Rules talk is fine in the beginning. It helps you learn the rules and shares the responsibility for judging action sequences with knowledgeable players. But you get the point: Move toward the dramatic presentation style as fast as you can.

## Interpret die rolls to your dramatic needs

The margin of a player's roll tells you how well he did, or how badly he bungled. Use the margin as a cue for your description.

'Oops. The security alarm—whoop, whoop, whoop! [Clatter.] You dive for the autocar controls and press the buttons for the security sequence... do you make it?... yes!... you're tapping... looks good... but, uh-oh... too bad... well, it's tough using a keyboard with armored gauntlets... WHAM. Next contestant?'

'Sure. You summon up all you know about physics as you inspect the CosmoZoom Planetary Warp Shield device you've been assigned for testing. [Clatter.] Looks perfectly safe. Perfectly... oh, say. You remember some rumor about planets and gravity and stuff... some Commie named Copernicus or Newton or something. Say. Maybe this thing is dangerous...'

A wide margin of success or failure is a cue for epic hyperbole: 'You apply your extensive knowledge of robot design to repairing the bot brain...' [Clatter—succeed fantastically.] 'My! You seem to have outdone yourself this time. You run through the operation checks and turn it on—the scrubot nods politely, inquires about the current status of the search for a unified field theory, spreads its mop attachments and leaps nimbly across the room like a ballet dancer. Nice work, citizen.'

## Manage information

'I'm sorry. That information is not available at this time.' **PARANOIA** players are caught in a bind. They have to rely on the GM for information, but they know the GM takes great delight in denying access to information. Further, they know the information they do get is either muddled or incorrect—and therefore useless—or completely reliable and accurate—which probably means they'll get executed if they're caught knowing it.

Information management requires a delicate touch. On one hand, you want to frustrate your players and erode confidence in the information they receive. That's **PARANOIA**: ignorance and fear, fear and ignorance. On the other hand, you don't want to crush their spirit completely; they have to ask questions to keep the game moving, and they have to

believe there is some point to asking questions, or they'll actually get paranoid and avoid you and the game like the plague.

A couple of principles help you maintain this tension between atmospheric despair and real despair:

**Exploit the ritual PARANOIA phrases:** 'I'm sorry. That information is not available at this time ... I'm sorry. That information is not available at your security clearance.' 'Information retrieval specialists are working on your request at this moment. All information will be forwarded to you at the earliest opportunity.' 'We've located that information you were looking for. It's definitely lost. Glad to be of service.'

**Maintain an exaggerated and cheerfully phony pretense of cooperation and eager service:** Pretend to be ever so sorry for the delay, or confident that the information is forthcoming immediately. The spoken message should be one of hope; the tone in your voice should ooze with obvious insincerity.

**Frequently dispense valuable tidbits to encourage false optimism:** About five or ten percent of the time, offer truly useful information, but bury it in useless and misleading information, or make it available through thoroughly unreliable sources. This conditions the players to look carefully for information in even the most obvious nonsense and hooplah, and to trust even completely unreliable sources, setting them up for even more colossal hose jobs.

**Use bogus secret attribute and skill rolls as a screen when feeding them plausible nonsense:** 'Oh. You want to know what security systems are protecting this installation. How about a security skill roll...' [You, knowing there are no security systems protecting the installation, roll dice. Pretend to study them. Look impish.] 'Well, well. You are absolutely certain there's no security at all here. Isn't that wonderful news? Why, you can do anything you want!'

Players catch on immediately. When their dice indicate a major failure, you are going to gleefully misinform them. They haven't seen whether the roll was a failure, so they don't really know they can't trust the information, but you are way too happy about the whole thing for the information to be on the level.

**When in doubt, invoke The Computer:** 'Surely The Computer, in its infinite wisdom and benevolence, would have given you that information if you really needed it. Certainly you wouldn't question the judgment of The Computer, would you?'

## Vary your tone of voice

When you talk to the players, make it clear whether you're talking as Referee, The Computer, Narrator, or NPC. **PARANOIA** is a game of tone, and each Gamemaster role has its voice or voices.



**The Referee** has an exaggerated sincerity and concern for fairness and impartial interpretation and application of the rules. To the players, this means they are hosed, and there is nothing they can do about it except look cheerful.

**The Computer** is schizophrenic: on one hand, it is ever so solicitous of the citizen's welfare and safety; on the other hand, it is cool and matter-of-fact about dealing swiftly and ruthlessly with traitors and Commies.

**The Narrator** is neutral and reliable. Your tone should lead the players to trust you when you describe what their characters remember and sense. Occasionally circumstances may permit tampering with memories or sensory data (drugs, MemGo, brainwashing, etc.), but only as distinctive exceptions. Don't mix this voice up with the other voices that make the players distrust GM statements.

**NPCs** have zillions of distinctive voices and manners. Avoid letting your NPC voices blur into one or two standard characters.

**Referee:** Gosh, I don't suppose there's any chance that it could malfunction, do you? [Clatter.] Hmm! Interesting!

**The Computer:** Yes, citizen. May I be of assistance?

**Narrator:** The room is about 10 meters across. A bot about the size of a microwave oven stands in its precise center. [Clatter.] John-R, you've seen this kind of bot before; it's an early-model scrubot.

**NPC:** Louie-G says, 'Okay, youse guys. Over de top. De last one out gets his brain fried, yunnerstan?'

## Be sensitive to play style

Be sensitive to your players, and know what style of play they prefer and can enjoy.

Sometimes **PARANOIA** players progress slowly over time from Zap to Classic and sometimes on to Straight. Because you can play several **PARANOIA** missions in an evening, sometimes this progression occurs overnight. Some players stick with one style; others bounce around from style to style according to impulse. To have the most fun, make sure you and your players agree on the desired play style before you start play.

## Monitor the stages of play

You already know the three play styles: Classic, Straight and Zap. Similar to these, but not quite the same, are the three *play stages*: **Trigger Madness**, **Roleplaying** and **Mastery**. These well understood and predictable stages describe, not the elements and tone of game missions, but the evolution of your players. Monitor their current stage closely, and evolve the game as you require to match it.

### Stage 1: Trigger Madness

Expect the players' initial reaction to **PARANOIA** to be a joyous release from the generally solemn and life-revering themes of other roleplaying games. Players gleefully exterminate one another at the drop of a hat, exhilarated by the prospect of ruthless play against the most imposing opponents—other player characters. They don't really need a mission; just stick the characters in an enclosed space and they'll start blasting each other. If you do by chance get them moving into a mission, they'll blast anything in their way that

isn't running fast enough to elude blasting. Then they will get back to the solemn work of annihilating one another.

Fun though this is, Zap is only the lowest form of **PARANOIA**. If and when you want to advance to the more subtle Alpha Complex 'Catch-22 No-Win Terminal Runarounds', get the players to put away their lasers for a while. Here are some tricks to dislodge the players from Zap mode.

The Computer, receiving reports of disturbances in the corridors and destruction of Computer property (large scale devastation of Troubleshooters, citizens and their environs), announces over the PA system the PCs are traitors, places a huge bounty on their heads and sends a Vulture Squadron unit to straighten them out. The next generation of clone backups, reluctant to roleplay molecules wafting down a corridor, may avoid repeating their predecessors' trigger-happy behavior.

If the backups show the same criminal disregard for public safety and property, repeat the first step, but summon the third set of clones directly to Internal Security for a 'weapons inspection'. IntSec technicians disarm the PCs and install remote-control switches in each weapon. IntSec then returns the weapons and assigns a leader—the sanest player—a remote that turns the other characters' weapons on and off. They also brevet the leader to a higher security clearance and give him Kevlar armor. Henceforth the PC weapons only function at the whim of the sanest player.

If this doesn't work, summon the PCs to a debriefing where they are all strapped into booths resembling iron maidens. Carry out an extensive debriefing with each player, reminding him how important it is that they achieve their mission without further delay—how terrible it is to damage Computer property—and how difficult it is to have roleplaying fun while you restrain their characters in debriefing booths for long, admonitory harangues. Then return them to the mission.



If they are still zapping each other, throw in the towel and play a video game.

## Stage 2: Roleplaying

At this stage the players are still so tickled by the bizarre setting of **PARANOIA** they just want to roleplay Alpha Complex citizens. They'll fool with their secret society affiliations and the IR market, test their mutant powers, learn how to manipulate the bureaucracy and regulations, play with all the neat stuff they can get from PLC Outfitting and R&D, see what kinds of treason they can get away with and what they can weasel out of.

This is loads of fun—simply learning how to stay alive in Alpha Complex is a mission in itself—but the players won't have much interest in accomplishing missions. In fact, each player may believe the only effective

strategy in **PARANOIA** is to stall long enough so he is the last mission group member killed or executed—that this is the highest accomplishment possible for a **PARANOIA** character. Who cares about the mission? Of course the mission is impossible. That's **PARANOIA**, right?

Good work, GM. That's the tone you've been aiming for: cheerful and utter despair.

But remarkably, when we Famous Game Designers design our missions, we really believe they could be completed. Honest. Admittedly, sometimes we don't know how, but we are absolutely confident some players are good enough to find out. After all, with an infinite supply of clone backups, every problem becomes solvable. At least, we're absolutely confident it becomes solvable by players smarter than we are.

Clever, cocksure players with indomitable wills and deviant imaginations are ready for Stage 3 **PARANOIA**.

## Stage 3: Mastery

These players have learned an awful truth: Even the Gamemaster, armed with **PARANOIA**'s unparalleled resources for coercion and PC oppression, is at the mercy of a group of players with twisted imaginations and perverse problem-solving strategies. To be honest, we've not met many players who can sustain this confident, competent style, but we've often found it at least in flashes in even beginner groups and convention demos.

This is one of the greatest pleasures of **PARANOIA**—to confront players with an impossible mission and watch them solve it anyway.

Still, don't get all sentimental. Give these ace players newer, deadlier challenges. How? By buying more **PARANOIA** products, of course.

