DEMONGROUND

The Electronic Fanzine of Dark Conspiracy

DECEMBER 1998
VOL 2

NEW REFEREE ISSUE!

In this Issue:

Burden of Reality
Cover Art by David Ho

Adapting Other Sources to Dark Conspiracy
Editorial by Paul Reinerfelt

Dark Embrace
Adventure by Michael Marchi

Life as a Ballotman
Milieu by Geoff Skellams

Dark Tubbies
Dark Race by Chris Carpenter

One Early Morning...
Fiction by Marcus Bone

Plus:

Referee Pointers, The Mercenary Philosopher, New Equipment, Personal Web Sites, Tabloids, and a lot more...

http://www.42north.org/~demongound/

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Welcome to Issue Two

by Michael Marchi

Well, here we are once again. I see most of you have stuck with us for the second issue of DEMONGROUND. And I see a few new faces out there too. Welcome! There's plenty of room over on the side by the windows.

The fact that we're all here together for another issue says a lot about ***Dark Conspiracy*** and the people who believe in this game. Many of you are here for the first time, only now discovering ***Dark Conspiracy*** in its Second Edition printing. It is to you that this issue of *DEMONGROUND* is dedicated. Still others of us have stuck by this game through the Dark Times between the demise of GDW and the resurrection with Dynasty Presentations, Inc. You all know who you are, and you can stop looking so smug. You were right. Be proud. Now get back to work.

What can I say? There's something about horror adventure gaming in the post-modern world that seems very accessible to people - more so than classic dungeon crawls or space ships battles. The fact that ***Dark Conspiracy*** takes place in a world very much like our own makes it easy for people to relate to the game. And let's face it. ***Dark Conspiracy*** is full of possibilities. I have yet to come up with a horror or modern sci-fi story that I couldn't easily fit into the DC mythos.

We have a lot of articles in this issue written by experienced DC Referees. Relax…They're just people like you (maybe a little more hardened and cynical) who wanted to pass their tips and secrets on to the new guys on the block (that's you). So sit back, put your feet up, and have a listen to your elders. You just might learn something!

Michael Marchi
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The DC ICQ Chatroom

Each week, fans of *Dark Conspiracy* come to the ICQ *Dark Conspiracy* chat room to talk about the game.

If you have ICQ installed on your computer, just search ICQ by id# (for 12565688) or nickname (&Dark Conspiracy) and add it to your ICQ contact list.

If you don't have ICQ installed on your computer, you can download it for free from the ICQ home page at http://www.icq.com.

For more details about the *Dark Conspiracy* chatroom and chat sessions, see the Discussions page on the Dynasty Presentations website. http://www.dynastypresentations.com

If you have any questions about *Dark Conspiracy*, come along. We look forward to seeing you.

Inspiration

Adapting other sources to *Dark Conspiracy*

By Paul Reinerfelt

*"We are the Borg of **Dark Conspiracy**, resistance is futile, you will be adapted"*

The ***Dark Conspiracy*** books advise the Referee to seek inspiration in the tabloids. Well, we don't have many tabloids dealing with the weird here in Sweden. Those that try tend to go belly-up in less than five issues. Maybe we are too serious-minded or something.

So, where do I get my inspiration? I'm glad you asked, because that is the subject of this article. How to find inspiration for new weirdness in ***Dark Conspiracy*** without going to the tabloids.

The first thing I'm going to look at is other RPGs. As those who know me might know, I prefer GURPS as my system of choice. So, I will start there. Steve Jackson Games have published a lot of source books for GURPS and some of it is readily usable in other games, especially ***Dark Conspiracy***.

First off, if you want to create new empathic abilities (either for your Minions or actually usable to the PCs), check out **GURPS Psionics**. It doesn't just contain a load of usable mental skills and disciplines, it also features a chapter of how to apply empathy (or psionics as they call it, not to be confused with ***Dark Conspiracy***'s use of the word Psionics) in imaginative ways. It contains an entire chapter of possible explanations to a lot of occult phenomena as uncontrolled psionics. Neuropathy side effects, anyone?

The book doesn't stop there though. It also contains a chapter on psionic machinery, some which is biological. It doesn't take much imagination to place most of these in the hands of the Dark Minions, especially the ETs. The last chapter, which deals with a background suggestion for GURPS should not be dismissed. Several of the secret organizations outlined there could be used in ***Dark Conspiracy*** too. What if the government (or a big corporation for that matter) started to train its Special Forces in the use of low-power empathic abilities (they don't trust high-powered empaths)? Right, you would get the Second Special Operations Detachment Epsilon, mostly known as the Psibercorps. To the Psibercorps, there are only two kinds of good empaths: Psibercorps empaths and dead empaths. And the way they got the Eugenic Security Police (ESP) to be legal stinks of ***Dark Conspiracy*** scheming. If you're only going to buy one non-***Dark Conspiracy*** book, buy **GURPS Psionics**.

If you're not, you're in luck. There are several other GURPS books that are well worth looking at.

If you need strange devices to put in the hands (or paws or tentacles) of the Darklings or you need strange tidbits of weird history as well as a rundown on such things as UFO-invasions and the Holy Grail, pick up **GURPS Warehouse 23**. This is the kind of place that you get a glimpse of in the final seconds of Raider of the Lost Ark (the first Indiana Jones movie). A large warehouse where everything that humanity isn't prepared for yet is stored. You don't have to take the warehouse literally to use all the strange things detailed in the book though. Just pick it out and use it at your leisure, it is more a warehouse for the Referee than the players anyway. My absolute favorite items in here are the Barb Needlers, needler pistols that fire small, barbed, darts that get stuck in the muscles of the victim and tears them with every move the victim make. A perfect Darkling weapon if I have ever seen one.

In the course of these descriptions, the book gives you a good mix of historical fact-and-fiction. The bibliography in the end is also useful as is the "illuminated" time-line. And remember, just because the book says something is magic don't take its word for it. Sufficiently advanced technology (or empathy for that matter) is indistinguishable from magic.

So, we got new empathic powers, a host of strange stuff to put in the hand of the Darklings... Ah, Darklings. Of course we need to shake up the players a bit by adding new bizarre Darklings. One of the best places to find them is **GURPS Creatures of the Night**. This book contains no less than sixty-seven horror creatures written originally for the book (no reiterated vampires here). Not all of them are adaptable to ***Dark Conspiracy***, but enough of them are to make the book a good buy. The author, Scott Paul Maykrantz, has a twisted imagination that sometimes makes even the most bizarre of the Dark Races pale in comparison. Creatures of the Night include fish whose songs drive you mad, spiderlike creatures that live in chimneys and people who steal organs from the living and plant them in gardens of blood. This book is not for those with a weak stomach.

Now we got it all, new powers, new darktek and new darklings. What? Not tough enough for your players? Well, if you need ideas for a really high-powered campaign, you can get plenty of inspiration from **GURPS Black Ops**. The subtitle says it all; "Find the truth and kill it". This is X-Files gone military. Much more than military. an ultra-secret organization, called the "Company", is recruiting the best of the best of the best to combat the Dark so that normal people can live in safe ignorance. Only fifty percent of those recruited survive the training. This is the ultimate in monster fighting. These guys and gals make Rambo look like a weakling (in fact Rambo would probably not qualify for recruitment). That's not to say that the Black Ops are mindless grunts, to be the best, you need brains as well as brawn. Putting it into the 1-10 system of attributes, the Company would require a minimum of 9 in *all* attributes (except Empathy, of course) in their Black Ops and a lot of skill at that.

That was four of the most useful GURPS books. Some others that could prove useful are **GURPS Bio-Tech**, **GURPS Dinosaurs** and perhaps **GURPS Blood Types** (if not for any other reasons than an alternative version of the Penanngalan).

When converting things from other systems it pays to have a clue about the rules (especially if you're looking at creature statistics). So if you're not using the GURPS system it might seem a waste of time to look at these books. Fear not. Steve Jackson Games have created a boiled down version of the GURPS core rules, **GURPS Lite**. At only 32 pages, it is as small as it gets and it is freely downloadable from the web. The address is http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/lite

Another RPG that is useful, especially for new creatures, is FASA's **Shadowrun**. In Shadowrun, magic return to the world in the year 2011. In 2060, when Shadowrun takes place, magic is commonplace. However, the rise of magic, as well as the increasing pollution has given rise to strange new creatures. Some of these creatures resemble creatures from legend and some are little more than bizarre mutants. Strip away the magic powers and replace them with empathic ones. Change the reason for its existence (if needed) from magical transmutation to extra-dimensional origins and you've got a whole score of new beasties and minions to let loose on the unsuspecting players.

The good thing about these creatures is that they feel completely right for the setting. Normal fantasy monsters need heavy tweaking but these are created for a run-down normal world with a paranormal twist. The best sources are the Shadowrun 2ed rulebook (about twenty-five creatures) and **Paranormal Animals of North America** (eighty creatures). As an example of what you can find here, I can mention the Behemoth, a three meter high and 5 meter long powerhouse that looks like a carnivorous hippopotamus. It is actually a mutated alligator and it can easily destroy small boats that happen to pass it by. Or, why not take the Incubus, a land living octopus-looking creature that can create an illusion of what you most desire (for instance your dream-babe) to lure victims close by. Both of these creatures are from Paranormal Animals of North America. You will also find new versions of old friends like Gargoyles, Banshees, Barghests, Krakens and Harpies as well as the Wendigo. Not to mention the completely unique take on mermaids...

After so many years and so much material, there must be something salvageable in **Advanced Dungeons & Dragons**. And indeed there is, especially the Monstrous Compendia. Most of the fantasy creatures are hard to justify in ***Dark Conspiracy*** unless you're good at coming up with the kind of weird explanations that you need in ***Dark Conspiracy***. On the other hand, you do hit gems from time to time, strange or unique creatures, disturbing undead and others. Check out the compendia dealing with the Outer Planes; they have a lot of useful beasties and no "standard" fantasy monsters. The Dragon magazine had a series of articles some years back where they created "Dragons" for other RPG-systems. They even did one for ***Dark Conspiracy*** (October 1993), the Darkwyrm.

If you don't need Minions in every bush and prefer some contemporary thriller themes, you can probably pick up some fresh ideas from Chameleon Eclectic's **Millenium's End**. Lots of useful equipment, if nothing else. You can probably come up with many other role playing games that could be adapted in bits and pieces.

I'll finish the RPG section by mentioning one of GDW's other products: **Twilight Nightmares**! Written for Twilight: 2000, it is compatible with ***Dark Conspiracy*** off the cuff and the adventures are just wonderful. My favorites are *"You're not from around here, are you?"* with its strange and devious alien and "*This ain't no weather balloon*" with a complete layout of a flying saucer.

So where do you get inspiration when you're not cannibalizing other RPGs? Good question. Some of my best inspirational sources are comics, preferably Marvel Comics. The **X-men**'s battle with the Shadow King gave a lot of ideas. On the whole, X-men are a font of ideas. Their battle with Adversary (the end of the Mutant Massacre) was interesting. After all, what happened in Forge's plaza if not the opening of a dimensional portal? Not to mention the spots of "alternate time" that opened around the city. The stripped down plot in the mega-crossover Inferno is worth a look and the state of Genosha is readily adaptable. Some other things I've used from Marvel is the pair of female detectives Misty Knight and Colleen Wing, the sorcerer Stephen Strange and some monstrous villains who have become new races of Minions. I also plan to introduce the Hellfire Club (with its Inner Circle) and its machinations (including the Massachusetts Academy) into my campaign. The Inner Circle's members, especially White Queen, can easily become empaths instead of mutants.

If you need some really nasty Dark Ones check out some old **Judge Dredd** comics featuring Judge Death. Death and his pals Fire, Fear and Mortis are more than a match for most Minion Hunters. And their otherworldly domain, the Deathworld, is a really scary place.

For five female vampires riding motor bikes across the States, check out Elaine Lee's **Vamps**. While they may not be that useful for ***Dark Conspiracy***, the charisma of these ladies makes it well worth the time.

Many other comics have lent pieces to my games, but their parts were so small that it would be no use in mentioning them here. However, old SF-comics are often usable. I found one dealing with subliminal messages in a cinema that brainwashed people, which is a great idea for a minion setup. Some other stories featured robbers and con men using movie props and similar tricks to make it look like aliens did the crime. That is an interesting twist. Not every Dark Minion has to be a real Minion; they could be fakes.

If we move over to books, we find that there are more books published about weirdness and other ***Dark Conspiracy*** related things than can be even categorized here. So I will only give a few titles that maybe aren't so obvious.

The first is a novel, **The Crystal Skulls** by W.A. Harbinson. This book is perfect. It is almost straight ***Dark Conspiracy***, you only have to make the world a little gloomier and you've got a dyna-

mite adventure rolling. I won't spoil it for you by mentioning the plot but believe me; it is well worth your time.

Another book that's been a great inspiration for new beasts is Dougal Dixon's **After Man**. This "zoology of the future" is an attempt to predict the evolution fifty million years into the future. It contains a horde of useful or just plain strange animals. Highly recommended. Dougal Dixon has also written a book called **The New Dinosaurs** where he speculates in what would have happen if the dinosaurs hadn't become extinct sixty-five million years ago. Could be mined for some new creatures or to make a truly strange proto-dimension (the same goes for the previous book).