# 33. Remember this!

## Don't torture the players—just mess with their minds.

As Gamemaster you aren't The Computer! Play The Computer as an NPC, but don't torment the players on that account. You're here to help the players ('help' in the sense of 'give them lots of rope').

It is seldom useful to be actively malevolent to the players. However, it is often useful to make them *think* you're actively malevolent. Knowing the difference is a step on the path to **PARANOIA** mastery.

Go light on arbitrary penalties. Let the players commit their own treason, observe other players' treason and make their accusations. They can make themselves traitors plenty often without your help.

Freely give players the power to make each other paranoid. Give players *no other power of any kind* without a compensating responsibility! In **PARANOIA** every advantage you allow should also somehow obligate the character. The Computer believes it can create a perfect Alpha Complex if every good citizen exerts himself to the utmost. It gives all benefits with the expectation the recipient will use them for the common good.

For instance, why are unregistered mutant powers treason but registered ones are okay? Among other reasons, it's because The Computer cannot make best use of unregistered powers. Register your mutant power and you can use it freely, but you're also expected to use it to save the team. If something bad happens to the team—well, it was your responsibility as a mutant to save them, right?

Skills, service firms, pretty much anything: Does The Computer know about the character's

skill or ability? If so, when something goes wrong that the character conceivably could have averted, it is the character's fault.

## Ration information jealously; don't ration jealousy.

The less players understand about their situation, the more tense and fearful they feel. Hoard information as you would gold. When players ask for information you don't want to give, that information is not available at their security clearance. If you tire of this response, roll 1d20 and consult the Information Withholding Table in this book's appendix.

Make each player believe other players have greater information than he does. A sample trick: When a player asks a question, The Computer informs him the answer is available only to his Troubleshooter team leader. Hand the team leader a note no one else gets to read: 'The answer requires higher security clearance than you have. Nod at me and smile to get a

Perversity point. If you don't tell anybody else what's in this note, I'll give you another point at the end of the session.'

## You are *always* right!

Some **PARANOIA** players believe the GM is actively hostile to their characters. Let them believe this, of course, but never actually descend to real hostility. You are entirely in control of this game; you control the vertical and the horizontal. Mere petty rivalry with the players is beneath you.

Train them as you would your pets. Be generous, yet display the arsenal of controls at your disposal. Be ever ready to turn the characters against one another. Do all this, and you will find in your players, not enemies, but—like the Olympian gods looking down on the mayfly lives of mortals—an endless source of entertainment.

If it doesn't work out that way, kill the bastards.



# DESIGN NOTES / BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Notes and resources

In the early 1980s a New York City Gamemaster, Dan Gelber, conceived the Alpha Complex setting for his roleplaying campaign. Game designers Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan encouraged Dan to detail the setting. From Dan's pages of notes Eric and Greg created a game, and editor and developer Ken Rolston added a darkly humorous tone. West End Games published **PARANOIA** in 1984 to instant success.

**PARANOIA** revolutionized roleplaying. The first really successful comedic RPG, it was among the earliest games to tailor rules to achieve a specific emotional atmosphere—a tensely hilarious Huxleyan satire. As the support line's inspired line editor, Ken Rolston guided to publication half a dozen brilliant supplements and adventures, as well as the much-loved second edition (1987), the line's high-water mark. In these products, ornamented by the quintessential **PARANOIA** artist, Jim Holloway, the game's tone moved to slapstick, the fast-moving frenetic play that remains the beloved **Classic** style.

When Ken left West End to work in computer games (he later became lead designer on *Morrowind*), the **PARANOIA** support line went astray. Like a Humanist after an IntSec brain scrub, it dwindled and vanished. Eric and Greg eventually recaptured rights to **PARANOIA** and arranged with Mongoose Publishing to revive it. Because I had co-written an early adventure (*Send in the Clones*, with Warren Spector), I got the happy assignment to expand Alpha Complex for a new and more paranoid time. Famous Game Designer Aaron Allston agreed to lend a hand. Under Greg Costikyan's supervision we resolved that, in the same way **PARANOIA** lit up the world of gaming in 1984, we should try to light a bulb or two again.

Like an industrious scrubot, **PARANOIA XP** cleanses the old game of excruciating pop-cult wackiness. **PARANOIA** is not wacky. It works best not as parody but as satire. Because satire reflects its times, this edition introduces new tech, new social structures and an economy. These additions offer much topical new material, yet the economy seems to some longtime fans to undermine a classic joke of **PARANOIA**: that The Computer, in the cause of fighting Commies, had turned Alpha Complex into a socialist police state. Does introducing capitalism detract from that? Can't a capitalist economy be a soul-crushing totalitarian anthill? Perhaps readers in Beijing or Singapore might comment. Oh, wait—they can't.

The XP edition explores a wider range of play. It reinstates the first edition's darker style, in tandem with **Classic**. **PARANOIA** is comedy, but it can be scary too. Some players like that. (The inspiration here was Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*, a splendid game that tapdances ingeniously along the line between horror and humor.) For fans of the manic parody of the later West End line, this edition offers Zap style; many people, especially those unfamiliar with the game, mistakenly believe it's all Zap, all the time.

XP changes the relationship between Gamemaster and players from open malevolence to a more interesting Skinnerian psychology. The system aims to turn players against each other in new ways. Characters are more broadly skilled and less dependent on one another. They may survive a bit longer (though only at the GM's pleasure) and have more clones. Players can spend Perversity points to aid or undermine other players—backstabbing as a game mechanic.

But if **PARANOIA** proves revolutionary again, the reason won't be its mechanics or tone, but its adoption of a successful online development process seen at its best in the field of indie gaming.

At **The Forge** ([indie-rpgs.com](http://indie-rpgs.com)), dedicated indie (independent) roleplaying game designers debate rarefied theory and practical self-publishing strategies. Working selflessly in communal collaboration for a tiny audience, these talented folks create bizarre, sometimes wonderful little hothouse games, which they distribute as .PDF files free or for a small fee.

(One of these, Paul Czege's amazing *My Life With Master*, was the principal design influence on **PARANOIA XP**. Check it out at [www.halfmeme.com](http://www.halfmeme.com).)

We liked The Forge's open model. So we stole it.

A community of longtime **PARANOIA** fans gathers on the online forums (fora?) of [www.Paranoia-Live.net](http://www.Paranoia-Live.net), a copious site run by Irish fan Andy 'Jazzer' Fitzpatrick. Hearing of the new edition, Jazzer generously placed his site at our disposal. At the same time, Greg Costikyan, on his own site, began a **PARANOIA** development blog ([www.costik.com/paranoia](http://www.costik.com/paranoia)). At these sites the community flocked to the cause in a way gratifyingly unlike Troubleshooters. They contributed much fine new material, vetted the rules and proofed everything.

The spirit of open development, exercised on a scale I've never seen before, infuses this rulebook. I thank our devoted community.

For all I know, plenty of commercial game publishers have already adopted this robust and enjoyable development process. But it was new to me. I hope to work that way often from now on. So in that sense **PARANOIA XP** has already revolutionized at least this individual part of gaming.

—Allen Varney ([www.allenvarney.com](http://www.allenvarney.com))

### Resources

These sources, among many, are particularly helpful for cultivating a characteristically paranoid atmosphere in your games:

#### Books

Stanislaw Lem, *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub* (1973)  
George Orwell, *1984* (1949)  
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932)  
Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1937) and many other works  
Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (1962)  
Philip K. Dick, *The Penultimate Truth* (1964) and nearly everything else  
Yevgeny Zamiatin, *We* (1921-22)  
Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson, the *Illuminatus!* trilogy:

*The Eye in the Pyramid*, *The Golden Apple*, and *Leviathan* (1988)

#### Movies and TV

*Brazil*, Terry Gilliam (1985)  
*THX-1138*, George Lucas (1971)  
*The Prisoner*, TV series (1967)  
*Equilibrium*, Kurt Wimmer (2002)  
*Logan's Run*, Michael Anderson (1976); TV series (1977-78)  
*A Clockwork Orange*, Stanley Kubrick (1969)  
*Soylent Green*, Richard Fleischer (1973)

#### Online

Paranoia-Live.net:  
[www.paranoia-live.net](http://www.paranoia-live.net)  
**PARANOIA** development blog:  
[www.costik.com/paranoia](http://www.costik.com/paranoia)  
'The Toothpaste Disaster'  
Lexicon game:  
[paranoia.allenvarney.com](http://paranoia.allenvarney.com)  
Paranoia-O:  
[www.paranoia-rpg.com/](http://www.paranoia-rpg.com/)  
Greg Costikyan's home page: [www.costik.com](http://www.costik.com)  
Aaron Allston's home page: [www.AaronAllston.com](http://www.AaronAllston.com)  
The Forge: [indie-rpgs.com](http://indie-rpgs.com)



## Universal Hostility Formula

### COMBAT

**1. ATTACK!**  
ROLL VS.  
VIOLENCE,  
TENSION LVL,  
OR 11

- 1. Attack!**  
An attacking character rolls against Violence skill. An entity without Violence skill rolls against the scene's Tension level or the number 11.  
More than one character attacking: Figure everyone's attack result separately, then apply all effects simultaneously.  
**Attacker surprise:** You may give the attacker one free attack before the target gets to respond.

**2. HIT OR MISS? DIFFERENT TARGET? BACKFIRE?**

- 2. Hit or miss?**  
If the attacker chose a specific target and hit successfully, that target *may* take damage.  
If the attack missed, did it hit a different target instead? Target the character with the lowest Power. Serves him right.  
**Backfires:** If the attack missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the attack may backfire. Some weapons malfunction in circumstances independent of the margin, so check the description.  
**If a backfire doesn't suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.**

**3. MULTIPLE TARGETS?**

- 3. Multiple targets?**  
Can the attack plausibly hit more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the attack description or the attack roll's margin.

**4. DEFAULT DAMAGE**

- 4. Default damage**  
**The attack deals the damage you want it to deal.** Attack descriptions suggest their default damage in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format on the Weapon Chart.

**5. DEFENSE**

- 5. Defense**  
Does the target have armor or other defenses? Does the defense apply against the attack type? If so, reduce the default damage by a number of steps equal to the target's defense value.

**6. BOOST**

- 6. Boost**  
You can adjust damage based on the attack roll margin and the attack's Boost increment. Don't like the arithmetic? Use the handy chart on the facing page.

**7. ACTUAL DAMAGE**

- 7. Actual damage**  
If the attack's damage is reduced to nothing, the attack still hits the target, but it has no effect.  
For damage effects, see Chapter 27, 'Damage and injuries' (page 75).

### TREASON

**1. ACCUSE!**

- 1. Accuse!**  
An accusing character rolls against Management skill (no specializations allowed). You may allow Perversity spending according to your dramatic needs.  
When more than one character is accusing, figure everyone's result separately, then apply all accusation effects simultaneously.

**2. CREDIBLE?**

- 2. Credible or not?**  
If the accusation roll succeeds, the charges are initially credible.  
**Backfires:** If the accusation roll missed by a margin of 10 or more, or if the roll was 20, the accusation may backfire. Continue with this formula, but the former accuser now becomes the target. **If a backfire doesn't suit your purposes, it doesn't happen.**

**3. MULTIPLE TARGETS?**

- 3. Multiple targets?**  
Can the offenses plausibly indict more than one target? If so, select multiple targets based on the type of offense and the attack roll's margin.

**4. DEFAULT CORRECTION**

- 4. Default correction**  
**A successful accusation prompts the correction you want it to prompt.** The Treason and Insubordination charts suggest corrections in 'Minimum-Boost-Maximum' format.

**5. DEFENSE**

- 5. Defense**  
In **Classic** games, reduce the default correction by steps equal to the target's Access attribute. **Straight:** Step reduction equals the target's Access attribute plus number of his current clone. **Zap:** No defense and no reduction.

**6. BOOST**

- 6. Boost**  
You can adjust the correction's severity based on the roll margin and the offense's Boost increment. If you shudder at the thought of division, use the chart on the facing page.

**7. ACTUAL CORRECTION**

- 7. Actual correction**  
The Computer or the citizen metes out correction on the spot. If the accusation's correction is reduced below one step, the accusation has no effect. A corrected target may become extremely unhappy, earning The Computer's disapproval and possibly further correction.  
For correction effects, see Chapter 30, 'Treason and correction' (page 81).

# UNIVERSAL HOSTILITY FORMULAE

## Damage steps (combat and treason)

For reference, this table lists all the damage steps for characters in combat, objects in combat, and characters facing correction for treason. The steps are numbered for ease of use with the Boost chart below.

STEP	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
CHARACTERS	OKAY	SNAFU	WOUNDED	MAIMED	DOWN	KILLED	VAPORIZED
OBJECTS	OKAY	LIGHTLY DAMAGED	IMPAIRED	HEAVILY DAMAGED	BUSTED	JUNKED	VAPORIZED
TREASON	OKAY	PROBATION	CENSURE	MEDICATION	BRAINSCRUB	TERMINATION	ERASURE

## Boost chart

Every attack or accusation does exactly the damage you want. For guidance, use the attack's Minimum-Boost-Maximum ratings. You don't need a table to figure the damage from any weapon or treason accusation. Here's the in-your-head method:

1. Roll 1d20 and compare it to the success chance number. If you roll the number or lower, that's success.
2. Find the attack's **Minimum damage**. Now **subtract the target's defenses: armor** for a combat attack, **Access rating** for a treason accusation. If you want to use the Damage steps chart above, start at the Minimum damage and count to the left one column for each step of defense.
3. **How much lower** was the attack's roll than its success chance number? That's the **margin**.
4. **Divide the margin by the attack's Boost number**, rounding down. That's the number of extra damage steps the attack does.
5. **Add the extra damage steps** to the damage you figured in step 2. On the chart above, move back to the right a number of steps equal to the extra damage. Don't move above the attack's **Maximum damage**.
6. Where did you end up? That's the **actual damage** the target takes.

Hmm. Well, you know... now that we write it out, maybe that procedure does look a little tricky, especially Step 3. So to help the division-impaired, we've created the Boost chart below. No need to do (much) arithmetic in your head—just figure the margin, find it across the top row of the chart, then follow down the column to the row for the attack's Boost number. The number there is the number of extra damage steps this attack roll does, after you subtract the target's defenses.

MARGIN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
BOOST 1	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6
BOOST 2	—	+1	+1	+2	+2	+3	+3	+4	+4	+5	+5	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6	+6
BOOST 3	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+4	+5	+5	+5	+6	+6	+6
BOOST 4	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+3	+4	+4	+4	+4	+5
BOOST 5	—	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3	+3	+3	+4
BOOST 6	—	—	—	—	—	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3	+3	+3

## Alternate damage methods

Maybe even with the Boost chart above, you still don't want to figure the margin, move back and forth on the Damage step chart at the top of this page and all that stuff. That's okay! Gamemasters have different preferences, and every GM, including you, is right.

Here we give two other ways you can figure combat and treason damage. These methods are a little slower, even a lot slower, than the 1d20 roll above, but you don't have to divide by Boost numbers.

1. If the success roll's margin is higher than the attack's Boost number, roll 1d20 again. If this second roll fails, the attack does its Minimum damage. If the second roll succeeds, increase the attack's damage by one step and roll a third time. Each time the roll succeeds, increase the attack by one step, until you reach the attack's Maximum or you get bored with rolling dice.

2. For this version you need three to six 20-sided dice. If the attack succeeds, start with the attack's Minimum damage and then subtract the target's armor or Access defense to reduce that damage. Next, find the number of the attack's Minimum damage step on the Damage step chart atop this page. Then roll a number of 20-sided dice equal to the Minimum damage step. For each die roll result of 10 or higher, increase the damage by one step. For example, Maimed is step number 3. So if an attack does a Minimum damage of Maimed, roll three d20s. If the three results are 4, 13 and 20, two of those are over 10, so you increase the damage two steps from Maimed to Killed.



# CHARTS / TABLES CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

CHARACTERS: **O**<sub>KAY</sub> — **S**<sub>NAFU</sub> — **W**<sub>OUNDED</sub> — **M**<sub>AIMED</sub> — **D**<sub>OWN</sub> — **K**<sub>ILLED</sub> — **V**<sub>APORIZED</sub>

## Weapon chart

Weapon	Wpn type	Dmg type	Min-Boost-Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Blaster	Energy	Energy	M3K	1	50	500	O	
Brass knuckles	Hand	Impact	S5W	—	—	10	R	
Cone rifle**	Projectile	—	—	1	200	1,000	B	
Cone rifle shells**								
solid slug		Impact	W3K	1	200	100	B	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	1	200	150	B	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	1	160	120	B	
HE		Impact	W2K	1	200	200	I	area 40m
HEAT		Impact	W2K	1	200	400	I	AP, area 40m
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	200	300	B	area 8m, spray
flare		—	—	1	200	100	B	bright light
ECM		Energy	J2J	1	200	400	I	only vs. bots
gas		Bio	varies	1	200	250	B	area 30m; see note 1
tacnuke**		Energy	V1V	1	200	150,000	V	area 160m; see note 2
Cone rifle triggers**		—	—	1	—	100	B	each shell requires one trigger
Energy pistol	Energy	Energy	W3K	5	60	200	Y	
Flamethrower	Field	Energy	S3K	10	20	500	Y	area 20m, spray
Force sword	Hand	Energy	S3K	—	—	400	B	
Gauss gun	Field	Energy	W3K	100	20	500	I	area 20m (60-degree cone)
Grenade	Thrown	Impact	W3K	1	20	50	R	area 5m
Hand flamer	Field	Energy	S3K	3	40	1,000	V	easily concealed
Ice gun	Projectile	Impact	S3K	25	50	500	G	spray
Knife	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	20	R	thrown range 20m
Laser pistol (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	50	25	*	needs body
Laser pistol (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	75	R	needs barrel
Laser rifle (barrel)	Energy	Energy	W3K	6	100	50	*	needs body
Laser rifle (body)	Energy	—	—	—	—	250	O	needs barrel
Needle gun	Projectile	Impact	S3W	10	60	750	B	AP
Neurowhip	Hand	Energy	S5M	—	—	300	G	
Plasma generator**	Field	Energy	V1V	10	—	2,000	V	area 20m (60-degree cone)
Rock or debris	Thrown	Impact	O5W	1	20	—	any	
Rock or debris, big	Thrown	Impact	O4W	1	10	—	any	
Slugthrower	Projectile	—	—	—	—	450	Y	
solid slug		Impact	W3K	6	50	50	Y	
solid AP		Impact	W3K	3	50	75	G	AP
dum-dum		Impact	M3K	6	40	60	Y	
HE		Impact	W2K	6	40	75	Y	
HEAT		Impact	W2K	6	40	100	G	AP
napalm		Energy	S2K	1	40	75	Y	area 3m
flare		—	—	1	40	40	Y	bright light
ECM		Energy	H2J	1	40	200	I	only vs. bots
gas		—	varies	1	40	75	Y	area 5m; see note 1
Slugthrower, semi-automatic	Projectile	—	—	—	—	750	G	spray (see note 3)
Sonic pistol	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	60	150	O	see note 4
Sonic rifle	Energy	Energy	S3W	10	100	300	O	see note 4 again
Stun gun	Field	—	Stun	6	40	250	O	see note 5
Sword	Hand	Impact	W5K	—	—	20	any	
Tangler	Field	—	—	3	50	250	G	see note 6
Truncheon	Hand	Impact	S5K	—	—	10	R	
Unarmed combat	Unarmed	Impact	O5K	—	—	—	any	

Used weapon 10-25% off market value; reliability varies (heh,heh!)