Since this is ***Dark Conspiracy*** we are talking about, we can't leave out the most twisted and bizarre of all conspiracy novels, the **Illuminatus!** trilogy by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson. These books cover everything from what really went on in Atlantis to why George Washington was growing hemp and of course why there is an eye in a pyramid on the US one dollar bill. The appendices give you a lot of useful ways to drop small, inconspicuous but interconnecting hints throughout your adventure. This should really be a classic. All hail Eris! A slight warning should be made; the book is *very* explicit when it comes to drug use and sexual activities. If this offends you, stay away from this one!

A book I'm in the process of reading is **The Stone of the Plough** by Ann Walker. I haven't finished it yet but it seems promising. Lots of hints about a hidden chamber in either the Cheops pyramid or the Great Sphinx of Giza abound. There is also lots of hints in the form of drawings and short cryptic phrases in old languages. I don't like the style it is written in, but anything that contains spiritual guides, UFOs and the pyramids inside the same cover should be interesting.

After books, we come to movies. There are, of course, loads of movies that can be used for inspiration. Great and small bits can gleefully be ripped out and used in whatever games you currently run. Here are some of my favorite movies for ***Dark Conspiracy*** inspiration.

The Invasion of the Body Snatchers

This is a classic SF/Horror movie. The bizarre alien and the way it takes over the whole town is highly inspirational. It has been remade in several versions. Personally, I prefer the 1978 version (staring Donald Sutherland and Leonard Nimoy) with its extremely paranoid atmosphere.

The Arrival

This is an amazingly good movie for ***Dark Conspiracy*** referees. It is almost pure ***Dark Conspiracy***. The story focuses on a radio astronomer (played by Charlie Sheen) who picks up signals from an extra-terrestrial source. He is promptly fired and, while doodling at home, locates a similar signal from Mexico. I'm not going to spoil the movie for you but he uncovers some pretty startling things in Mexico. Not many cliches and an interesting story.

Robert Heinlein's Puppet Masters

Another great paranoia movie staring Donald Sutherland. More suspense and a new amazing alien creature that wants to take over the world. This creature is absolutely wonderful. It just begs to be used as a main opponent. I especially love its "harpoon"...

Stargate

What have we here? Hidden technology from the ancient Egypt? Encoded instructions? A gate to a distant part of the galaxy (or another dimension, there's little difference)? This movie has it all. Also, as a special bonus, the *real* reason that the gods of Egypt have animal heads...

Alien

Possibly the most well known extra-terrestrial creature in existence, the monster of this movie (and its sequels) is an ideal Minion race. The life-cycle of this creature is one of the most imaginative I've ever seen. Highly useful.

The Relic

While not earth-shattering new in the plot, The Relic still has some good spots. It has good suspense and the creature and the "scientific" explanation for it is very useful. The surroundings (a museum) just asks for a team of independent investigators. In fact it could be used as a start for almost any plot.

The Terminator

A very good movie and source of inspiration. To begin with, what is the Terminator but a highly advanced Changeling type II? A tougher, more combat oriented version, but a cyborg changeling none the less. Don't forget that the Terminator can imitate any voice it has heard. Second, what if the dark future of the movie isn't the future after all? Maybe it is a proto-dimension and the time-travel-machine is in fact a gate? If so, we have a whole new dimension (pun intended) of problems. The robots in this place could rival the Mechaniacals of Mechaniaca in destructive capacity.

You don't need SF or horror movies to get some good ideas. Take a look at **Basic Instinct**. You may say whatever you want about Sharon Stone's abilities as an actress, but think about the plot. This woman is so good at psychology that she almost appears to read minds. What if she could? That would make things even scarier. And her reckless, highly sexually charged lifestyle? Doesn't that sound more like a Dark Elf than a human? Those killings are pure Dark Elf in style.

Even if you don't find anything major to use in the movie you're watching, you can always collect places, scenery and bit-players. It adds a great deal of color to the game if you just mention that the singer in the bar they visit not only is pretty good but also is blind! Or perhaps the local shady dealer is just a respectable seller of office supplies that thinks it lacks style to do that.

Ok, that's a lot of information sources to mine. Go out in the world and pick up those little gems of gaming ideas that are scattered everywhere. Always carry a notebook and a pen with you. You can never know when you'll find a good idea for an adventure or just an episode. Be sure to be able to write them down and pretty soon you will have a large collection of small pieces that can be woven together to form a great tapestry. Happy gaming!

Pointers for the New Referee

by Ms. Georgie

Greetings and Welcome to the world of ***Dark Conspiracy***. This article is intended for the "new" ***Dark Conspiracy*** Referee, but experienced referees might find something useful in here as well. Being a referee can be a lot of fun, although it can be frustrating at times, and is only occasionally hazardous to your health (I'll explain later ☺)

Before you run your first ***Dark Conspiracy*** adventure, you'll need to do a little preparation. The first thing you need other than the books themselves, is to be familiar with the rules – you need to have an idea where everything is. This saves you from the frustration of trying to find it quickly. Personally, I copied the last few pages of the original ***Dark Conspiracy*** book and I keep them close at hand.

Now you are ready for your friends to generate their characters. If you have a lot of "new" players, this can be a time consuming job. As a Referee of many years' experience, I like to watch as the players develop their characters.

It will also help you as a Referee if you have some contacts and NPCs (non-player characters) rolled up before you start your first run. Again, this saves you the frustration of needing them in the middle of your game. I would also suggest that until you are familiar with all the "Darkness" in ***Dark Conspiracy***, it may be easier for you NOT to have "rogue androids" or other "rogues" as player characters, as it can get complicated and frustrating for the beginner. But when they are used as a NPCs, they are quite useful for surprising your players and giving them a peek at how easily the "Darkness" can hide among them.

I also have a few pointers that will allow your game run smoothly and which will mean that you are less interrupted, which helps the flow of the game. I always make sure that I have my munchies close at hand and soda in the cooler. If you are a coffee drinker, have a fresh pot brewing. My favourite snack is peanuts in the shell. Why? It's nerve wracking for your players while you are sitting there cracking peanuts. If you can set the stage and convey the Darkness, your players will be on their toes. The cracking peanut is a distraction that will put your players on edge. I am not a nice GM - my players have several names for me that I will not repeat; however, they always come back for more. If you want uninterrupted game play, have your players bring their munchies with them as well. A good way to lose any flow during the game has to be stopping for a munchies run.

Being a referee can be a lot of fun, although it can be frustrating at times, and is only occasionally hazardous to your health.

You're ready, your players are ready.... Let's play!

You're now facing the dilemma that every referee goes through. How do I, as the referee bring the characters together? Well, that depends how creative you wish to be. You can set them up, so they already know each other from school, from somewhere else in their background, or they could be each other's "contacts". This is the simplest way.

I personally use a place called "The Cave". It's an "everything" place, from a bar to a nice place to eat. Since everyone likes to party and everyone needs to eat, this is a good place for people to meet. While there, they can start interacting with each other. For example, one player can witness a thief picking the pocket of another or drinks can be spilled on one of the prospective party members. If you have a female player in the group, she could be having trouble with some unruly NPCs and needing some help from the others. One tactic is a good old-fashioned barroom brawl and everyone gets hauled off to jail in the same paddy wagon. This can also give you your first taste of how "initiative" and "damage" works.

For my first ***Dark Conspiracy*** session I used "The Cave" with a female singer who had very Dark things after her. One thing you can count on from male players is the need to rescue a damsel in distress. That game was a home grown one that flowed into the "New Orleans" campaign (which is pre-generated). Nowadays, if I use "The Cave", my players cringe knowing that all does not bode well, and I still use it to bring in new players.

Now to explain my first statement about DC, about it of being hazardous to your health: Always 'expect the unexpected' from your players! In one of my game sessions, I had 2 of my players so something completely unexpected while I was drinking a cup of coffee. I ended up choking and found out the hard way that hot coffee burns!

That should be enough "Tips and Tricks" to get you started in the world of ***Dark Conspiracy***!

If there is anything else I can help you with, you can catch me in the ***Dark Conspiracy*** chatroom (my ICQ number is 10323496) or you can e-mail me at msgeorgi@primenet.com

Guidelines to writing your own tabloid articles

by Chris Carpenter

An oft-mentioned but seldom used ploy to introduce characters to a new adventure is the discovery of a darkling plot through tabloids or underground magazines. Tabloids, one of the few remaining forms of media generally untainted by the megacorporations, can be gold mines for minion hunters, providing valuable clues, names and places of dark activity. They can also be misleading, embellishing mundane accounts with the fantastic, or creating fictionalized accounts out of thin air. Regardless, they remain the minion hunter's hotsheet, a heads-up of the supernatural. To the other extreme, is the corporate newspaper. Even today, newspapers and electronic media (TV, radio) are almost the exclusive property of a few, i.e. Time/Warner, and Gannet; stories considered "unfavorable" for any reason may find themselves heavily edited, or squashed altogether.

> They remain the minion hunter's hotsheet.

News articles from either source make great handouts, and a combination of the two will strike a proper balance between the believable and the bizarre. Each must be properly "tuned," however, to come off as being of the right genre. Following these steps will help you create realistic news stories.

1. **The story**. Start with the truth. Nobody has to know the whole story but you (the GM) but having it in writing will avoid the later pitfall of having spontaneous solutions to complex problems. Don't be afraid to improvise later, but for now stick to your guns. Let's say bloodkin vampires have been killing along the Chiwaukee waterfront posing as religious missionaries. They offer shelter and food to runaway teens, and eventually induct them into their "church"; in turn, the "converted" become missionaries themselves, bringing more teens to the bloodkin. The oldest teens are offered entrance to the "inner circle," an exclusive group that sits at the right hand of the "religious leader," and are apparently privy to the secrets of their "religion." Of course, these "inner circle" members are ultimately made into lesser vampires, staying indoors during the day, and acting as strong-arms to enforce the will of the "leader" or by rounding up those who escape the church. This scheme will run pretty smoothly for awhile, but eventually, a member will see the vampires for what they are, and contact someone in authority. The story will eventually get to the press, and that is where the "facts" will come into dispute.

2. **The KISS principle**: Keep It Simple, Stupid. Neither article has to be a front page, thoroughly researched piece of journalism. Stay to the facts as the reporter and his witnesses would report, not what you (the GM) know. Use good journalistic writing styles, using the inverted pyramid method (most important facts first, incidentals last) and try to answer the 5 W's and 1 H (who, what, where, when, why, how) in the first few paragraphs. KISS has a second meaning for tabloid articles: they are generally written so people with a 6th grade education can understand them. Keep the word count low, the "big words" to a minimum, and use lots of exclamation points.

> Tabloids can take the most mundane events and find supernatural specters in every corner.

3. **Every story has a witness**, an official recounting, a professional in authority, a suspect, a police record, etc. A good reporter doesn't have to go far to find someone who knows <u>something</u> about the event, even if trivial or blown out of proportion. Old people creep around like pigeons, surely they saw part of the action; there are experts in every field, ask some. The major difference between the newspaper and tabloid: newspaper articles may run short on field research, but will usually quote and name a reliable source, be it a scientist or accepted expert. The tabloids will trot out "reputable insiders," "unnamed sources," and people you never heard of quoting books you've never read. Not that these accounts are necessarily untrue, but they are used frequently, as if everyone has something to hide.

4. **Newspapers play down**, tabloids play up. The newspapers may even concede that the teen was probably involved in some sort of cult or gang, but the word "vampire" will never be used once with any credibility, unless it is a direct quote, and maybe not even then. Tabloids can take the most mundane events and find supernatural specters in every corner. The story in question would 99.999% for sure be titled VAMPIRE CULT RAVAGES WATERFRONT, even with only the teen's word on the story. Newspapers will stick to the facts at hand, keeping the teen's quotes to a minimum, and reporting the official police reaction. Papers seeking to bury the story or discredit the witnesses may bring up a questionable past, through former arrests, past or current drug use, or psychological counseling. The inexplicable can often be attributed to swamp gas, ball lightning, cloud formations, etc. The tabloid reporter simply hands the pen and paper to the teen, letting him tell the entire experience in his own words, accepting his story without (many) questions.

5. **The Red Herring**. Tabloids, due to overzealousness, or a desire to generate

sales, may create articles out of thin air. These usually involve a minimum of witnesses (best=none) and an unnamed source or two. A poorly doctored photo may be the only "evidence." Real world tabloids are about 50% red herring, 35% half-truths and gossip (or logical, but unproven extensions of the truth) and 15% real, but unusual stories of human interest. The last 15% are used to "prove" that the rest of the tabloid has credibility. The tabloid of the future will be divided as you see fit, but handing your players a tabloid with too many stories to follow up will prove exhausting for everyone involved. Often, the front page story is the best one to focus on, but a small side story could be just as profitable, especially if it is backed up by a credible source or known non-player character. Gossip stories could be used to further other side adventures, or could link to the main adventure in some subtle way.

Traditional newspapers will almost never make up stories outright, and will print retractions of facts deemed later to be incorrect. They may also print half-truths at the request of the police, or withhold information pending further criminal investigation, but this happens rarely, and usually only on tv dramas.

6. **Good Source Material**. The best tabloids available in America are the Sun, and the Weekly World News. These contain more stories of the supernatural and the bizarre than most of their contemporaries, notably the National Enquirer and the Star, which focus mainly on gossip, dieting, and some human interest. When making your own tabloid, be sure to include advertisements for good luck charms, love potions, and diet aids, plus classifieds, personals, etc. The extra effort will show, and attention to detail will help flesh out your role-playing world.

One last note: if you are writing articles for submission to a role-playing magazine, such as Demonground, be sure to include a "hook"or adventure idea for the story. While conspiracy can be found everywhere, you may have ideas that others hadn't thought of, or the truth may be more cleverly concealed than you suspect. Remember: GMs are always looking for an unusual path to take their players down, so the more clever and original your ideas are, the more your work will be appreciated.

"You'll probably be forgiven if you soil yourself the first time you come face to face with something from another dimension. If you make a habit of it, we'll find a more useful job for you. Bait comes to mind."

- Zena Marley,
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Rhythm and Role-playing

Music in RPGs

By Marcus Bone

Role-playing is more than a hobby for me; it's almost an addiction. I constantly find myself writing or reading role-playing games and supplements. The invention of the Internet has just made this worse, and now I can be found at all hours, searching the Net in the hope of finding some article to satisfy my hunger for adventure.

But what has this got to do with ***Dark Conspiracy***? Well, as part of my journeys I have discovered many articles on how to make one's role-playing experience more enjoyable - the use of props, allowing the players to run some of the NPCs and setting the scene by writing backgrounds and histories. These are all quite good for adding that special something to your session. But I would like to contribute another suggestion, one that is not quite so intrusive, and is easy as being part of your life.

That idea is to add music to your Role-playing sessions.

Now that my role-playing career is firmly focused on ***Dark Conspiracy***, I have found that today's music lends itself quite nicely to this modern horror genre. Many CDs that I have been brought are done so purely on the basis that they 'feel' right, and would enhance my mood when I am writing. (Right at this moment I am listening to the Jurassic Park Sound track – excellent mood music)

This comes from some simple observations. The basic premise is that, from my experience anyway, most role-playing takes place in someone's (usually the GMs) lounge, or barring that, in a special hobby room and one thing that is common in these rooms this is the stereo. These days, it usually includes a CD player. The next thought is that most people like music, from Classical and Opera, to Rap and Techno (Dance music). We can see the love for music in people's day to day life; we have music in our shopping malls and our work places. In our free time, we spend hours listening and dancing to music, and we can see how important it is to human existence by observing the power the music companies possess. In my opinion then, music in leisure extends itself to music in role-playing.

Setting the Mood

During my time as both a player and a referee, I have seen and heard music that has just grabbed my attention as being the right sort to introduce to a role-playing game.

To me these have usually 2 requirements:

- First, they need to be long. Nothing is more frustrating than having to change a CD or the sides of a tape in the middle of a tense session.
- Second, that they reflect the type of adventure or situation that the players are in. That they portray the atmosphere you most require.

Although both of these sound rather simple, in reality they are much harder to come by. More than once I have found myself suddenly being surrounded by a beating Techno bass song, when I was trying to produce a moment of sadness or despair, or having some soft rock come on when the party was in the middle of a tense fight scene.

Atmosphere

I have a number of CDs that I use for certain games, and most of them are sound tracks in some shape or form. This is quite logical when you think about it, most sound tracks are designed to capture the mood of certain moments, and why shouldn't I capitalize on the millions movie directors spend on these atmosphere generators.

I will mention a couple of my particular favorites for different settings as examples. As I mentioned above the Jurassic Park soundtrack is one of these, combining fast and slow place music in one album, it naturally progresses from the quiet introduction to a hectic conclusion. One of the best things about it is that an orchestra played all the music, and therefore doesn't have on set feel to it.

Another CD I used is The Fifth Element, another soundtrack. This one however has a much more futuristic sound (like the movie) but lacks the ups and downs in tempo and feel that Jurassic Park had.

Yet another common CD I used is a sound track from a computer game – MechWarrior. This music, used as background on the various missions the player undertakes during a game, adds much in the way of atmosphere to a game. Combining a regular tempo and that feeling that something is just around the corner. (Something that is a necessity in both RPGs and Action Computer games). I find that this soundtrack is much more suited to a game, which is going to include a lot of combat.

I must mention a couple of other pieces of music, although none of them would ever really suit the DC world. The sound track for Games Workshop computer game – Shadow of the Horned Rat, is one such piece, combining action with a real Gothic feel this sort of music is a must in any grim fantasy game. On the other hand, when I played Call of Cthulhu regularly, a couple of Gershwin albums combined with a collection of later Jazz really hit the spot when portraying the 1930's.

Scene music

Another way music may be combined with your role-playing session is adding it to specific scenes. For example if the player are to meet a contact at a Country and Western Bar, playing some Garth Brooks quietly in the background will add an air of authentically to the encounter. Another example would be to play some

popular music e.g. Hootie and the Blow-Fish, or Madonna, as the characters travel by car from one place to another. Even better would be to have a real news broadcast play and then add in that piece of information you have for the players during it.

I have more than once used music in a combat. The hard rock tunes of many eighties and nineties bands are great for adding the special feeling to an action scene. One specific song I have used is "After the Flesh" from My Life With The Thrill Kill Cult, heard on 'The Crow' soundtrack. (If you want to know it was the song playing in the nightclub when The Crow a.k.a. Brandon Lee, attacked his killers in the big bad guy's board-room.) It really has a fast paced action feel.

Inspiration

I have to say that I am a real fan of music, my CD collection has a bit of all most everything – Gershwin, The Prodigy, Steve Vai and Icehouse, to name but a few. Music has always inspired me, especially some of the classical music that I heard when I was younger.

Today when I am studying, reading or writing, music is a constant. If nothing else, at least it relieves the boredom when I have an all night studying session. One thing that still happens is that music, regardless of what type, fills me with ideas for adventures.

This has happened quite a lot, and for most part they give me an image of a scene that would be good in a role-playing game.

One of most enjoyable adventures I ever ran was based on the premise presented in T. Rex's song 'Dandy in the Underworld'. I simply I followed the adventures that happened to the hero in the song and then translated them into a structured adventure my players could follow. In the end, the adventure was as confusing for the players as it was for the hero in the song. Everything eventually came to a head and it all became clear.

Warning

There are two things that I will say in the way of warning when it comes to using music in your role-playing session.

- **It's only an enhancement** - Like Beer or munchies, music is only an enhancement. Don't spend too much time on it, and especially don't allow it to get in the way of the game. The last thing you want is the players getting bored as you search for that tape, which you 'know is here'. Another valid point is the volume – quiet is sometimes best.

- **Not that again!** The other important thing to remember is – Not everyone likes your choice of music. We are all individuals and as part of that we all have different tastes in music. One thing that I can assure you of is that having to listen to music you don't like can really turn you off what you are doing. (Hey I listen to the 24-hour sports radio station, but I don't expect my flatmates to listen to it with me.) Part of this involves changing the music around -listening to the same music session after session soon gets on everyone's nerves.

Closing Comments

I have been role-playing for some 10 years now and have only had music in a handful of my games. Like many other enhancements it has its place in the whole atmosphere in the phenomenon that is role-playing. So if you have the time or the inclination to use it I fully recommend you use music in you games.

Dark Embrace

By Michael Marchi

Like creatures out of a horror movie, they come. Strangely familiar, yet disturbingly different. How do you fight the Darkness when it wears your face?

Foreword

Jillian screamed as the thing leapt out of the shadows and slammed into her. She could smell the fetid breath that escaped from between the rows of teeth that lined its mouth. Its hands gripped her arms, pinning them to her side. She tried in vain to step away from the attack, to let the creature's momentum carry it past her, but it stayed with her, all the way to the ground. The back of her head bounced on the hardwood floor sending a kaleidoscope of colors and lights flashing behind her eyes. She felt the onset of unconsciousness and struggled to fight against the soft enveloping pull of sleep. She could feel the thing straddling her stomach, pinning her arms to the ground at her side. Jillian focused all of her energy into delivering a kick to her attacker's groin. The muscles in her leg tensed up. Hot moist breath caressed the side of her neck. She felt something wet slide across her throat, then felt the teeth compress together on her skin. A flash of heat splashed across her shoulder and soaked her shirt. She raised her knee, delivering the blow with all the force she could muster. The creature shrieked in agony, and released its grip on her neck. She felt it roll off onto the floor on her left. She reached up to her throat and felt the jagged edges of the wound it had inflicted. Blood flowed from the tattered skin, soaking into her black cotton tank. Lights still swam across her vision, only now the siren song of sleep had added a chorus of blood-loss.

Referee´s Information

A hundred years ago, a meteor crashed to earth, striking a small island in the Pacific Northwest. The island, known today as Sangomanka Mortaro, is one of several hundred that make up the San Juan archipelago in Puget Sound, Washington.

The meteor in question is no ordinary rock from space. It's ultra-dense structure not only punched a hole through the crust of Sangomanka Mortaro, but right on through the space-time continuum as well. There is a tear in the fabric of reality, in which the rock is lodged. Right now, the rock is acting like a cork in a passageway to another dimension. There is an alien presence on the other side of that cork that can send its thoughts and influence through the portal and affect minds on the island.

The meteor itself possesses one other ability. The radiation emitted by the rock, somehow allows the brain pathways of a dead creature to continue functioning. Thus, nothing ever really dies on Sangomanka Mortaro.

Frederick Brimley, an eccentric nomenklatura owns the island and lives there in his vast mansion. Apart from the house, which is located at the apex of the island, there is also a private beach, garden areas, a boathouse and dock, an in-ground swimming pool, and various outbuildings scattered around the island. Frederick's boat, is the only vehicle on the island. Electricity and telephone are provided to the island via undersea cable, which originates on San Juan island, the largest in the archipelago.

Brimley no longer leaves his island home, preferring instead to extend invitations to visitors who share common interests with him. There is no regular ferry service to the island. If the small size of Sangomanka Mortaro wasn't enough to dissuade them, the fact that the larger ferries can't enter the island's small cove certainly is. But there are a few boats and captains willing to brave the narrow inlet to Sangomanka.

November 4, 2013

Dear Sir,

Your name has come my way via a mutual friend of ours within the Talamasca. Forgive me for not contacting you in person, but I am geographically isolated in the Pacific Northwest. I would ask your assistance in observing an interesting phenomenon I have discovered on my island home. I do not wish to go into great detail in this letter, but suffice to say I believe that a group of individuals possessing certain "mental abilities" may be able to discern what the source of the phenomena may be.

I would like to invite yourself and several of your fellows for a weekend retreat on my island of Sangomanka Mortaro, located in the San Juan archipelago north of Seattle, Washington on Puget Sound. There are a number of ferryboats that service the small islands in the archipelago. I suggest you seek passage on one of these.

I hope you will consider accepting my offer. There will be another full moon on Saturday, November 16. I have noticed that a full moon tends to make observation of the effect easier.

I look forward to your visit.

Frederick Brimley

Sangomanka Mortaro Island

The Invitation

The players are invited to visit Sangomanka Mortaro, a privately owned island located in the San Juan archipelago on Puget Sound, Washington. The island is one of hundreds of small rural islands in the area, that can be reached only by boat, seaplane or helicopter. Frederick Brimley, the eccentric millionaire has contacted the group in hopes of securing their help observing a strange phenomenon. The text of the invitation appears at the left.

If anyone asks, a chart of the moon phases for the month of November, 2013 is on the previous page.

The group arrives in Seattle on Friday, November 15th in the early afternoon. *Note: The actual date that the party goes to the island is unimportant. The full moon is a red herring. Therefore, make the following event happen regardless of when the party arrives:* By the time they reach the San Juan archipelago, it is approaching 6pm, and the winter sky has already darkened into night. As it turns out, there is no regular ferry service to Brimley's Island, and very few booking agents will even consider the trip. It seems the dock on Sangomanka Mortaro is sheltered by a relatively shallow cove, and most of the larger ferryboats cannot land there. After some checking, they will discover that all seaplane and helicopter flights in the area have been suspended for the next twelve hours due to a national weather service advisory. A severe storm warning is in effect due to an unnaturally strong storm due to hit the area within the next few hours. Thus, they can either rent a boat or hire one of the smaller ferries. *Evergreen Clipper*, captained by Ira Shulmann is one such vessel. Shulmann already has some pressing business across the Sound (Seattle's mayor had taken a helicopter with his wife to attend an opera performance. The sudden turn in the weather has grounded them. Schulman has been hired to deliver the mayor's limousine). Ira is willing to divert to Brimley's island for an appropriate fee (about $25 per person). This is extremely reasonable, compared to the rental fee on the private boat is $350.00 per day, for a small, open-topped runabout, which looks

like it would be very uncomfortable in the rain.