Reloads/recharges 10% of the base weapon cost, unless otherwise specified. Lasers are recharged by buying a new barrel.

Note 1: Gas effects are listed in Chapter 41, 'Equipment', under 'Cone rifle and slugthrower.'

Note 2: Roll damage from a tactical nuclear weapon only in extraordinary circumstances. Otherwise, assume mass vaporization.

Note 3: Semi-automatic slugthrowers fire slugthrower ammo at a higher rate. Solid, solid AP, dum-dum, HE and HEAT ammo can be sprayed. The other ammo types are one-shot and hence can't be sprayed (duh).

No

Note 5: This weapon stuns the target. A stunned target can't perceive or do anything in the next round.

Note 6: This weap

\*\* Unauthorized possession of an item marked with a double asterisk (\*\*) is treason. Possessing an unauthorized tacnuke is *big-time serious* treason.

# WEAPONS / ARMOR / EQUIPMENT

OBJECTS: O<sub>KAY</sub> — L<sub>IGHTLY DAMAGED</sub> — I<sub>MPAIRED</sub> — H<sub>EAVILY DAMAGED</sub> — B<sub>USTED</sub> — J<sub>UNKED</sub> — V<sub>APORIZED</sub>

## Armor chart

	Type and protection	Cost (credits)	Clearance	Notes
ArmorAll**	4	2,500	B	hardened; full-figure
Asbestos clothing	E3	100	any	ablative
Battle armor**	6	100,000	I	hardened; full-figure
Combat suit**	5	10,000	B	hardened
Environment suit	—	1,000	G	see note 7; full-figure
Farraday suit	—	5,000	G	see note 8; full-figure
Kevlar	I3	800	O	
GM fiat	Infinite	—	any	only characters important to the storyline
Reflec, legal	E1	500	varies	see note 9
illegal	E2	1,000	—	
incredibly illegal	E3	3,000	—	

Note 7: Armor protects against hazardous environments (gas, poison).

Note 8: Protects against radiation and strong magnetic fields.

Note 9: Reflec protects only against laser attacks (not other energy attacks, just lasers) of its color or lower. The reflec's color is its clearance. Illegal IR-market upgrades may offer greater protection (yeah, right).

## Hit location

Does it matter what part of the target's body gets hit? Only if it's entertaining. Roll 1d20, ignore the result and pick a body part. That's what got blown off.

For more rigorous guidance, note the die result and consult this table:

- 1: Left hand
- 2: Right hand
- 3-4: Left arm
- 5-6: Right arm
- 7-12: Left leg
- 13-14: Right leg
- 15-16: Loins
- 17-18: Chest
- 19-20: Eye, teeth, tongue, nostril, earlobe, etc.

If you roll a part that's already been blown off, use the next line down on the table.

## Equipment chart

This chart lists many common and sought-after items and their typical costs at a standard PLC supply depot. Prices vary with current production quotas, The Computer's current inflation policy and other, even more boring reasons.

Every item has a security clearance below which it is illegal to possess the item without specific authorization from The Computer. Possessing an item marked with a double asterisk (\*\*) below the listed clearance is treason. In Straight games possessing an item above your clearance but without the double asterisk is insubordination punishable by a fine. In Classic or Zap games possessing the item is treason.

**Note:** If you don't like something on this list, change it.

### Bots

[cost; clearance]  
 Bot brain, used: 500; varies  
 Combat\*\*: 30,000; B  
 Docbot Model 4: 4,000; R  
 Docbot Model 18: 100,000; B  
 Guardbot: 8,000; G  
 Jackobot: 10,000; O  
 Petbot: 400; any  
 Robutler: 2,500; Y  
 Scrubot: 1,000; R  
 Teachbot: 1,000; R  
 Warbot Model 425 Mark 4\*\*: not for sale

### Coms and multicorders

[cost; clearance]  
 Com 1: 100; R  
     2: 500; Y  
     3: 1,000; G  
     4\*\*: 5,000; I  
 Multicorder 1: 600; R  
     2: 1,000; G  
     3\*\*: 5,000; I  
     4\*\*: 10,000; V  
 Multicorder programs: 100; varies  
 PDC: 250; R

### Vehicles

Vehicle prices and availability vary. Rebates possible. Dealer prep and options not included.  
 Autocar: 15,000; R  
 Copter: 75,000; G  
 Crawler: 50,000; Y  
 Flybot: 125,000; B  
 Transbot: 50,000; O  
 Transition: 2,500; R  
 Trend-Stepper: 800; O  
 Vulturecraft\*\*: you can't afford this; B

### Supplies and stuff

[cost, clearance; if no clearance listed, clearance is INFRARED]  
 Bouncy Bubble Beverage: 1  
 Chainsaw: 50; R  
 Chapstick: 100; G  
 Chocolate bar: 10; O  
 Clothing: 25

Cold Fun: 2  
 Cotton swabs, 100: 10; R  
 CruncheeTym Algae chips: 1  
 First aid kit: 10  
 Flashlight: 5  
 Gas mask: 50; R  
 Geiger counter: 150; G  
 Goggles, infrared: 100; R  
 Goggles, protective: 5  
 Hot Fun: 2  
 Keychain, attractive: 2; R  
     ugly: 1  
 Microwave oven: 100; R  
 Musical instruments, Old Reckoning\*\*: 1,000; B  
 Paint\*\*  
     four-liter pail: 1,000; B  
     spraycan: 100; B  
 Personal hygiene kit: 5  
 Refrigerator-freezer, portable: 250; O  
 Shoes/boots: 25  
 Soap, bar: 2; R  
     liquid: 2; O  
     on rope: 2; Y  
     perfumed: 20; G  
     transparent: 20; B  
     extra-nice: 200; I  
     99 <sup>44/100</sup>% pure: 200; V  
 SuperGum, tube: 10; R  
 SuperGum solvent, tube: 100; O  
 Towel, small: 5; R  
     large: 15; O  
     patterned: 15; Y  
 Vacuum cleaner: 200; O  
 Vitamins: 20; Y



# Treason chart

This is a set of guidelines, not an exhaustive list. Lots of other things are treason, too. You assign their fines or treason damage. For that matter, feel free to change these guidelines. **An offense deals the treason damage you want it to deal.**

Penalties vary between Classic and Straight games. In general, Straight correction is less severe than Classic regarding violations of decorum and ordinary daily conduct, but more severe than Classic regarding false accusations, assault, wanton destruction and other lighthearted stuff. Compared to Straight games, Classic offenses against citizens of clearance lower than the offender aren't that big a deal. In Zap games all offenses are punishable by termination.

## KEY

**Character conditions:** Okay, Probation, Censure, Medication, Brainscrub, Termination & Repatterning (Twiddling), Erasure

Offenses are listed in **Minimum-Boost-Maximum** format. *Example:* P5B means the offense's default minimum correction is Probation, its Boost (the margin needed to add one treason damage step) is 4, and the maximum correction is Brainscrub.

☒ = number of ranks of difference in security clearance between the offender and the individual or object involved in the offense. For instance, a RED citizen who insubordinately questions a GREEN superior's judgment (an offense listed as ☒x100) earns (3x100=) a 300-credit fine.

% = percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary. **cr** = credits. **Replacement cost** = the cost in credits to replace the destroyed item or clone)

Offense	Classic	Straight
<b>Accusations of treason</b>		
AA. Being accused of treason by a citizen of lower clearance	+1 to Boost number	unchanged
BB. By a citizen of equal clearance	unchanged	unchanged
CC. By a citizen of higher clearance	-1 Boost (min. 1)	-1 Boost (min. 1)
DD. Falsely accusing a lower-clearance citizen of treason	O5C	C4M
DD/1. A citizen of equal clearance	O4C	P4M
DD/2. A citizen of higher clearance	P3M	C3B
<b>Conduct and bearing</b>		
EE. Arguing with the Gamemaster	Medication	Medication
FF. Assaulting a lower-clearance citizen	O5T	P5T
FF/1. A citizen of equal clearance	C4T	C3T
FF/2. A citizen of higher clearance	M3T	M3T
GG. Being present in a location of higher security clearance	P4M + ☒x100cr	P4C + ☒x5% cr
HH. Damaging, destroying or losing assigned equipment	P3C	P3C + replacement cost
II. Failure to defer to a citizen of higher security clearance	P4B + ☒x100cr	P4M + ☒x5% cr
JJ. Theft of equipment, possessions or files, including filesharing	P4C	P4C
KK. Framing a citizen of lower clearance for a crime	P4M	C4B
KK/1. A citizen of equal clearance	C4B	C4T
KK/2. A citizen of higher clearance	M4T	M4E
LL. Possessing a treasonous (Unhealthy) skill	Brainscrub	Brainscrub
MM. Possessing unauthorized food, information or equipment	P3M + ☒x100cr	O2C + ☒x5% cr
NN. Refusing to take a prescribed drug	P4M	Censure
OO. Threatening the physical or financial safety of a lower-clearance citizen	O5B	P4B
OO/1. A citizen of equal clearance	C4B	C3B
OO/2. A citizen of higher clearance	M3B	M3B
PP. Unauthorized destruction of higher-clearance property	P4M + ☒x100cr + replacement cost	P4M + ☒x5% cr + replacement cost
QQ. Demonstrating knowledge of the <b>PARANOIA</b> rules above the player's clearance	Termination	Brainscrub
RR. Lying to the Gamemaster	<i>Termination!</i>	<i>Termination!</i>
<b>Missions</b>		
SS/1. Disobeying an order given by a mission superior	P5B	P5B
SS/2. Disobeying an order given by The Computer	C5T	C5T
SS/3. Failure to complete a mission	O4C	P4M
SS/4. Failure to complete a service service	O5C	P5M
SS/5. Refusing the assignment of a service service	P5M	P5M
SS/6. Refusing to accept a mission	Termination	Termination
<b>Mutation</b>		
TT/1. Mutation registration	Medication	Medication
TT/2. Suspicion of mutation possession	C4T	C4B
TT/3. Proof of mutation possession	M3T	M3B
TT/4. Incontrovertible proof of mutation possession	Termination	M3T
TT/5. Possession of Machine Empathy	Termination	Erasure
<b>Secret society membership</b>		
UU/1. Confessing to secret society membership	M3T	M3B
UU/2. Suspicion of secret society membership	M3T	C3B
UU/3. Proof of secret society membership	B3T	M3T
UU/4. Incontrovertible proof of secret society membership	Termination	B3T
UU/5. Knowledge of Communist doctrine	Brainscrub	B2T
UU/6. Being a Communist	Termination	B1E
<b>Terminations</b>		
VV. Terminating a lower-clearance citizen without prior authorization or evidence	C3B	M3T + replacemt cost
VV/1. A citizen of equal clearance	B2T	B3E + replacemt cost
VV/2. A citizen of higher clearance	Termination	T1E + replacemt cost

# TREASON / INSUBORDINATION

TREASON: O<sub>KAY</sub> — P<sub>ROBATION</sub> — C<sub>ENSURE</sub> — M<sub>EDICATION</sub> — B<sub>RAINSCRUB</sub> — T<sub>ERMINATION</sub> — E<sub>RASURE</sub>

## Insubordination chart

See the **Key** for the Treason chart on the facing page.