Arrival

Even as *Evergreen Clipper* proceeds out into the dark waters of Puget Sound, a very impressive wall of clouds is rolling in from the southwest. The storm hits with a fury, stirring the seas into a tempest. Wave after wave washes across the deck. Any PC who hasn't had training in a maritime career needs to make a difficult save vs. CON to avoid getting seasick on the voyage out to Brimley's island.

Shulmann manages to pilot the ferry between the jagged rocks into the semi-sheltered cove where the dock for the island is. If any of the players offer to help, Shulmann will order them to stand by the mooring ropes to help bring *Evergreen Clipper* into dock. During landing, roll 1D6, the boat will hit the dock hard enough to knock everyone off their feet on a 5 or 6 (requiring a Difficult save vs. Agility to avoid falling). A roll of 3 or 4 requires an Average task to avoid falling. Note that any PC's who fall while attempting to help land the boat will have a good chance to fall overboard during this process. Rescuing the PC from the pounding surf should prove to be quite a chore. If they fail, and the player drowns, it isn't the end of the line for them (as you will see).

Although the cove is sheltered, Shulmann is anxious to get *Evergreen Clipper* back to sea. She is far safer braving the swells in open water than here among the rocks. As soon as the party disembarks, the ferry will leave. Ira will not endanger his ship by staying tied to the dock for more than ten minutes. If any characters refuse to leave the boat within that time, he will cast off the lines and leave the island with them aboard.

From the dock, the party can just make out the silhouette of the mansion situated high above them on the apex of the island A steep, winding path appears to climb the incline from the docks up to the house. There is a boathouse at the base of that path, next to the dock. This is where Frederick's boat, *Ageless Dream*, a 30 foot Cris Craft cabin cruiser is located. Neither the electric boat-lift mounted on the ceiling, nor the lights will operate, as the power is out. Normally, the boat is pulled into the boathouse onto a platform, which is hoisted out of the water by the motors mounted in the rafters overhead. At the moment, the platform is lowered all the way down, and *Ageless Dream* dangles from her moorings three feet under water. The cabin cruiser has had a large hole chopped in the hull, and sunk beneath the dark water where she is being bashed against the rocks by the undercurrent.

Lying on the floor of the boathouse, is the body of a man. He has an axe-wound to the back of the head. The puddle of blood in which he lies face down is still fresh. Checking the body for identification will produce a wallet identifying him as Rupert Cox, 32 years old. The wallet contains $60 in cash, a credit card and a photograph of Rupert and an attractive blonde woman. An axe lies a few feet from Rupert's outstretched hand. Anyone with medical skill can determine that the axe is responsible for the death of both Rupert Cox and *Ageless Dream*.

Entering the House

Viewed from the courtyard outside, the house is fairly dark. The only light seems to be coming from dim, flickering lights in the windows (candles) that seem to be glowing in every visible room. The wind is really picking up, and the storm is about to break. The characters knock on the door, and Frederick Brimley himself answers it. He is an older, somewhat heavyset man with a thick mustache and lambchop sideburns. The facial hair serves as counterpoint to the bald expanse atop his head. Frederick is holding a brass candelabra with three lit candles. He stands facing them silently, paying no heed to the ominous storm clouds gathering overhead, which threaten to burst open and soak his visitors.

Someone from the party must introduce them as a group and mention the letter before Frederick will stand aside and let the pass. Even as they enter, his demeanor doesn't change much. He seems vaguely confused and preoccupied. His speech is slurred, and he keeps muttering about the lights having gone out.

If anyone mentions the body in the boathouse, he will speculate that it is probably Rupert, and that he'd warned Rupert not to leave the house at night. If they brought the body with them, he will refuse to let them bring it into the house. "The house is no place for him now", he will say.

If they press him for information, a possible interchange could go like this:

Players: "What happened to him?"
Brimley: "He's dead … Everybody's dead … Or worse."
Players: "Worse?"

Frederick will only go to the window and stare out into the night. The wind is really blowing outside and the window panes rattle in their frames as he looks out. The rain begins to fall. He is looking out the west side family-room window toward a different path. Then he turns away and gets out more candles and starts lighting them. He is moving very sluggishly, as if he is in shock. If anyone were to examine him, they would be in for a real surprise…

Frederick Brimley's Surprise

Frederick Brimley, in spite of his winning per-personality and obvious mobility, is dead. He has no pulse. His heart isn't beating. His body is go-going through the motions of breathing, but only because it needs the air to talk. If questioned

about it, he will appear quite ignorant of the concept. If pressed, he will reveal wakening one night shortly after mailing their letter with sharp pains in his chest. A doctor doing an in-depth examination would be able to verify the diagnosis, but his descriptions sound as though he suffered a major coronary - a fatal one.

Searching the House

The floorplan for the house is as follows. There are three floors, plus a basement.

The Main Floor

The main floor contains the Family Room, a Game Room, the Library, Dining Room, Living Room, Kitchen, Breakfast Nook and a Half Bath.

The Second Floor

The second floor has five bedrooms. Frederick's room is the Master Suite on this level. This area also has an overlook over the family room, and stairs leading up to the third floor. Kylie Harrison was in Bedroom #4 and Edgar Shapiro was in Bedroom #3.

The Third Floor

Four more bedrooms are located on this level. Jillian Taylor and Rupert Cox were sharing the Master Suite on this floor.

The Basement

The majority of the basement is a large open area. There is a small enclosure built around the twin furnaces and water heaters. The area to the south of the furnace enclosure looks like a wood-paneled wall. It leads to a crawlspace/storage area under the game room. The wine cellar is quite well stocked.

Island Inhabitants

Frederick Brimley - The owner of Sangomanka Mortaro and everything on it. Brimley is deceased, but gets around really well (for a dead guy).

Rupert Cox - The body of Rupert Cox lies in the boathouse at the time the players arrive. Within an hour of their arrival, Rupert's body will rise and begin walking up the winding path, past the house, and down the back path toward the beach. Of course by this time, the storm will be raging, so the characters will only be able to tell that someone is walking passed the house in the rain. (See the section on Zombies below)

Kylie Harrison - has been 'turned' by the evil force on the island. She is hiding down in the pool house. She will probably stay there until somebody discovers her presence. If she is discovered by someone who has also been turned, she will suggest they band together to attack the house and get a quick meal. She is VERY hungry. (See the section on Vampires, below)

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Edgar Shapiro - has also been 'turned'. Edgar is hiding up on the third floor of the house when the party arrives. While the group begins questioning Frederick, Edgar will stalk into Jillian's room and attack her as she sleeps. (See the section on Vampires, below)

Jillian Taylor - At the time of the player's arrival, she is asleep in the room she shares with Rupert Cox on the third floor. When Edgar tries to sneak into her room, she awakens. Her screams will easily carry down to the first floor. This event should be triggered as soon as you are ready to have the adventure begin in earnest.

Searching the Grounds

Sangomanka Mortaro contains very little usable land. The majority of the surface of the island is jagged rock, characterized by sharp inclines and even sharper edges. A few areas have been cultivated for living space. They are:

The Boat Landing

The boathouse is located here, as well as the dock. Frederick's cabin cruiser, *Ageless Dream* is usually moored inside the boathouse. The channel that leads to the dock is narrow, and not nearly deep enough to keep a larger ferry off the bottom. Hence, only small boats such as *Evergreen Clipper* or *Ageless Dream* can even land here.

The House

Brimley Manor is located at the center on the apex of the island. It is an impressive 3-story structure constructed of gray brick with a slate roof.

The Pool

A relatively level section on the west side of the island was leveled out even further. It now has a swimming pool, a poolhouse with showers, changing rooms and a sauna, and a screened-in gazebo. The pool is heated and well maintained. The entire yard is covered in a thick carpet of closely cropped, wide-blade grass. Kylie Harrison is hiding in the pool house. The hunger pains have overwhelmed her. She will attack anyone who enters on sight (unless they have already been turned). She knows that Edgar Shapiro has been turned as well.

The Beach

The beach lines the north to northeast shore of the island. It is covered in a course grey sand with a great deal of small sea-shell material and a good portion of volcanic rock. Although the weather in the summers will reach a temperature suitable for swimming, the waters of Puget Sound are not so inviting. Anyone who wishes to swim, uses the pool. The beach narrows as it approaches

THIRD FLOOR PLAN

FOUNDATION PLAN

the east point of Sangomanka Mortaro. There will be a lot of things washed up on the beach. A few fish, washed high up on shore continue to flop on the ground, even though they appear to have been up there a long time.

The Point

At the end of the beach, where it passes around a small outcropping of rock is a large cavern. The path to the cavern is only passable at low tide (which will occur approximately 14 hours after the characters arrive) The cave extends to the core of the island beneath the house, and is the resting place for a large green meteor.

Vampires

There are vampires on Sangomanka Mortaro. Actually, there is an alien presence, convincing people that they and their fellows have been transformed into vampires. The alien has empathic abilities so great, that it is able to project a virtually impenetrable illusion of vampirism upon not only the victim, but those around him as well!

An attack by one of the "vampires" which does sufficient damage to reach a serious head wound level will result in death - at least that's how it appears. As the vampire manages to pierce the victim's neck, and blood loss begins, the alien (who is located in the cavern off The Point (behind the Meteor)) begins an empathic assault upon the victim. As soon as the character reaches a serious wound level in the head, he/she needs to start making difficult saves vs. Constitution. If they fail to make their save, they will drop into a death-like coma. A roll should be made every 15 minutes vs. Formidable Constitution to awaken. If the initial Con test was successful, however, then the following effects occur immediately, otherwise they occur upon awakening.

Upon awakening, the victim has changed. His/Her skin is pale, with veins standing out. The whites of their eyes are completely bloodshot, the iris's fogged over and a milky yellow (like the color of puss). Their teeth are long and razor sharp. They awaken in pain, their stomach feeling like it's been tied in knots. Almost as if they are suffering from intense hunger pains. Also, there will be an odd metallic taste in their mouths.

The newly awakened vampire's only thought will be to stop the pain. The only thing he/she can think of to stop it, is to feed - on blood. They will try to attack the party members, seeking out the weakest, most vulnerable or most convenient one. The vampire may resist the urge to feed. Doing so starts out as an Easy Willpower task, gaining one level of difficulty each subsequent hour. If the player actually feeds, reset the save at Easy. Anyone who fails the willpower check will immediately attack the nearest (or weakest or most vulnerable), trying to feed. And spreading the affliction at the same time.

After the second hour of the game, any player with Empathy can make a save to see through the vampiric image. This test is an Impossible task vs. Willpower. Once the player sees through the image, he or she will never see that particular vampire in anything but human form again, even though the other party members who haven't made the save will continue to see a disfigured hideous creature. Hopefully, by this point in the game, the player who makes the saving throw the first time, will assume the vampire has now begun projecting a human form, rather than not projecting an inhuman one!

Should the other players manage to kill one of the vampires, it will revert to human form almost immediately. This should unnerve the players, but may not be totally unexpected, considering Hollywood's penchant for using this effect in horror movies.

When the players arrive on the island, Kylie Harrison and Edgar Shapiro are both vampires. Edgar is about to attack Jillian. If the players react to Jillian's screams, they will arrive just as she begins to "turn". If a PC is bitten by a vampire, play up the pain that they are experiencing. Remember that despite the pain, they must be given a chance to make a saving throw to stay in control. Even if the player makes his/her save, it remains to be seen whether the others will believe that they are in control of themselves.

Zombies

On Sangomanka Mortaro, death is not the end, but the beginning of a new life – after death. You can't keep a good character down. Especially when there is a meteor buried in the island that reanimates dead bodies. When a character dies, hitpoints to the head are replaced by Intelligence points. There is no longer a need to roll against passing out. If body parts get chopped or blown off, oh well. A Zombie only has as many hitpoints in the head as Intelligence points. Each head hit reduces both Intelligence and Head hits simultaneously. Once the Zombie's Intelligence reaches Zero, it is no longer in control of itself.

Meteor

The meteor possesses the ability to reanimate dead tissue. Somehow, the radiation the meteor puts out causes the nerve impulses of the brain to continue functioning. And not just human brains. No creature, great or small on Sangomanka Mortaro ever really dies. This could be used to great effect as fish washed up on the beach continue to thrash about, even after they start to decompose. Or a bird, blown into the side of the mansion by the high winds, continues to flop around the yard, despite having a broken neck.

That same radiation, while beneficial to the dead, is devastating on the living. A living being (human or otherwise) will suffer 1d6 of damage to the head and chest when approaching within 10 feet of the meteor, and continue to collect another 1d6 each combat phase thereafter. The damage doubles to 2d6 within 5 feet of the meteor.

The meteor can be destroyed. Blowing up the rock will cause the breach in which it is lodged to snap shut as if it never existed. But the overall effect that animates the dead will be greatly diminished…perhaps even negated (GM's discretion).

Alien

There is an alien presence on the island. The alien sits on the other side of a rip in the fabric of reality. It is not able to come through to our side due to a large

meteor blocking its path, but it *is* able to send mental images through. The creature feeds off fear, and has learned of vampires via one of Frederick Brimley's early visitors: a player of an odd live-action role playing game. The creature creates the illusion of the vampiric metamorphosis to instill horror in both the victim and the victim's companions. The more terror it can generate along the way, the happier it will be. But the ultimate goal is the same.

The alien needs bodies – dead ones. Somehow, the meteor possesses a strange radiation, which can result in the reanimation of dead tissue. These reanimated corpses are particularly vulnerable to the suggestions of the alien mind… especially if the person was empathic before they died! The alien needs empathic dead bodies it can control to try to dislodge the meteor so it can come through to our world. It is using the vampire illusion to get people on the island to kill each other off.

The alien has one weakness, however. Once a human makes a successful save vs. the illusion it cannot be reinstated against that person. The roll must be made for each and every vampire in the area, and may be made once per hour. Fortunately for the alien, the humans misinterpret this return of human guise in the vampire. They believe the vampire is attempting to take human form to lull his victims into a false sense of security.

Alien Statistics

STR:	8
CON:	12
AGL:	6
INT:	10
EDU:	5
CHR:	6
EMP:	23
Move:	2/8/12/24
Skill/Dam:	10/1D6
Hits:	40/80
# Appear:	1

The players better hope they don't let this thing through into our world. By utilizing the same ability it used to project the image of the vampire onto the group, it could disguise itself as anyone or any thing, and probably maintain the image for quite some time. It could also project the image of a dead alien onto one of the numerous dead bodies that are bound to be around when the adventure ends.

The Summoning

Dead bodies are just what the alien needs. For some reason, no living creature may pass through the rip that the meteor has created. But the reanimated corpses can! Once a day, at low tide, the alien summons the zombies to come to the caverns via the entrance on the eastern beach. The compulsion to come is impossible to resist. Even Brimley will drop everything and start walking in a dazed stupor down toward the beach.

Dislodging the meteor will take a combined strength attribute of 50 points to dislodge the rock using levers. If it can find a character with Dimension Walk skill, it will be even happier. An empath, actively working to enlarge the opening will greatly aid in the removal of the meteor, while at the same time helping keep the portal open for the alien to pass through.

Once dislodged, the meteor could roll either way - either into the breach, or out into the cave. This is one of those cases where the portal staying open longer could be considered a bad thing. The quicker it snaps shut, the less likely the alien will come through.

End of the Game

Should there be insufficient physical strength to move the meteor, it could still be removed through the us of Dimension Walk skill to widen the rift. Any level of success will be sufficient to dislodge the rock. Use the stage of success to determine how long the widening lasts. If one of your players doesn't possess this skill, then you can have either Rupert or Jillian possess the skill as a latent ability.

Remember, no matter what, the players need to dislodge the meteor! Leaving the meteor in place and fleeing the island won't solve the problem. Sooner or later the alien will get that rock out. The trick is how to do it without letting the alien through, or being killed by the radiation pouring off the rock.

If the meteor is destroyed or pushed through to the other side of the breach, all of the zombies on the island will revert to their natural state – death. That's right. Even the Player Characters. If they were legitimately killed, they will be dead.

If the meteor winds up on this side of the portal, the undead will continue to walk on Sangomanka Mortaro.

"Centuries ago, someone managed to seal off all the dimensional gateways. This begs the question: "Where the hell are those bastards now?"

- Zena Marley,
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Academic Curiosities

By Rob Beck

Introduction

Dateline: November 6, 2016

Berkeley, CA: Professor Arthur Kinyon, of the Archaeological Research Facility at the University of California at Berkeley, announced today a find that, in his words, "is of major significance to the understanding of the mystic beliefs which underlie Western civilization."

Professor Kinyon, during a recent excavation on the plains at Avebury in England, uncovered what he believes to be the sacred stone known as Anancithidus. "The inscriptions at the site point to it being several hundred years old, but my research indicates the stone itself is much older. The name was applied to the stone sometime around 1st or 2nd Century A.D., when it appeared in Naples. Scattered legends note a stone of similar descriptions dating back to a story told of a 'demon rock' that brought forth hideous creations that terrorized the peoples of Mesopotamia during the supposed reign of Sargon I."

The so-called "demon rock", Anancithidus, is a rather large, baseball-sized piece of obsidian, inlaid with platinum markings similar to the cuneiform writing style of ancient Sumeria. A spokesman for the University, Jeffery Marshall, said "We are proud of Professor Kinyon and his accomplishments. His discovery of this stone is another feather in his and our ARF's collective cap."

In other news, strange electrical storms continue to plague the Los Angeles area...

Plot

What Professor Kinyon doesn't know is that more than a few people are interested in his find, and not just for academic reasons. The Professor's find is of tremendous value monetarily. Already, a group of professional thieves are planning to steal the stone from the University's Archaeology department, where it is guarded by a small security detachment (3 men; 1 Vet, 2 Exp) from a private security firm brought in to augment campus security, at least until the press dies down. Their weapons should be for the most part non-lethal (small caliber pistols). After all, this is a university, not a fortress.

The thieves are but four in number and are experienced at stealing high-value objects of artistic or collectable interest. They are merely a diversionary side plot. They will attempt to steal the stone at a time best left to the GM, but it should be strategically timed to cause maximum confusion.

The real worry is a Ravager, Alastor, who has been ordered by his Dark Lord master (your choice) to retrieve the stone and destroy the professor and his research. The day before the University announced the find to the media, the Ravager arrived amidst a huge thunderstorm. His arrival and other interdimensional anomalies caused by the stone have contributed to the storm's lingering and turbulence.

He is biding his time in locating the stone, the professor, and his research, so that he might complete his mission quickly and depart. He will take a week stalking his quarry and when he is sure of his prey's habits and location, he will strike. Alastor will take the form of a visiting professor and assume his identity. He will keep contact with others to a minimum on the chance that his cover will be blown.

He will use his cover to get into the Archaeology Dept. and determine the stone's location. The major drawback to this will be that, as a Ravager, he must feed daily. Ravager feedings are not elegant black-tie affairs and he will try to find out of the way places where he can feed on the homeless or impoverished.

This will cause a rash of stories in the local papers about bizarre murders in the lawless areas around Berkeley, which itself is a sort of fortified mini-Dreamland, and a panic by the denizens of the slums. They will be full of rumors and stories of seeing a strange demon lurking in the alleys "twice as tall as a man" that kills their friends and acquaintances. It will be equally obvious that no organized effort is being made to find this killer, as it is only affecting those who are beneath the concern of the police and corporate entities in this part of California.

A contingency plan by the Dark Lord involved could have a couple of humanoid ET's (for those who use them in their campaign) or Dark Elves standing by as a second assault team on the off chance that the Ravager is unable to complete his mission (read: dead).

Luckily for the doctor, he is a bit of a latent empath. He has a fairly strong Foreboding skill (4) and has been having horrible dreams and feelings of dread. Kinyon is worried that someone is going to do him or his find harm and this feelingmay save his life.

The Hook

This is a fairly easy one to get the characters involved with. If any of your players are paraphysicist or scientist types, the Professor may be a contact of theirs. He will know of the character's fascination with strange and unusual things and may elect to bring him in on the research. If so, he'll confide in his friend, eventually, that he is very worried something might happen to him.

He claims to have had "bad feelings" like this throughout his life and that his instinct has never let him down. The character might offer to help protect him and his find if he/she thinks to offer, or they may just be asked by the good professor directly. "You have friends who are into this sort of thing, right? Well, I need help, and I don't know who else would believe me."

Kinyon's paranoia will see conspiracies where there aren't necessarily, but

he'll pick out stories and information he sees or reads about in the media that might support his fears, if he thinks it will convince the characters he's in danger.

If there are any empathic individuals in the group, they might be on the look out for anyone showing an unusual interest in the artifact or the professor. The Ravager will have to get close enough that an alert group might get curious as to this "visiting professor's" intentions. If they snoop too closely, though, he will back off to a safe distance, or may strike prematurely, if he thinks someone is on to him.

Another possible player hook could be a law enforcement contact of a player, in this case the leader of the security team assigned to protect Anancithidus. He will bring the characters in at the request of Kinyon, who has been pestering him for personal security and bombarding him with stories of his "bad feelings". The intro could go something like "Hey, sorry to bother you, but this wacked-out professor who works at the site I'm assigned to right now has been on my case to get him some people who can protect him from creepy-crawlies or some crap like that. I know my boss'll think I'm crazy if I ask for additional men under those pretenses. I remember the last time we talked you had talked about how you and those guys you're in with now are into this kinda stuff, so..."

They would be there to investigate the stone and/or to protect the professor from his real or imagined fears.

If neither of these angles is viable, there's always the chance they'll find interest in a news story (like the one in the Introduction) while searching for leads on Minion activity. Have the killings show up in the media reports the characters review, and make sure they get wind of the archaelogical findals. If they're bright, they'll put two and two together and maybe try to track down the cause of the killings. Alastor is good at what he does (well, he's a Ravager), but he's not perfect, and small clues might lead to his identification if someone were actually hunting him. Witnesses near the various crime scenes might have seen him in his disguised form or seen the car he's using to get around. A little money or booze spread around could get little ideas like the type of car and license plate.

It's all a matter of someone giving a damn. The players would have to be careful, though, as Alastor will catch on eventually to anyone tracking him. Hunters as experienced as he can get a sense of when they themselves are being hunted. That could lead to early confrontation, as Alastor will let nothing stand in the way of his mission.

Side Plot

The stone, Anancithidus, is an ancient dimension walk device that was used originally as a gateway activator to bring Dark Minions to Earth. The powerful sorcerer who possessed the stone was eventually killed and the Minions he brought through slain, but it was a horrible struggle, enough so that it was a remembered event that has become a legend.

It has been recovered and used many times since it's initial creation by various individuals for both good and evil and has a strong empathic signature to it. Empathic sensitives who get very close to the stone will feel uneasiness and those who actually hold it will get impressions of the strong power that has been associated with this device.

In fact, so much the stone is such an energy magnet that it causes electrical anomalies in the vicinity of electrical generation systems (such as power plants).

Anancithidus is a large piece of obsidian deeply inlaid with platinum, acting as a dampening agent. Depending on how the GM's campaign universe is structured, it could be used as a generic dimension walk device, as described on pages 222-224 of the 2nd Edition Referee's Guide. Another possiblity is that it could be used as a gateway activator, which under the proper conditions (STRONG electrical fields, solstice, planetary conjunctions, etc.) activates a gateway its near. The Proto-dimensions section of the Referee's Guide talks of the dampening metal in the activator and the gateway anchor needing to be the same, but that's a point for the individual GM.

Alternatively, it might open a singular gate, perhaps in Mesopotamia. My choice would be a gate at Baalbek in Lebanon, but then that's the stuff of another adventure...

Resolution

The best time and place for a confrontation will be at the University, perhaps during the evening. Alastor will wait until he has everything together (target, notes, and stone) in the Archaeology Dept. and a relatively quiet time (like late evening) to strike.

As it happens, the professor does work long hours and with his new find is leaving very late during the week that Alastor is stalking him. Alastor will make

quick work of any security and then try to eliminate the players. He will cut power to the facility by destroying the circuit box and then stalk any targets that stand between him and his objective.

If the characters hole up with the professor and wait him out, he'll project the form of one of the security team and try to gain close access to them then he will reveal his full self and go into a rage, attempting to slay everyone around him. On the off chance the characters retreat, he will take what he came for and attempt to finish off Kinyon. Nothing short of his death will stop him from this.

Of course, the characters, if he and they survive, will have a new enemy. Killing them will become a pet project for him when he has the time. If the characters stand and fight and are on the losing end of things, have the thieves show up now and distract the Ravager's attention. This should give them a little breathing room.

The characters will either live through this night or they will not. How many others survive with them is solely based on how well they perform. They should definitely feel as though they've survived a major menace, because they have. Remember that Ravagers are about as big and nasty as Minions can get. Taking out one of these critters should never be easy.

For keeping quiet about what went on, the University might well offer financial compensation to the players. If Kinyon survives, they will of course have his lasting gratitude and a new solid contact. Anancithidus, itself, is another matter. Knowing that someone wants it bad enough to send a Ravager after it should set a warning light off somewhere, and this artifact will have to be disposed of, either by the players or the University.

After the destruction that's likely to occur during a Ravager attack, the University can easily be made to part with the artifact, on the condition that it is properly dealt with and disposed of. This could be another whole adventure in its own right. The remainder of the resolution and what to do next are up to the GM.

Notes

I'm cutting it there as that's quite a bit already. As I was writing the end, I started looking in to doing a sequel that would entail taking the stone to it's place of origin and disposing of it.

Finding a reason to go to all that trouble is what will take some time, though. It could even lead to a little dimension hopping. Right now, it's just a fancy idea or two. The Ravager is hard to replace as the main heavy, but if you want to provide it with cohorts, I've left that door open.

There is plenty of room for development as to the characters involved, like the security team and the thieves, depending on how long you expect them to last in your individual campaigns.

Time and place are easy to change out also. UC Berkeley was just a random pick because they have a strong anthropology department. I was toying with the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, but that would be a bit out of the way for most people's campaigns. Since the stone is recovered from a site near Avebury, though, it could more easily be substituted. Enjoy.