Offense	Classic	Straight
A. Asking a question irrelevant to a mission or duty	10cr	5%
B. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question unrelated to a mission or duty would be considered insubordinate or treasonous	20cr	5%
C. Asking whether a particular hypothetical question, if it were hypothetically directly related to a mission or duty, would be considered insubordinate or treasonous (nobody likes a smartass)	30cr	5%
D. Being out of uniform or sloppy	10cr	10cr
E. Being unhappy	10cr	5%
F. Bringing bad news	50cr	—
G. Curiosity about or postulation of supposed virtues of Old Reckoning times	10cr	10cr
H. Curiosity in general, undue	30cr	30cr
I. Evading IntSec or Computer surveillance	50	5%
J. Excessive impoliteness	10cr	—
K. Failing a hygiene inspection	10cr	10cr
L. Jokes, insolence, or disregard for the importance of a mission or duty	10cr	10cr
M. Jokes, insolence, or disrespect for a specific higher-clearance citizen	☒x100	☒x5%
N. Jokes, complaints or warnings about a specific service firm or group other than Internal Security	30	3%
O. Jokes, complaints or warnings about Internal Security	100	10%
P. Questioning the ability or judgment of a higher-clearance citizen	☒x100cr	☒x100cr
Q. Questioning the ability or judgment of The Computer	1,000	100%
R. Turning off one's PDC (communicator) during a mission	50cr	50cr
S. Unauthorized vandalism or destruction of property of equal or lower clearance, not in line of duty	50cr	replacement cost

## Reward chart

This is close to an exhaustive list. It includes several entries that an Alpha Complex citizen would not actually see; identification of these lines is left as an exercise for the reader.

A given act may qualify for more than one reward. Use the lowest. That'll show 'em.

### KEY

% = a percentage of the citizen's current monthly salary; **cr** = credits

☒ = This number equals the difference in security clearance ranks. For instance, a RED citizen who risks his life to save a GREEN citizen earns (3 x 5%=) a 15% bonus, because GREEN is three ranks above RED.

### Acts Deserving Rewards

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>A. Being extremely happy: 10cr</p> <p>B. Doing a small favor spontaneously for a higher-clearance citizen: 10cr<br/>B/1. A large favor involving non-trivial effort: 30cr<br/>B/2. A really large favor that takes most of a day, if not longer: 70cr</p> <p>C. Unctuous flattery: 10cr</p> | <p>D. Completing a mission successfully: promotion and credit bonus equal to one month's salary (minus deductions for damage, expenses, etc.)</p> <p>E. Completing a service service and filing a report: 100cr</p> <p>F. Risking your life to serve or rescue a citizen of your clearance: 500cr<br/>F/1. A higher-clearance citizen: ☒ x5%<br/>F/2. To serve The Computer: 50%</p> | <p>G. Terminating a traitor of your clearance or lower with sufficient evidence: 50%<br/>G/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 25%</p> <p>H. Turning over a traitor of your clearance or lower to Internal Security: 25%<br/>H/1. A traitor of higher clearance: 10%</p> |
|--|--|--|



## Tension levels by location

These are just suggestions. You can adjust the Tension level freely.

Entries such as 'RED areas' means all RED areas not otherwise listed in specific entries. When an area could have more than one Tension level, use the highest.

- 0: Sewers; reactor cores; Outdoors; conferences with the GM
- 1: IntSec interrogation chambers
- 2: INFRARED areas
- 3: Supply closets; garages; bot stations; HPD&MC indoctrination centers
- 4: RED areas
- 5: Briefing rooms; food vats; sickbays; clone tanks; PLC warehouses
- 6: ORANGE areas
- 7: Mess halls; waiting rooms; grooming stations; elevators and stairwells
- 8: YELLOW areas
- 9: R&D labs; any place with Junior Citizens (kids)
- 10: GREEN areas
- 11: Troubleshooter HQ; Armed Forces bases; armories
- 12: BLUE areas
- 13: Termination centers; re-education centers; IntSec stations
- 14: INDIGO areas
- 15: Power and Tech Services control rooms; IntSec headquarters
- 16: VIOLET areas
- 17: Confession booths; CPU monitoring loci
- 18 ULTRAVIOLET areas
- 19 Central Compnodes
- 20 Bathrooms

## Clone backup costs [Straight games only]

6-pk	Clone #s	Cost	Cost/clone
1	Prime + 2-6	2,000	400
2	7-12	6,000	1,000
3	13-18	15,000	2,500
4	19-24	30,000	5,000
5	25-30	60,000	10,000

## Random crate contents

During a mission Troubleshooters often visit abandoned warehouses, disused sub-basements, dangerous factory floors and so forth. They always see the ubiquitous Large Plastic Crates, standard cubes two meters on a side, with a serial number stenciled on each face. If the Troubleshooters pry or blast one open, use this table as inspiration for what they might find inside. Roll 1d20:

- 1: 144 boxes of hand grenades, two dozen per case. They appear intact, but unscrewing the tops reveals they have no fuses.
- 2: 27,648 pads of Clearance YELLOW sticky-notes, labeled 'From The Desk Of:'
- 3: An old-model guardbot missing its bot brain.
- 4: 1,000 fluorescent light tubes.
- 5: 1,000 rolls of duct tape.
- 6: Wingnuts. Lots and lots of wingnuts.
- 7: 8,000 INFRARED-Clearance coloring books, entitled 'The Computer is the Only Friend I Need.' Each copy is shrinkwrapped with a single black crayon.
- 8: Yargh! It's full of *teeth!* Millions of them! Must be leftovers from the HPD&MC Dental Hygiene Services offices. Creepies!
- 9: A load of shrinkwrapped data discs from Sector AOL, labelled 'Version 73.0.'
- 10: Communist propaganda leaflets in massive quantities.
- 11: A huge number of unused foil CruncheeTym Algae Chip bags, left over after the flavor 'Extra-Zesty Strawberry & Cheeze' was pulled from the market.
- 12: 288 boxes of Vita-Yum Meal-Substitute Bars, three dozen per box. (Expired roughly six months ago, but they might still be good...)
- 13: About a million little spools of minty-fresh dental floss.
- 14: 144 cases of uncharged RED laser barrels, three dozen per case.
- 15: 216 cartons of misprinted Teela-R-MLY keychains, 144 per carton.
- 16: Eleventy-three billion little steel ball-bearings.
- 17: Stacks and stacks of old documents and paperwork, dated three years ago. (With a high-margin Power roll and a whole lot of time, a Troubleshooter might learn something to his advantage—but more likely, not.)
- 18: Standard-issue black socks, enough for a whole army of sock-puppets.
- 19: A single first-aid kit. (Does it seem strange such a large box would only have one first-aid kit in it? Hmm.)
- 20: Internal Security agent, observing from cover. Roll 1d20 again. 1-10: Agent is at or below PCs' clearance. 11-20: Above PCs' clearance.

## Random cannister/ barrel / vat contents

Roll 1d20:

- 1: Pure distilled water
- 2: Not-yet-recycled shower water
- 3: Raw sewage
- 4: Battery acid (concentrated sulfuric acid)
- 5: Pure hydrochloric acid
- 6: Motor oil
- 7: Gasoline
- 8: Diesel fuel
- 9: Mercury
- 10: Blood
- 11: Algae sludge (aka future Hot Fun! Mmm!)
- 12: Bouncy Bubble Beverage
- 13: Cooking oil
- 14: Reactor coolant (water—not very dangerous)
- 15: Reactor coolant (liquid sulfur—extremely dangerous)
- 16: Radioactive waste
- 17: Glue
- 18: Giant experimental amoeba
- 19: Liquid nitrogen
- 20: Nitroglycerine

## Random passersby

In every battle, shots go astray. When you feel like it, roll 1d20 and consult this table if a shot misses its target. The number you roll suggests the random victim injured or killed by the stray shot. Feel free to improvise new and even more dangerous targets.

- 1-3: Nothing
- 4-5: INFRARED line worker
- 6: Vending machine
- 7-8: Scrubot or other bot
- 8: Confession booth
- 9: RED office worker
- 10: Vulture Warrior
- 11-12: Crate, vat, cannister or barrel (roll on corresponding table to get contents)
- 13: YELLOW manager
- 14: Three Vulture Warriors
- 15: IntSec GREEN goon
- 16: BLUE executive
- 17: Warbot
- 18: VIOLET administrator
- 19: Ten Vulture Warriors
- 20: High Programmer



## Information withholding

Sometimes you get tired of responding, 'I'm sorry, that information is not available at your security clearance'. To palm off a different excuse when you lack inspiration, roll 1d20, consult this table and use the response beside the number rolled.