"The best cure for an empath who has succumbed to dark influence is an injection. Preferably lead, delivered at high velocity from a safe distance."

- Zena Marley,
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Androdamus

By Rob Beck

This is an artifact that could fit into a ***Dark Conspiracy*** adventure as a subplot, as part of a Minion or Minion Hunter's possessions, or could be the centerpiece for an entire adventure, depending on how important it may be in an individual's campaign.

Background

Androdamus is an artifact whose creation is lost to antiquity. It could have been a Darkling device that was given by to a Charon as a gift or weapon to accomplish some task and then lost or passed on.

According to ancient belief, this was a stone resembling a diamond, said to be found in the sands of the Red Sea. Its name denotes the virtue belonging to it, namely, to restrain anger, mitigate lunacy, and lesson the gravity of the body.

Game Information

Let's assume this stone doesn't really have these particular powers, (Project Emotion; Change Environment (Special-gravity) or Sorcerous Flight; Project Thought) but that these powers were possessed by the user and merely associated with the stone through time and distortion of the facts. The stone could, however, act as a focus for sorcererous empaths, adding a power level or even doubling the power level of their empathic task.

At first I thought a fixed power level increase might be in order, but it would be more ***interesting*** of a stone or device if it's power level fluctuated. Say, it increases the power level of an empathic sorcerer one level in a normal environment, but it doubles the power level on demonground or in an empathically charged area. (This option because I know not everyone uses demonground in their campaigns)

The idea that it is DarkTek would allow another little "complication" for empaths who use it. My suggestion is Control:1 and Detection:100.

This denotes that the Darklings who created it expected that its owner not have that much autonomy regarding its use. The 100m detection range would act as a beacon if the owner tried to use the stone too near Darklings, thus tipping them off to his/her location. Alternatively, it could let them know to clear out, should they not want to be associated or identified with the owner, thus adding themselves to its mystique and destroying some of its "mystery".

Control value is obvious. Never hurts to have your opponents little weaker than they normally would be, in case their goals and yours don't agree.

Contact Information

Personal Web Sites

Carolina Triad Sanctuary
http://users.vnet.net/seawolf/dc/dc.htm

Dark Conspiracy Page of Ari Julku
http://www.megabaud.fi/~julku/

Ian's ***Dark Conspiracy*** Game Page
http://vminc.com/dc/

Incursions
http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Nebula/7515/yp2.html

James' ***Dark Conspiracy*** Page
http://www.dcs.ed.ac.uk/~jld/dark.htm

Mike Marchi's ***Dark Conspiracy***
http://www.42north.org/~mjm/rpg/dc/

Panzer's ***Dark Conspiracy*** Page
http://www.fortunecity.com/underworld/myst/564/pdc.html

Paul's ***Dark Conspiracy*** Page
http://www.ludat.lth.se/~dat93pre/DarkConspiracy.html

Ripper Jack's RPG Characters
http://www.netspace.net.au/~riprjak/characters.html

Ryan's ***Dark Conspiracy*** Pages
http://members.aol.com/ltlolme108/darkc.htm

Speedbump920's ***Dark Conspiracy*** Page
http://members.tripod.com/~speedbump920/sbdc.html

Steven Ward's ***Dark Conspiracy*** Page
http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~ccussmw/rpg/dc/dc.htm

Tad Kelson's ***Dark Conspiracy*** RPG Items
http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/7614/d_c.htm

The Gateway
http://www.pcisys.net/~arkangel/dark.htm

The Interdimensional Demon Hunting Club
http://www.chem.swin.edu.au/~mitch/darkconspiracy.html

The Pitts-Hio Barbed Bar
http://www.geocities.com/Area51/8734/

Mindset

Life as a Ballotman

By Geoff Skellams

*This is the first in a series of articles aiming to give **Dark Conspiracy** players and referees a better idea of what it is like to live in the DC universe. Each article will look at a different social class within the universe and will try to uncover the basic "mindset".*

You just don't go out after dark. It's as simple as that. Once it gets past 9pm, you lock the door to the apartment and you don't leave until the sun comes up.

Oh, the corporations would have you believe that these places are the securest facilities on Earth. It's all part of the package that they entice you with to sign up. Perhaps they are secure – from people on the outside. It's the human refuse on the inside that's the problem.

I've been here for three years now. I'll probably be here until I die as well. I've been out of the workforce too long now. No one will take me on, at least no one in his right mind.

It all started nearly four years ago. I used to have a good job, one that I enjoyed. It wasn't perfect, but at least my family had place to live and there was decent food on the table. Times were tough, and we found it hard to make ends meet, but we had more than most people.

My boss called it a product of the Greater Depression. "Times are a whole lot tougher than they used to be, and the marketplace is drying up," he said. "Our company has been purchased by a larger interstate corporation, so we will be reorganizing the work force here to fall into lines with the new company policy. Unfortunately, this does mean that some of you will not be able to find a position in the new organisation and for that I am truly sorry."

Two days later, I found an envelope on my desk. It was the piece of paper I had been dreading - my termination notice.

Life went downhill from there. I tried to get a new job, but being on the wrong side of 40 didn't weigh in my favour. It didn't stop the bills from coming. The government didn't seem able to help either. Slowly but surely, we had to sell off all our possessions, just to keep up the payments up on the house.

I should have seen it coming, but for some stupid reason I didn't. My wife decided that she wasn't going to sit by as we sold off everything we had. She took most of our stuff and the kids and took off to LA to live with her parents again. The divorce papers from her lawyer arrived a month later.

The bank repossessed the house not long after that. Left me with nothing. I contemplated suicide for a while. Guess I didn't have the guts. I came as close to climbing over the railing on the bridge, but I just couldn't take that last step.

I lived on the streets for a while, but it was more than I could take. Gangs cut me up pretty bad and took the last few things I held dear in the world. I got sick and nearly died in a dumpster.

I guess that was when I decided to sign my vote away. The recruiting girl came around to the homeless shelter I was at. I wanted to say no, but she was so persuasive and it certainly beat the hell out of the situation I was in.

I hadn't liked the idea before. People need their own vote, so they can tell the government what they think. But when you have nothing in the world and your voice really doesn't count, then the offer of a roof over your head, a warm bed and three meals a day sounds like a much better deal that the crap you have now.

They promise you the world, these bastards. The brochures make it look like a real holiday apartment building. It's all new and shiny and clean. I'm surprised they're allowed to get away with lies like that. Perhaps the buildings did look like that, once upon a time. They sure as hell don't look like that now.

So, I signed my vote over to the Nayoda Group. That means they get to vote on my behalf in the federal and state elections. Not that it helped them any. They lost the last election in this district anyway.

There is a mountain of legal paperwork to fill in when you sign your vote away. Some people have called it "signing their life away". That's probably a better name for it. You're basically selling your life to the corporation. They'll take care of you, but you have to play by their rules from then on.

The contract isn't easy to understand either. I tried to read all of it, but by the fifth page, my head was aching. So I just skimmed the rest and signed on the dotted line on page 37. The woman on the other side of the desk was really nice. She summarized the rest and told me all of the important points. She sure as hell didn't tell me about some of the bad stuff.

So that was how I became a ballotman. The Nayoda Group loaded me and a whole pile of other new signees onto a bus and drove us to our new home. It was a great 50 story concrete box with lots of small, dirty windows. It did look vaguely like the picture in the brochure, but you needed a damn good imagination.

At least I have my own room. I share a two-bedroom unit with another guy, Fred. He was in pretty much the same boat as me, so we got on OK. When we had to find someone to live with, we kinda decided to throw our lot in together. It was probably the best thing we could have done. Over the past three years, we've managed to keep each other relatively sane and stopped each other from doing some really dumb things.

The unit is nothing flash. It's just a living room with a couple of bedrooms. There's some threadbare carpet on the floor, but it's so old we're not even sure what color it was when it was put in. The

company furnishes each unit the same. There's a crappy black and white TV built into the wall in the living room and there are a couple of lounge chairs as well. Along one wall, there's a small bookshelf unit, also build in. The paint's faded and peeling and there are a few spots where we've got rising damp. We've called the building management people, but they haven't done anything about it yet.

The lounge room also has a small sink unit in one corner. You could drink the water but it tastes like crap. Too much chlorine. Fred and I keep a bucket under ours that we use as a toilet during the night. It's safer than going down the hall.

Each bedroom is pretty much the same. They've got a single bed and a small built in wardrobe. There's not much room for anything else. I've got most of the spare space in my room filled with old newspapers. I've got pretty well the last three years worth of newspapers stacked up. I guess that tenuous link to the outside world is one of the few things that keeps me going.

Each floor has a communal bathroom at the end of the hall. Ours is better than most, or so I believe. We've at least got one cubicle with a door, even if it doesn't lock. At mealtime the other day, I met a new guy who has been assigned a room on the 27th floor. He told me that most cubicles up there don't even have a toilet anymore. They've all been smashed. You gotta use the hole in the floor and pour a bucket of water down after it. If you can find the bucket, that is.

Everyone in the building goes to the mess for meals. They stagger meal times based on which floor you live on. Five floors eat at the same time each day. If you miss the meal at your allotted time, you go hungry. Everyone has a bar code stitched to the breast pocket of the clothes the company gives you to live in. When you go for meals, you have to pass through a gate. I guess the computer must scan your bar code and open the gate for you if it's your mealtime. I've never missed a meal yet. I might be dumb, but I'm not stupid.

The food they serve up is bloody awful. There's nothing fresh at all. It's all processed… something. When I first came here, I used to wonder what the hell I was eating. These days I'm just grateful that it's edible, using the term loosely.

The food is served up by volunteers. They're the bastards who suck up to the company and try to get some extra favors. I've heard rumors that they have bigger apartments in the more secure upper levels of the building, and that their apartments even have their own bathrooms. I've thought about volunteering a few times, but it's not worth it. The rest of us give them that much stick about sucking up to the company that their lives are just as miserable as the rest of us.

Apart from meal times, there's no socializing with large groups of people. Sure, small groups on floors get together and provide some small amount of support for one another, but there's not a whole lot of that. People here just don't have anything to talk about. It's just too depressing.

Some of the groups have formed to protect against the gangs that roam the corridors. That's what I meant when I said you don't go out after dark. It's mostly teenagers that cause all the problems. They have nothing better to do with their time, so they terrorize people. They tend to smash things up and cover the walls with graffiti.

The corporation pretends the problem doesn't exist. They have security goons that come round from time to time, but that usually only happens after someone has been killed or injured. "Protecting their assets" they call it. They need to keep us alive so that they can have our vote when the elections come round.

Around here, the corporation doesn't interfere too much in the lives of the people. They have some laws they expect to be followed and they clamp down pretty hard on people who break some of them. Especially murder. That one causes raids by the elite security forces. Killing a ballotman can theoretically mean the difference between a win and a loss in an election, so they really don't like it when someone dies. They come and take the offender away pretty damn quickly. We don't know where they are taken. The rumors I've heard suggest that the punishment for killing a ballotman make life imprisonment in San Quentin look like a Sunday picnic.

The gangs seem to know how far they can go so the goons don't interfere with their operations. Extortion, bashing, rapes and a couple of other "fun" things seem to be fairly run of the mill, especially for the ones who arm themselves. There's supposed to be a law against a ballotman owning a weapon of any description. It doesn't seem to worry most of them though. Just about all of them have knives or some other sort of stabbing weapon. Somebody told me that some even have guns. I've heard a few distant shots in the building sometimes, usually late at night. I guess they might be the corporate security forces, but I don't think so.

Some of the gangs run drug smuggling rackets as well. For a lot of people who live here, life is just too hard without some sort of chemically induced release. The corp pays us all an allowance of corp scrip that we can use to purchase things like newspapers, alcohol or tobacco. Some people prefer to spend it on harder stuff. It's supposed to be illegal too, but it doesn't stop some people. There are those that will sell everything they have, including themselves, to get the next hit.

If people don't want to do drugs, then there are all sorts of gambling rackets around the complex as well. Some are just simple poker games played for cigarettes. I've heard there are also clandestine casinos around, if you have the right contacts.

I guess it's hardest for the kids. The corporation does run something resembling school, but it's pretty inadequate and won't help them get a job. Some of the kids who have been born in this complex can't even read or write. I guess the corporation seems to think that the kids will just grow up and sign their votes away like their parents.

Some parents have started their own schools to teach kids the basics, like they did at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Those kids are the ones who manage to get out of the complexes. I haven't heard of any of them making it to college, but some of them to manage to get a job.

Those that don't make it out are the ones who end up in the gangs. There's not a lot more they can do really. Victimizing someone else probably makes them feel stronger and more worthwhile. Fred and I

have been lucky. We don't tend to make ourselves too noticeable and we give enough of our scrip away to keep the local gang happy, so they don't bother us.

It's funny, but a lot of people find religion in the blocks. There's nothing much else to do besides watching the cable TV, and even that can get too much sometimes. Not all of the religion is Christian either. Just about any sort of religious belief you can think of has followers somewhere in the complex and there are probably those you've never heard of as well. I read a report in a paper that there was some weird cult in a complex on the East Coast last year. They were supposed to have sacrificed babies or something. Apparently, their corporation busted them and they found life after that to be decidedly more unpleasant.