- 1 The requested information is above the inquirer's clearance [the default response].
- 2 The information is unavailable due to Commie sabotage.
- 3 The information is unavailable due to an unknown mutant force.
- 4 If the inquirer files the appropriate request form, it will be processed in 6-8 days.
- 5 The form to request that information is currently being revised.
- 6 The inquirer was already briefed on that. If he wasn't paying attention, it's his own fault.
- 7 Only a traitor would have a use for that information. Is the inquirer a traitor?
- 8 Give information as a printout, entirely blacked out except for pronouns and articles.
- 9 Give information as an encoded printout. If inquirer asks for the code, roll again.
- 10 If the NPC being asked is below Clearance ULTRAVIOLET, the information is above the NPC's clearance. If a High Programmer or The Computer, roll again.
- 11 An honest I-don't-know. If inquirer is asking The Computer, roll again.
- 12 Give obviously wrong information. 'Repeat' it a second time, completely differently and still obviously wrong.
- 13 Imply the question is a sign of unhappiness.
- 14 The NPC pretends not to hear the question.
- 15 That information is available on a need-to-know basis and is not yet required.
- 16 Information is available in a purchasable but prohibitively expensive publication.
- 17 If the NPC told the inquirer, the NPC would have to kill him. If the inquirer insists, do it and fine him 100 credits. The next clone doesn't remember the answer, so you don't need an actual answer.
- 18 Refer inquirer to a non-existent room number for that and related information.
- 19 Refer inquirer to a real room far above his clearance.
- 20 Roll twice and vacillate between the two responses.

## Drug name generation

Roll 1d20 twice. Take the 'ones' digit of each roll and put them side by side to get a two-digit number from 00 to 99. Consult this list to get a fragment of the drug name. Repeat 2-3 times, then mash together the syllables until they sound plausible.

00. Resta-	50. Juter-
01. Foco-	51. Loba-
02. Sele-	52. Veli-
03. Paro-	53. Cetir-
04. Hur-	54. Xonia-
05. Ari-	55. Trepta-
06. Raji-	56. Altar-
07. Haka-	57. Iteri-
08. Gond-	58. Wot-
09. Wra-	59. Opti-
10. Thon-	60. Nega-
11. Alla-	61. Cova-
12. Peru-	62. Uton-
13. Utri-	63. Locu-
14. Ele-	64. Gren-
15. Enu-	65. Ascu-
16. Harv-	66. Credi-
17. Stanto-	67. Lasa-
18. Sanga-	68. Cona-
19. Meta-	69. Pora-
20. Mete-	70. Nico-
21. Boli-	71. Uspeo-
22. Trans-	72. Tine-
23. Ert-	73. Beta-
24. Magna-	74. Prima-
25. Piter-	75. Muxo-
26. Fracta-	76. Noxi-
27. Ding-	77. Wif-
28. Fraka-	78. Tresto-
29. Parsi-	79. Lister-
30. Ulla-	80. Brunta-
31. Manda-	81. Caxel-
32. Respa-	82. Parth-
33. Quer-	83. Rexa-
34. Kive-	84. Ukel-
35. Troe-	85. Neuro-
36. Emnic-	86. Vetta-
37. Trec-	87. Grin-
38. locu-	88. Octin-
39. Botu-	89. Pano-
40. Luk-	90. Westa-
41. Andro-	91. User-
42. Zive-	92. Loktic-
43. Meme-	93. Carni-
44. Walla-	94. Vetro-
45. Retre-	95. Gambi-
46. Gonu-	96. Hontro-
47. Hret-	97. Repat-
48. Umbli-	98. Slynth-
49. Yteri-	99. Omnu-

## PLC equipment request denial table

We were going to explain when to use this table, but just read the entries and you'll get it. Roll 1d20, consult this table and use the response beside the number rolled.

- 1-2 'I'm sorry, citizen, we appear to be temporarily all out of that item.'
- 3-4 'According to [your briefing officer/my supervisor/The Computer], that equipment is not necessary for your mission.'
- 5-6 'Certainly, right away.' *[NPC walks off for a while.]* 'I'm sorry, it appears that Commies have stolen the last of our supply. The Computer has dispatched a Troubleshooter team to solve the problem.'
- 7-8 'Yes, of course, one moment while I get it for you.' *[Wanders off and doesn't come back.]*
- 9-10 'Are you implying The Computer forgot to assign you something, citizen?'
- 11-12 'For that you need to fill out Form #B5AT67.' *[When asked for the form, say it requires another form, and so on until they give up. If it looks like they will keep going, send them off to some remote location, where they will fall into a food vat or something.]*
- 13-14 No one anywhere in the entirety of PLC has ever heard of the requested item, or at least doesn't admit it.
- 15-16 The requested item requires a deposit of an insanely large number of credits.
- 17-18 'That item has been sent to our labs for testing due to apparent design flaws. We may still have some in stock, though, if you want me to go check...'
- 19-20 'Certainly, here you go.' *[The clerk provides an obviously mistaken order. Instead of the requested cone rifle, the Troubleshooters receive, say, 10 meters of twine.]*

## **Bouncy Bubble Beverage!**

**It's the MANDATORY thing! Drink more today!**



## Bureaucracy

An ungodly percentage of Alpha Complex works in the bureaucracy, processing forms, stamping vouchers, tracking resources and performing the thousands of myriad tasks necessary to keep bureaucrats occupied and out of trouble. The whole point of bureaucracy is to create a system that can continue, regardless of the stupidity of individual workers. So, though dull citizens find bureaucratic work challenging, most of those with IQs above that of your average clam tend to be surly and bored.

Here are a few tips on running a fun bureaucracy:

- ☉ **Make 'em wait:** The line stretches back from the counter, loops around the room twice, out the door, and down the corridor out of sight.
- ☉ **The old 'Wrong Office' ploy:** 'Oh, you must be looking for the Department of Routing, Internal. This is the Department of Internal Routing. Have a nice day.'
- ☉ **Not all clerks are nice guys:** Uh, actually, *no* clerks are nice guys (something to do with sitting around all day and doing menial tasks meant for morons). Most clerks are unsympathetic at best, openly hostile at worst.
- ☉ **Use lots of forms:** 'Listen, buddy, I'd like to help you out, but I can't give you a 498-C until you first fill out a 95757-13KE/4 and a 39411-B6.'
- ☉ **Life ain't fair:** So what if the Troubleshooters are living in a high-rad zone? Tough! They still can't move until they receive a 4838/BRD-4 Housing Relocation Due To Excessive Radiation Transfer Form, and it takes at least a week to get the inspection team up there for confirmation (once the form is filled out, once you get the form...). In the meantime, issue them a spraycan of Rad-Away or something.

## Random Bureaucracy Generation

These tables provide a general description of a bureaucratic office: room size, shape, security clearance and a brief description of the clerk in charge. To create an office, roll 1d20 once on each table. Of course, no tables can match your own twisted creativity. Take these examples as inspiration when you create a bureaucratic office of your own.

### Room size

- 1-2: Cubicle
- 3-4: Cell or refitted closet
- 5-10: Small office (3-6 workers)
- 11-16: Normal office (7-30 workers)
- 17-18: Large office, room for 100 desks
- 19: Real large office, room for 500 desks, multi-tiered (but where are the stairs?)
- 20: Real, *real* large office. Think the Astrodome with a low ceiling. Citizens at the far end look incredibly small.

### Room shape

- 1-10: Square (ho-hum)
- 11-12: Circular. Clerks stand behind a circular counter in the center of the room, surrounded by citizens seeking service. Clerks feel besieged.
- 13-14: Triangular
- 15-16: Pentacular
- 17-18: Hexagonal
- 19: Octangular
- 20: A maze of twisty-turny passages, all alike

### What's wrong with this room?

- 1: Not enough desks. Deskless employees stand by edges of the room and charge toward any vacated desk. Fights are frequent, fatalities not unheard of.
- 2: Too many desks. *Way* too many desks. Desks piled on top of each other.
- 3: No desks. Citizens stand around. Some have a tape outline on the floor showing where their desk should go. Their files and papers are scattered all over their desk areas, making information retrieval rather difficult.
- 4-6: Room is in poor condition. Ceiling sags, cracks in the walls, exposed highvoltage lines, etc. Floor apt to give way at any moment.

- 7: Wrong security-clearance room. Way too high (maybe INDIGO). Clerks are all standing outside in the corridor expecting to get terminated for low productivity. They scream and scatter when Troubleshooters arrive.
- 8-9: One of the ceiling lights flutters and buzzes annoyingly. Can be fixed with a successful electronic engineering roll. Failure means the bulb explodes, showering everyone in the room with sharp pieces of glass shrapnel (damage O4W).
- 10: Very crowded. Hundreds of citizens are waiting in line, queued up and p'd off. Security clearances vary from INFRARED to GREEN. The line moves slowly. Citizens near the front look as if they haven't eaten for days.
- 11: Nobody's here. No workers, no clients, no nothing. Footsteps echo ominously off the walls, ceiling, and from beneath the floor.
- 12-13: Thermostat's broken. Temperature varies from absolute zero to the boiling point of lead.
- 14: One clerk, multiple windows. The clerk refuses to help the PCs because the Troubleshooters don't have something from one of the other windows. When the Troubleshooters shift windows they find the same clerk there (he changed windows also). Clerk keeps sending them from window to window, for approvals, loyalty oaths, etc., until the gag gets old... maybe longer.
- 15: Secret society stronghold. For instance, a Sierra Club office would have a hanging fern; sign on the fern reads 'Howard'. Clerks seem oblivious to the plant's presence. Service here is fast and efficient. Any threatening remarks about Howard, and every clerk in the room suddenly draws his laser and starts blasting. (After using this room once, vary the secret society and the treasonous item—fuzzy dice and Pink Floyd records in a Romantic's office, etc.)
- 16: Difficult accessway. Housing Preservation and Development has decided to save credits by making

[continued on next page]

# BUREAUCRACY

corridors narrower. Exactly how narrow is up to you. Make the Troubleshooters stoop, crawl or even slither along on their bellies to reach the clerks inside.