In some ways, I'm actually glad that people have found religion around here. It helps them keep their hope alive, even if it is only dimly. Some of the better groups actually go out of their way to help others. Extra food and blankets, or medical help, that sort of thing. You'd think that the despair around them would crush their spirits, but some people seem to thrive on the atmosphere.

As hard as it may sound, there are worse places that this one to live. Before I signed on, I had a cousin, Dan, who signed up in Florida. I got a letter from him one time and he was telling me about his complex. People there seemed to live in a state of something just short of pure terror. No one spoke to anyone else. Even thinking wrong seemed to get people into trouble.

Dan had heard rumors that people had been taken away for thinking wrong thoughts about the corporation. Every now and again, some uniformed troops came to someone's unit in the middle of the night and took them away, never to be seen again. All sorts of stories went around about the "Thought Police" as the troops were called. Dan said that he had even seen the Thought Police drag a little old lady out of her unit around 1am and beat her senseless before taking her away. All this because she had mentioned to someone in the mess that she thought the corporation didn't care enough for them.

He had even had thoughts himself. He wrote that he had found something that looked like a weird legless cockroach, hidden inside a vent in his bedroom. I never heard from him after that letter. I guess the Thought Police came and got him as well. I don't even know if he's still alive.

You might think that my life is not all that great. But at least I'm alive, I get regular food and I've got someplace to live. I've lived on the street and it's a lot worse that this. There are those that would disagree with me. I'm not all that happy with my life, but I am content with where I am. I guess that's all you can hope for.

Game Information

Mental Stability

When portraying the proles to the players, it is important to emphasize the squalid living conditions these people put up with. Most of them have signed their lives over to a corporation because it is the only way they can get food and shelter. The majority is so accustomed to this tedious lifestyle that they would have a hard time making a change for the better.

On a psychological level, the proles have very little, if any, self esteem left. They have "fallen victim" to the Depression and think they have no other option. They have no vision of the future and no hope left for something better.

Mental illness is rife in the prole communities. Depression is by far the greatest illness but just about any sort of psychological disorder is present to some degree. It is possible to have one of the residents think of themselves as an alien, or a high priest of a strange cult. Schizophrenia and other personality disorders are often in evidence as peoples' subconscious minds try in vain to regain some semblance of self-esteem.

The corporation does not really care about the resident's mental problems. So long as the poles stay alive, the corporation retains that person's vote and that's all that really matters to the accountants. They make some token efforts to enrich the lives of the residents, but just to appease the social services of the Government.

Because of the incredibly fragile nature of the residents' psyches, a large criminal element preys on those weaker than themselves. Drugs are rife, as people look for any way to escape from the monotony of their everyday life. Prostitution, gambling, theft, rape, extortion and a whole range of other crimes are also prevalent. Some corporations attempt to eliminate these influences and make their complexes safer for the residents, but these are definitely in the minority.

It is also possible that the levels of depression people suffer are enough to raise latent neuropaths to active status. As a result, all manner of paranormal phenomena can occur somewhere in the complexes.

Playing a Prole

If your character spent one or more terms as a Prole, then your character should bear some emotional scars from the experience. Ballotmen have very little worth living for and their lives are filled with apathy and despair.

Your character should have, at the very least, some sort of self-esteem problem. They signed their lives over to the corporation and went through at least four years of mind numbing boredom. Life in the complexes can be hard sometimes, so the character should at least suffer from some form of apathy or self-doubt.

Fear is a part of every day life in the complexes. The character might come away with a fear of strange noises in the night, or perhaps even something as extreme as a fear of open spaces if they never left the complex.

On the other hand, if the character was a part of one of the gangs that prowl

the complexes, they may well have a sadistic streak and will use fear as a means of getting people to do something. These people would have little respect for the value of a human life and would react accordingly.

If your character is an empath, then the time spent as a prole could well have brought about the awakening of the character's empathic powers. It is possible that the corporation could have discovered their powers and "recruited" the character, either willingly or be force, as a psychic test subject.

One thing that needs to be remembered about Prole characters is that they would never sign on "for the hell of it". Just about all of them would have a reason for becoming a ballotman. Spend some time thinking about why the character signed their vote over to a corporation. It is a really good plot hook for you and your Referee to base some of the campaign around.

Using Proles in a Game

As a referee, there is a whole range of ways to introduce proles into your game. A small set of examples is given here.

- The players hear about the "legless cockroaches" that are hidden throughout the complex. These are Darktek devices that are used by the Dark Minions to eavesdrop of the conversations and sometimes even the thoughts of the residents. If the residents appear to be speaking or even thinking against the corporation, they would get a visit from the "Thought Police" who would come to take them away to unknown location.
- Several residents of a complex have started disappearing. The corporation employs the characters to go undercover into the complex as new residents to help find out what is going on. It is possible that they are being murdered and eaten for food because there is not enough nourishment in the slop the corporation provides. Or something far more sinister may also be happening.
- A Demonground area has appeared in the bowels of one complex. Several empaths have been subverted to the Dark Lords and have formed cults worshipping evil beings from another dimension. The ceremonies of worship could open portals to proto-dimensions that allow Dark Minions to pass through. The constant opening and closing of these portals has weakened the fabric of reality and all sorts of problems have arisen.
- New minion hunters might be recruited from the residents. They would not be able to provide any sort of material aid for the players (a person loses all assets when they sign on as a prole, Player's Handbook, page 71), but they will be able to provide more muscle for the group if need be.
- The players investigate some of the strange paranormal phenomena that seem to be happening in one of the complexes. It may be due a latent empath suffering enough emotional shock to awaken their powers. The players might be acting on behalf of the corporation, or they might be trying to find the empath before the corporation can take the empath away for psychic testing.
- Someone living in the complex might well be a witness in an investigation the player characters are involved with. The investigation might involve the reason the person signed on as a prole in the first place, or it might well be examining an incident that has happened since the person moved into the complex.

Summary

The whole concept of ballotmen is one that is mentioned briefly in the ***Dark Conspiracy*** rules, but is never examined in much depth. In this article, I have tried to portray what life might be like for a typical ballotman, to help provide some extra color for a campaign.

Whether your character has been a prole in a former career or you want to send the player characters into a Prole complex, you should have a much better idea about what it is you are getting involved in.

"The Dark Ones gained their freedom, and suddenly there were more empathically active humans. Sensing the threat, the Dark Ones hunt us.

"Most problems in nature are ultimately self-correcting. The question is, which of us is the problem, and which is the correction."

- Zena Marley,
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Teletubby Land

aka Dark Tubbies

by Chris Carpenter

Background

On a date marked on no Earthly calendar, the evil Lord Xorex called forth for a new soldier, one that could move quietly beneath the soil, bursting upwards within the fortresses and strongholds of his enemies, taking them completely by surprise. Nosnum, a creative bioengineer created swift, reptilian troglodytes, individually able to kill a large Earth steer. At first, it was deemed a success, but Xorex found the creatures unreliable, and unresponsive to disciplinary stimuli, and therefore too dangerous to use in an organized campaign of terror or conquest. Disappointed, but hopeful, Nosnum found a small proto-dimension to house his "pets" which, (while vile in appearance,) matched the environment needed to sustain them. Naming it "Rannos," and populating it with medium sized herbivores (as a food supply,) it proved a perfect biosphere, as long as it remained undisturbed.

In the midst of this project, a small band of renegade Humanoid ETs have made a breakthrough: a device that would allow them to return "home" by means of a small scout ship equipped with an experimental dimensional device. Starting from a secret base in Argentina, the alien craft powered up, focused it's beam into a clearing, opened a portal, and slipped through amidst a cloud of debris and dimensional flotsam, the gate closing a full minute later. No one would see the three confused troglodytes in the clearing, nor would they ever, as they scampered into the thick South American underbrush...

The craft, emerging from the interstices, appeared low over a depression surrounded by gentle hills. Fearing a miscalculation by the on-board computers, the ETs decided to land and assess the situation. It was clear they had not reached their destination, but the dimension seemed safe enough, and their course would have to be replotted. System checks were performed and cleared, but any exterior damage would have to wait until "morning" to provide adequate lighting. Come the dawn, it was discovered that a crucial antennae array had been crushed by the awkward landing. Hoping to complete repairs by nightfall, the men worked quickly and efficiently. Having only an hour's worth of work left to perform, artificial lighting was set up, and repairs continued, but not for long.

Two of the crew of seven were taken, one grabbed from outside the light, the other from below, being pulled screaming straight down into the soil, the loose earth covering his arms. The other ETs scrambled for the safety of the craft, and sealed the door. Panic coursed through the remaining five, and weapons were distributed.

The next morning, a new discovery, one even more horrible: their bodies had started to change. Once slim and graceful, they had rapidly put on weight, the fingers of their hands fusing together to form grotesque mittens. Dimensional assimilation was destroying their bodies, and worse, they could feel their sanity slipping. In a last ditch effort to repair the craft, the crew managed as best they could with their new forms, but alas, even their equipment had started to change, laser torches becoming bubble-guns, and simple hand tools becoming as soft as baby toys. Hallucinations and happy delirium soon followed, even the simplest tasks were abandoned for childlike diversions. Only one, a strong empath, was able to resist the mental changes long enough to roughly modify certain ship functions, namely the food processors and scrub-bot, to accommodate their new lifestyle...

This, is Rannos, the land of the Teletubbies.

Game Information

Rannos is a splinterland, with a discontinuity of 1. Its assimilation effect value is 10 (special and explained below).

To all appearances, it is a beautiful, pastoral setting, with green hills of trim, even grass, clear blue skies flecked with white puffy clouds, and thick patches of wildflowers. There is a central clearing, with one building, a grass-covered dome with one main door and four windows pointing in compass directions (if, in fact, a compass worked here.) Conifer trees grow in sporadic clumps, most markedly in a large ring around the central clearing where the dome rests.

On a tall hill about 100 meters NW of the dome is a large windmill that resembles a child's pinwheel, its speed varying throughout the day. Rannos has a 24 hour day, 14 light, 10 dark, with no variance on sunset/sunrise times. The weather is always pleasant and warm, with a cool, steady breeze from the SE. Exploration in any direction from the dome will eventually reveal the limits of the land area, a three kilometer radius circle surrounded by a relativistic barrier. The land would appear to go on forever in such a pattern, but the barrier prevents further movement. One special exception is detailed below.

Rannos has three inhabitants not including some beneficial worms, microorganisms and small birds: the Teletubbies, a race of childlike, androdgynous creatures in various chromatic hues; common brown rabbits (which are very tame;) and a third species which hunts nocturnally and is rarely seen.

The Teletubbies are completely harmless; they don't seem to understand anything outside the realm of their world, and have a very limited, babyish language. They will repeat anything you say to them in a gibbery mish-mash of mispronunciation, but can clearly understand concepts such as "No!" and "Go Play." They will not be able to tell characters anything about their living quarters, (except, perhaps identifying something as "mine.") or how they came to be here. They each have names, and can say each others names, but basically they have the mental capacity of a 2 year old.

Trying to take something from them is fruitless, and will cause them much displeasure, perhaps to the point of tantrum. They have no combat skills, and might not even flee if attacked due to ignorance. Each is easily identified by color, an unusual (and unique) growth on their heads, and a strange patch of off-white fur on their "tummies,"faces, and ears. Occasionally, they will seem to speak to no one in particular, or react to unseen cues to run, roll, etc. They make a morning pilgrimage to the windmill every day, revering it as perhaps a god-like entity, rolling around on the ground before it, as metal sparks fly from the (apparently) poorly maintained equiptment.

The rabbits are large and not very skittish of people. They will hop out of the way of an oncoming TT, but will tolerate gentle affection. They are about 10 pounds, have a health of 4/8, and make good eating, if the party is so inclined.

The party should discover the third species by accident. If they are leery of sharing the TTs quarters, or wander too far from the dome near sunset, then they will have to sleep outside, locked out until dawn. They are then fair game for the troglodytes. The troglodytes dig huge underground burrows, packing soil into solid, resinous chunks building up the strength of the burrow without the tell-tale piles of dirt outside its entrance. It's real advantage is its ability to "swim" through the soil, stopping periodically to listen for vibrations of possible prey. They are sensitive to the light and will only hunt at night. They are small-pack hunters; an attack would consist of only 2 or 3 trogs at best, unless found in the nest. A typical attack will come from the side and underneath, pulling their victims under the soil with great force, often smothering them. If they are unable to drag their catch down whole, they will simply tear off a leg. A topside attack is more risky, but the trogs are immensely strong with wicked claws

and teeth, able to tear a head or limb off a man.

Generally, only one attack will come a night, unless the characters keep moving around, drawing the attention of other packs. TTs caught outside (due only to character intervention, they will never stay out voluntarily) will whine and make a lot of noise, and are subject to the same attacks. Rabbits tend to be the first consumed (to heighten tension,) unless the characters are stomping around like a rude upstairs neighbor.