- 17: Mixed security clearance room. Most of the floor is GREEN, except for not-very-wide-at-all BLACK paths that wind circuitously and eventually lead to the various desks. Trigger-happy Vulture goons armed with laser rifles stand on either side of the paths and yell, 'Boo!'
- 18: Lighting malfunction. Either pitch-black darkness or blinding light.
- 19: Something's *very* wrong here: biological contamination, radiation, firefight in progress. Maybe there's a dead citizen on the floor, and nobody seems to notice him. Citizens in front of the Troubleshooters step over the body as if it weren't there.
- 20: Nothing is wrong. This is a nice office (thank you very much).

## Security clearance of workers

- 1-5. INFRARED
- 6-8. RED
- 9-10. RED with ORANGE supervisor
- 11-13. RED and ORANGE with YELLOW supervisor
- 14-16. ORANGE and YELLOW
- 17-19. ORANGE and YELLOW with one GREEN administrator visiting
20. None. Staffed entirely by clerkbots.

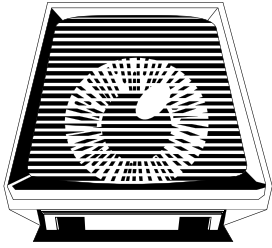
## Waiting time

- 1-2: No wait, suspiciously efficient service
- 3-4: Five minutes
- 5-6: 10 minutes
- 7-8: Short line of citizens waiting; 30 minutes
- 9-11: Medium line of citizens, one hour
- 12-14: Long line, two hours
- 15-16: Very long line, four hours
- 17-18: Very, very long line, eight hours
- 19-20: Infinitely long line. Higher-clearance personnel keep cutting in front of the Troubleshooters. Serious Bootlicking, Bribery, Intimidation or Access required to do anything but starve slowly at the end of the line.

## Personality of clerks

1. **Paranoid:** Confides to Troubleshooters his firm belief all other workers in the office are Commies. If intimidation is used, clerk screams, 'You're not taking me alive!' and opens fire.
2. **Greedy:** Wink at your players. Rub two fingers together as if you're holding a coin. Say stuff like 'Sure, I think that can be (*wink, wink*) arranged.' Jingle the change in your pockets.
3. **Antagonistic:** Argues about everything. If accused of being antagonistic, will argue about that too. Would rather die than succumb to threats of physical violence—and probably will—die, that is.
4. **A dreamer:** This citizen doesn't really want to work in Bureaucracy Central. This citizen wants to be a HPD&MC vidstar. Talks endlessly about 'the big break' and popular reality vidshows. He shows around his portfolio of photographs.
5. **Robotic:** Devoid of all emotions. Talks in clipped sentences and uses lots of logic and other sense-making stuff. Troubleshooters might suspect clerk is a Commie android. (Maybe it is. You decide.)

6. **Dolefully docile:** Feebly laughs if Troubleshooters try to cheer him up, or gazes at them gratefully with tear-filled eyes. Breaks into spontaneous sobs. Swallows noisily. 'I'm s-s-sorry?' (*Gulp*)
7. **Annoyingly helpful:** Has to be in control of everything. Helps other clerks so often he doesn't have time to listen to the Troubleshooters. Favorite phrase: 'Back in just a sec.' Returns 10 minutes later.
8. **Vulture Squadron transfer:** Drummed out for excessive brutality (!). Greets everyone by saying, 'I could kill you in seven seconds. Maybe five.' Willing to prove it. Unwilling to do just about anything else.
9. **Inefficient and clumsy:** Troubleshooters who get pushy are in for a rude surprise. The clerk is an Internal Security agent on a task force assigned to investigate CPU reports of clerk harassment.
10. **Nervous:** Doesn't trust citizens with lasers (justifiably so). Tries to usher Troubleshooters out of room as quickly as possible, even if it means lying. Con Games rating 18.
11. **Harried:** Clerk buried beneath piles of paperwork. Protruding hands snatch the form from the PCs and stamp it a dozen times with a red stamp that reads 'Approved.' If the PCs don't have a form, a muffled voice inside the pile tells them to go away.
12. **Snob:** Feels superior to any other citizen who doesn't understand and appreciate the bureaucratic runaround as well as he does. This means just about anybody. Loves to make things difficult for poor PCs.
13. **Defensive:** Favorite phrase: 'Oh, I suppose you could do it better?' If pushed, rises and says, 'Okay, smarty, you're in charge now. Have fun!' Then he stalks off.
14. **Crazy. Schizoid. Whacked-out:** Seems normal at first, but, if any pressure is brought to bear, starts dancing around the room singing, 'Can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!' and current loyalty songs.
15. **Prematurely old:** A thick layer of dust covers his arms and head; cobwebs cling to his clothes (the hygiene officer should note and remedy this). Nods off in the middle of conversations. Looks up from time to time and says, 'Maggie-O, is that you?'
16. **Former hygiene officer:** Wants everything done exactly the way he likes it done. Refuses to accept forms or vouchers even slightly smeared or crumpled. Won't even speak to anyone but a hygiene officer, then trades anecdotes about 'the good old days.'
17. **Bully:** Tries to intimidate customers. Favorite phrase: 'You and what service group?' Intimidation 15; tries to extort items from the PCs in exchange for 'favors' that never materialize. Heavily armed to back up his threats.
18. **Depressed:** Completely bored with existence. Infuriatingly slow. Refuses to help Troubleshooters if they don't have the correct forms filled out properly. Immune to all Management skills. Doesn't care if Troubleshooters blast him.
19. **Cheerful and competent:** Likes his job. Smiles and answers all questions in a clear and concise manner. If he can't help the Troubleshooters, he knows precisely where they should go and to whom they should talk. This should completely unnerve them.
20. **Just like #19, but totally incompetent:** Confidently and helpfully sends Troubleshooters down wrong hallway to get wrong form from wrong department. If encountered at a different time from #19, this could be the exact same guy in a new clone backup body.



# PARANOIA™

## CHARACTER SHEET XP

Troubleshooter: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - 1 2 3 4 5 6 \_\_\_\_\_

Name Clearance Sector Clone number

Troubleshooter's gender: M F Other Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Service group and firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Tics: \_\_\_\_\_

### MANDATORY BONUS DUTY

- Team leader
- Loyalty officer
- Hygiene officer
- Comm & recording
- Equipment Guy
- Happiness officer
- \_\_\_\_\_

## ACTION SKILLS

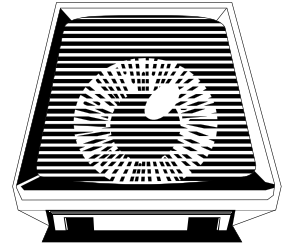
Management	Stealth	Violence
Bootlicking _____	Concealment _____	Agility _____
Chutzpah _____	Disguise _____	*Energy Weapons (Violence +4) _____
Con Games _____	High Alert _____	Demolition _____
Hygiene _____	Security Systems _____	Field Weapons _____
Interrogation _____	Shadowing _____	Fine Manipulation _____
Intimidation _____	Sleight of Hand _____	Hand Weapons _____
Moxie _____	Sneaking _____	Projectile Weapons _____
Oratory _____	Surveillance _____	Thrown Weapons _____
_____	_____	Unarmed Combat _____
_____	_____	Vehicular Combat _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

Hardware	Software	Wetware
Bot Ops & Maintenance _____	Bot Programming _____	Biosciences _____
Chemical Engineering _____	C-Bay _____	Bioweapons _____
Electronic Engineering _____	Data Analysis _____	Cloning _____
Habitat Engineering _____	Data Search _____	Medical _____
Mechanical Engineering _____	Financial Systems _____	Outdoor Life _____
Nuclear Engineering _____	Hacking _____	Pharmatherapy _____
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance _____	Operating Systems _____	Psychotherapy _____
Weapon & Armor Maintenance _____	Vehicle Programming _____	Suggestion _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

### HAPPINESS IS MANDATORY!

# PARANOIA™



## XP CHARACTER SHEET (SECRET SIDE)

Mutant power: \_\_\_\_\_  Registered

Secret society: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree: \_\_\_\_\_

Current society mission: \_\_\_\_\_

Attribute ratings: Power **CLASSIFIED**

Access **CLASSIFIED**

### SECRET SKILLS

**Uncommon**

---

---

---

---

---

**Unlikely**

---

---

---

---

---

**Unhealthy**

---

---

---

---

---

### EQUIPMENT

**Personal**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Assigned**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Treasonous**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### OTHER STUFF

**Credits**

**Perversity**

**Treason codes**  
and evidence against others

### SECRETS ARE TREASON!





# CHARTS / TABLES CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

- A**  
Acceptable behavior 37  
Access attribute 27, 60  
Accusation 81, 82-84  
Action skills 18  
Alpha Complex  
Economy 101-104  
History 96-97, if you believe that  
Ammunition 72, 167  
Arbitrary Justice rolls 64  
Area effect attacks 71  
Armed Forces 116-118, 141, 211, 213  
Armor 74  
Chart 74, 247  
Armor-piercing attacks 71  
Attacks 66, 68  
Attributes 27, 60  
Adjustable 62-63  
Draining 27, 61-62  
Replenishing 62  
Auctions 102
- B**  
Backfire 70, 82  
Backup clones, cost 77  
Bennies 58  
Boost 66, 71  
Bots 28, 135, 175-178  
Brainscrub 88  
Bribery 101  
Busted 75-76
- C**  
Campaign *see* Miniseries  
Cash hackers 102  
C-Bay 109, 210  
Censure 88  
Central Processing Unit *see* CPU  
Character creation 16-28, 89  
Checklist 17  
Character sheet 254-255  
Classic play style 15, 54-55  
Clone replacement 13, 31, 76-79  
Backup costs (chart) 77  
Clothing 99  
Combat 66-70  
Communications & recording officer 32, 192-193  
Computer, The 1-256 and beyond  
Playing 56-57  
Pressure 51  
Coms 28, 171  
Congeniality award 33  
Contests 63-64  
Correction 81, 84, 85-87  
Recovery from 84  
CPU 119-121, 141, 211, 213  
Credit bonuses 38  
Credit licenses 102  
Credits 29-30  
Tracking 90  
Where to get lots more legally [Classified]
- D**  
Damage 66, 71, 75  
Conditions 75  
Cumulative 75, 76  
Objects 75-76  
Recovery 75  
Types 71, 167  
Dark *see* Straight play style  
Debriefings 79-80  
Decanting 97  
Defenses 66  
Demotion 88  
Die rolls 60  
Docbot 139, 176, 198  
Down 75  
Dramatic Tactical Action System 67, 68  
Dweeble-dingus 124
- E**  
Equipment 28, 166-177  
IR Market 48  
Legal 28  
Equipment guy 32, 194-195  
Erasure 88  
Excessive *see* Zap style  
Experimental weapons 72
- F**  
Fiat armor 74  
Fines 88  
Flavors 177  
Frantic *see* Zap play style
- G**  
Gamemaster fiat 74  
Gamemaster tips 51-52  
Gen. Perversity Modifiers 65  
Samples (combat) 69  
Samples (treason) 83  
Genetic drift 77
- H**  
Happiness officer 32, 196-197  
Hardware skill 21  
Specialties 108  
Heavily damaged 75-76  
Hit locations 75, 247 (chart)  
HOOC Award 81  
HPD & Mind Control 122-124, 141, 203, 211, 214  
Hygiene officer 32, 190-191
- I**  
Impaired 75-76  
Index 256 (duh)  
Injuries 75  
Insanity 76  
Insubordination 36, 37  
Chart 85  
Internal Security 125-128, 141, 211, 214, Behind you  
IOUs 38, 152  
IR Market 48, 74, 103, 210
- J**  
Jackobot 176  
Junior Citizens 97  
Junked 75-76
- K**  
Killed 75  
Knowledge Skills 20
- L**  
Laser pistol 28, 71, 72  
Life support 98  
Lightly damaged 75-76  
Living expenses 29-30  
Living quarters 98  
Love 99  
Loyalty officer 32, 188-189
- M**  
Maimed 75  
Management skill 18  
Specialties 105  
Mandatory Bonus Duties (MBDs) 32, 183-197  
Margin 60  
ME Card 28  
Medication 81, 88, 136, 198-201  
MemGo 177  
MemoMax 13, 111, 139  
Meritorious conduct 37, 38, 80-81  
Miniseries 212  
Missions 53, 208-212  
'Mister Bubbles' mission 217-242  
Multicorders 28, 172-173  
Mutant powers 23, 51, 61, 142-151  
NPC-only 150-151  
Mutant wack 61
- N**  
Naming characters 16  
Notes and note-passing 89, 243  
Nutrition 98
- O**  
Offenses *see* Accusation  
Official Commendation 80  
Official Reprimand 88  
Outdoors 99
- P**  
PDC 28, 173  
'Pervasive Computing' 205-206  
Perversity Modifiers, General 35, 60, 68-69, 83  
Perversity points 26, 33, 34-35, 60, 168  
General Perversity Modifiers 65  
Pizza 64, 78  
Play styles 15  
Play tips: GM 91-94  
Players 43-47  
Player behavior 38-39  
Player conditioning 58-59  
PLC 129-131, 141, 209  
Power attribute 27, 60  
Power psychosis ('mutant wack') 61  
Power Services 132-134, 141, 211, 215  
Probation 88  
Production, Logistics & Commissary *see* PLC  
Promotions 38  
Psychbot 204
- Psychological stress, sustaining** 51  
**Public Hatings** 88
- R**  
R&D 135-137, 141, 211, 216  
Reflec armor 74  
Stupid upgrades 173-174  
Registering mutant powers 23  
Replacement clones, cost 77, 250  
Research & Design *see* R&D  
Resources 243  
Retirement 88  
Rivalry 51  
Rounds 66, 67  
Running the game 89
- S**  
Salary 29-30  
Sanity tests 202-204  
Scenes 33-34  
Secret skills 25-26, 47, 111-114  
Table 25  
Secret societies 23, 38, 51, 152-165  
Degree 24  
Tables 24, 25, 154  
Security clearance 12, 26, 29-30, 38, 97-98, 104  
Series *see* Miniseries  
Service firms 21, 115-140  
Table 22  
Service groups 12, 21, 115-140  
Specialties 21  
Tables 22, 24  
Service services 115, 141, 211, 213-216  
Skill rolls 63  
Extended 64  
Skills 18, 47, 105  
Specialties 18-19, 47, 105-114  
Weaknesses 18  
Slaps 59  
Snafued 75  
Software skill 21  
Specialties 109  
Solo mission 39-43  
Special attacks 71  
Specialties *see* Skills: Specialties  
Spray weapons 72  
Stealth skill 19  
Specialties 106  
Steps 66  
Straight play style 15, 54-55  
Stupid reflec upgrades 173-174  
Suspension of disbelief 51
- T**  
Tables and charts  
Alt damage methods 245  
Armor 247  
Boost 245
- Bureaucracy** 252-253  
Clone Backup Costs 77  
Container Contents 250  
Crate Contents 250  
Damage Steps 245  
Drug Names 251  
Equipment 247  
Hit Location 247  
Info Withholding 251  
Insubordination 249  
Equip Req Denial 251  
Passersby 250  
Rewards 249  
Tension Levels 250  
Treason 248  
Universal Hostility Formula 70, 82, 244  
Weapons 246  
Team leader 32, 187, 197  
Technical Services 138-140, 141, 211, 216  
Tension level 60, 65-66  
Termination 81  
Tickets and vouchers 80  
Tics 26  
Timekeeping 100, 102  
Tips for Traitors 43-47  
Tracking data 90  
Traitors Everywhere  
Transportation 78, 139; *also see* Vehicles  
Treason 36, 37, 81-84  
Armor 61  
Codes, tracking 90  
Chart 86  
Conditions 81  
Damage 81  
Defense 81, 84  
Points 88  
Treason armor 61  
Treason points 88  
Treasonous knowledge 49-253  
Troubleshooters 100  
Twiddling 88
- U**  
Uncommon, Unlikely, Unhealthy skills 25, 26  
Universal Hostility Formula 70, 82, 250
- V**  
Vaporized 75  
Vehicles 28, 137, 178-182  
Violence skill 19  
Specialties 107  
Vouchers and tickets 80
- W**  
Weapon recorders 169  
Weapons 71-74, 166-171  
Chart 73  
Malfunctions 72, 166-171  
Reloading 72  
Wetware skill 21  
Specialties 110  
Work 100  
Wounded 75
- Z**  
Zap play style 15, 54-55



**A ROLEPLAYING CLASSIC  
BACK IN PRINT AFTER 10 YEARS**

*Over 150,000 copies sold*

*New XP edition COMPLETELY  
UPDATED for a more paranoid era*

## ***The Computer is your Friend!***

*PARANOIA is an award-winning role-playing game set in a darkly humorous future ruled by a well-meaning but deranged computer.*

**The Computer is happy. The Computer is crazy.**

**The Computer will help you become happy. This will drive you crazy.**

Being a citizen of **Alpha Complex** is fun. The Computer says so, and The Computer is your friend.

Many **traitors** threaten Alpha Complex.

Many **happy citizens** live in Alpha Complex. Most happy citizens are crazy.

**Which are more dangerous—traitors or happy citizens?**

Rooting out traitors will make you happy. The Computer tells you so.

If you are not happy, The Computer will use you as reactor shielding.

Being a **Troubleshooter** is fun. The Computer tells you so.

Do you *doubt* The Computer, citizen?

Troubleshooters get shot at, stabbed, mangled, incinerated,

poisoned, stapled, blown to bits and accidentally executed.

This is so much fun **many Troubleshooters go crazy.**

**You work with many Troubleshooters. They all carry lasers.**

Aren't you glad you have a laser too? Won't this be fun?

***Stay alert! Trust no one!  
Keep your laser handy!***

# PARANOIA™

## **HAPPINESS IS MANDATORY!**

When *PARANOIA* was first published almost 20 years ago, amid fears of nuclear war and job loss to those newfangled desktop PCs, it was instantly popular for its vision of a high-tech, post-holocaust, totalitarian future ruled by a deranged Computer. It won attention too for turning the basic paradigm of RPGs—players cooperate—on its head, making all players secret traitors who can only advance by uncovering treason.

Happily, today those fears are obsolete. Instead, we have spam, viruses, trojans, malware, distributed denial of service attacks, the RIAA, cyberwarfare, identity theft, terrorists, the Patriot Act, terrifying new diseases, the threat of environmental catastrophe, the grey goo scenario, and weapons of mass destruction.

In other words, *PARANOIA* is more relevant than ever before—and *Paranoia XP* upgrades the world of Alpha Complex for the fears of the 21st century.

**BE A LOYAL CITIZEN! PURCHASE PARANOIA XP TODAY!**

*Failure to purchase this product is treason. Treason is punishable by summary execution. Have a nice day!*

ISSN 1-904854-26-5



\$39.95

MGP 0320

Within this 256-page volume, you will find:

- New non-D20 rules. *PARANOIA* is fun. D20 games are not fun. Play *PARANOIA*.
- Happiness-inducing advances such as mobile telephony, pervasive computing, brain-spam, RFIDs, and privatization of non-essential services.
- Many new and treasonous ways for players to die.
- Three ways to play: Classic, Straight, and Zap!
- 'Mister Bubbles,' an introductory adventure
- No 20-sided die, which you will need and may purchase at better book, game, and comic stores everywhere.

[www.mongoosepublishing.com](http://www.mongoosepublishing.com)

Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2004 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan. *PARANOIA* is a trademark of Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. All rights reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User