When coming to Rannos, it is best for the party to arrive just before dawn. The TTs (Teletubbies) will be asleep, but will rise with the morning sun through a hatch at the top of the dome. Seeing the party, they will rush forward to see the new "things," and may even offer "hugs" if the party is receptive. Otherwise, the TTs will leave the party alone to their own devices. Every night before sunset, however, the TTs return to the dome, and the doors and upper hatch seal automatically. The TTs sequester themselves in an upstairs bunk area, and sleep soundly until the next dawn. The TTs will stop periodically during the day to eat "Tubby Toast" or "Tubby Custard", a process they revel in, perhaps because of their ability to "do it themselves."

Special Assimilation

Rannos has a special assimilation formula: no changes for the first 24 hour period for people or equipment, then use the formula on pg 20 of the Proto-dimensions sourcebook. Instead of damage, however, the chars will find themselves turning into Teletubbies. As you take "damage," however, instead of real damage, the chars can use the total percentage of chest damage from the Serious column to determine how "Tubby" they are becoming.

Example: Susan has 66 points in her chest: serious column. After 24 hours, and 30 minutes, she takes ten points of "damage," but instead of pain, she discovers her skin has changed to a snazzy green shade, and she's put on a little weight around the belly. 15 minutes later, and 5 more points of "damage" her fingers start to grow together, making tools difficult to use, and penalizing agility based skills one level. At 35 points (53%) her fingers grow completely together, and she has completely outgrown her clothes. She will be covered in a short thick fur the same color as her body (green, for example) and speech will become difficult. By 50 points (75%) she will look completely like a Teletubby, including light patch on belly. Coherent thought starts to become difficult, and all intelligence and education skill become one level more difficult, plus one more level of agility (for a total of two.) At 66 points, she will lose all concept of self, and all previous knowledge, save for what the other TTs "know." Only returning her to Earth will reverse the process, and if the char has gone total conversion (all points in her chest: serious column,) the char will lose one point from either int or edu (gm's choice) plus a possible psychosis, notably hallucinations.

Chart of changes and penalties by percentage.

- **24% or less** - change in color (any, random,) considerable weight gain, fingers beginning to fuse together.
- **25% - 49%** - all AGL skills one level more difficult (easy becomes average,) growth of body fur, slight bump on head, most form fitting clothes impossible to wear.
- **50% - 75%** - complete change to Teletubby form by 75%, INT and EDU skills one level more difficult, AGL skills now two levels more difficult (easy becomes difficult.) Small tools and instruments almost impossible to use, weapons very difficult (mostly because of trigger guard.)
- **76% - 100%** - growth of unique antennae, shape up to gm. Existing shapes include loop, twist, inverted triangle, and straight. At 100%, total conversion takes place, and char. is controlled by GM, using average TT stats for health, strength, etc.

Equiptment is not immune to the assimilation. After the same 24 hour period, all materials brought in will become as safe and benign as possible. Complicated machines will become little more than light up toys, buzzing and beeping at the touch of a large colorful buttons. Simple tools, such as a wrench, become a soft, lightweight plastic, unsuitable for any work. Weapons will turn into fruit, umbrellas, walking sticks, and flutes, whatever suits the GM's fancy, as long as they are rendered inert. Darktek "critters" (such as the Esperlink) scamper away, free of their bonds, to live (and probably die) in the woods around them. All items return to "normal" upon returning to Earth, or an Earth-like dimension, with no loss of quality. Even items found on Rannos can be brought back, but most will be mundane, a work tunic, a spanner wrench, etc. Only a few of the items found will become "treasure:"

A High-Cycle Laser from pg 45 of the DarkTek Sourcebook

A Chameleon Suit from pg 93 of the DarkTek Sourcebook

An item of the GM's choice, but typically one of alien invention.

Some areas of interest:

The Windmill

This is the final resting place of the fifth Teletubby. At the bottom is a door, which is locked with an average complexity mechanical lock. Inside is a small room, with complicated equipment lining the walls, apparently unaffected by the assimilation. In a chair at the center of the room, is the fifth TT, long dead. His physical body was somewhere between TT and alien, but he is in advanced decomposure, so the reason for his death may not be readily apparent. Long written journals can be found on a small, laptop computer, but time has not been kind to the equipment, and breakdown is imminent. If the journal can be read (it's old *and* in "alien") it reads as so:

After the assimilation of his comrades, Tonod (the fifth alien) kept his own assimilation at bay through his high empathic skills. Able to modify the food replicator and a scrubbot, he basically became the "parent" of the TTs, making sure they returned to the ship each night for safety. Fearing his own eventual assimilation, he struggled to save himself. He found that the experimental device used to open the gateway to this dimension had remained unaffected, as well as the systems surrounding it. Salvaging

pieces from the ship, he managed to build a wind generator and housed the device inside, eventually bringing other equipment to it, which reversed their assimilation. Despite his efforts, the chamber would not reverse the effects of his own personal transformation, not that of his shipmates. Hoping for eventual rescue, he worked till his last days maximizing the efficiency of the windmill, and trying to send rescue signals across the dimensions, to no apparent success. Computer automating the remaining functions of the ship and the windmill, he eventually perished, sick and afraid, unwilling to let assimilation take him completely.

Items brought into this room will eventually return to normal, but not living creatures, who will continue to change. The complexity of the systems, and the delicate jury-rigging of the equipment will prevent most characters from even attempting to tinker or repair anything recognizable. The first failure will make the power flicker on and off (temporarily;) further failures will render the room inert, causing the equipment to shut down permanently a critical failure will cause a fire.

The ocean

Periodically, and inexplicably, the SE corner of Rannos floods, three circa-1800's steam ships will sail in, navigate along the coastline, and leave, the water then drying up without a trace. It is theorized that this is a neighboring dimension overlapping onto Rannos, but this has never been explored. It is possible that this is the only "natural" way to leave Rannos, and further adventures could be based on this journey.

New Races

Troglodytes

STR	13
CON	11
AGL	10
INT	2
EDU	1
CHA	1
EMP	3
INIT	4
MOVE	15/30/60/20*
Skill/Dam	5/3d6+3
Hits	25/50**
#Appear	1-3, 2d6 in lair

*Movement through typical soil, double for sand, halve for rocky or frozen

** Trogs have one point of armor on all hit locations

Physical description

The Trogs are tall, thin reptilian creatures, with 6 legs, a long tapered head, and a long tapered tail. Their eyes pinch tightly shut for tunneling, and they have no other openings on their head, save for their mouth, which is reminiscent of a beartrap. The two front legs can be used as hands, and all limbs are tipped with hard, sharp claws. The rear legs allow the trog to "stand" but full locomotion requires all six legs on the ground. The Trogs, a biological construct, are genderless, but longlived. Eighteen were created in the original "batch," three of which inadvertantly escaped onto Earth, giving rise to the Chupacabra legends. The trogs movement through the earth is a wonder to behold, somewhat akin to swimming, its powerful legs sliding up along the smooth torso, and then gaining purchase in the soil, forcing the head through like a plough. Above ground, it's movement is more ungainly, (a rapid lope similar to a weasel or ferret,) but it's speed compensates for it's strange undulations.

The trogs are immune to the assimilation effect of Rannos.

Combat Tactics

The trogs hunt topside nocturnally, swimming beneath potential prey slowly, bursting up through the soil, and pulling it's prey down beneath the loose turf. Trogs flee from bright lights, and will only fight if cornered under those conditions, lashing out at the source of light, weather it be a flashlight or a burning torch. It is completely at home in it's lair, giving it an initiative of 5. It's supersensitive eyes and hearing allow it to "see" in the dark, effectively out-matching anyone foolish enough to wander below without a lightsource.

Teletubbies

STR	3
CON	4
AGL	2
INT	2
EDU	1
CHA	10
EMP	1
INIT	2
MOVE	2/6/12/20
Skill/Dam	0/1
Hits	20/40
#Appear	4(special)

Physical Description

The teletubbies are a group of assimilated humanoid aliens found on the Protodimension of Rannos. They are androgynous, chromatic creatures akin to giant stuffed animals. They stand less than 2 meters tall, are portly in appearance but only weigh 65 kg, and are unique in color and single antennae, which grows from their heads. They have all the abilities and social skills of playful 2 year-olds, and live accordingly, waking up, eating, playing, going to bed, etc.

Characters assimilated to teletubby form suffer penalties as noted above, and should have their characters controlled by the GM.

Combat Abilities

None. The teletubbies have the combat abilities of your average 2 year old. They will run, cry, swing ineffectively, etc. Their soft bodies simply prevent them from fighting effectively, even if so inclined. Confusion, coupled with low initiative, might prevent the TTs from even fleeing danger, unable to comprehend its immediacy.

Story Ideas

1. **Survive and Leave** - Rannos comes with its own inherrant dangers, just surviving 24 hours here might be all a player can stand. Of course, if they players don't have any way to leave after 24 hours...
2. **Rescue the Teletubbies** - coming back and grabbing the four original TTs could become important, esp if their true nature is discovered. Coming back for fallen comrades is a great story hook, and tends to be more timely. Salvaging the "ship" or the device in the windmill may have its advantages, too.
3. **The Ocean** - what are those boats, and where do they go?
4. **Rannos, Prison Dimension** - what about leaving criminals here, ones "beyond" help. Would assimilation pacify their baser urges?

"We say that the Dark One are unknowable, unfathomable, indecipherable. We say that their motives are too twisted, too otherworldly, for humans to understand. I have never felt so, though I do sometimes think that about humans.

"For generations we have killed our brothers, robbed our neighbors, abandoned our children, polluted our world. Now the Dark Ones encourage us to do so even more, as they benefit from the suffering that results.

"What's ***our*** excuse?"

- Zena Marley,
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Aliens in the Forest

Darktek in the Great Outdoors

By Marcus Bone

As we all know technology is a growth industry. What is the smallest, fastest and best today quickly becomes second best as quickly as tomorrow.

In the ***Dark Conspiracy***[tm] world we do not only get to predict the advances mankind will take in the next twenty years, but also have another factor to take into account… the presence of ETs. These alien beings have access to the highest levels of technology, and possess skills and knowledge that man can only dream of.

As we have seen in the Darktek sections of the ***Dark Conspiracy*** rule books, there has been amble opportunity for the ETs and man to combine their skills and resources to product artifacts and machinery, which has been, up to now, out of mans grasp. Many of these devices are aimed at harming earth and its population, while others have been created solely for the greater good.

Slowly but surely the technological gains discovered in these multi-million dollar Labs begin to filter down to the common populous, now in forms which are aimed at making life for the average man more convenient. In our modern world we see this, technology created originally for government or military purposes finding its way into our day to day life. One example is Electronic Mail or E-mail, starting life as a piece of military technology now it is in the hands of us regular Joes, and if I may add becoming more and more important in the way in which our life's are run.

My point in all this is that in the ***Dark Conspiracy*** world we will also see examples of these technological gains in normal everyday items. Gained that they may not be cheap or nor may they be that common, but that they would be known to exist and have proven advantages for those that can afford them. One such area that I believe would gain much from a union of advanced technologies would be the world of outdoor apparel, which today is leaps and bounds more advanced than it was barely ten years ago. The advantages the ET knowledge could bring to Outdoor Equipment could be quite substantial, making clothing better resistant to the elements, creating lighter and stronger tents and rafts, and adding much to the chances of Outdoor survival.

Below are some of the items that may be created by a combined Xenalogical endeavor. They might form part of a Dark plot, or they could used solely to make the characters lives easier. This list of Equipment neither comprehensive nor complete but rather just a guide on how the World of ***Dark Conspiracy*** can hold a myriad of different surprises.

Sectra-Light Sleeping Bag

Extremely light sleeping bag created by the masters of Outdoor Pursuits "Sectra". This little beauty weighs under half a Kg, while fitting into a bag not much greater than your hand. On top of all that it is guaranteed to temperatures up to –20 degrees Celsius, and is non-flammable. The key to the size and weight is the new vacuum action pump which is smaller than a bottle-top, when activated this little whiz removes all the air from the bag, and keeps it out, ensuring you a nice small package.

Weight – 0.5kg

Price - $250 (C/V)

Heat Torch

The latest in technology is now available to you, the public consumer. First manufactured for the military this wonder of lighting now comes cheaply to you home. Ever reached for a torch only to find its batteries dead, or having the bulbs break when it is accidentally dropped. Now with the Heat Torch you can replace all conventional portable light sources.

How does this piece of wondrous Technology work you ask?

Well… with the use of the fabulous heat converter simply holding the specially made handle the heat produced by you hand alone is turned into light. As long as you hand produces any warmth, and is in contact with the torch handle light will continue to be emitted from this technological breakthrough. Its special lens means the end to everyday light bulbs, unbreakable, even unscratchable it will last for twenty years minimum, and that's guaranteed.

The Heat Torch comes in many different sizes and shapes, from pocketsize through to the large all purposes utility.

Weight – 0.2kg through to 5kg

Price - $50 - $250 (C/V)

Sectra Ultrasafe Survival Dome

Gone are the days of living life in the Outdoors in the cold and wet, as "Sectra" has now released the newest of their high-

tech tents. In fact it is more than just a tent, it is a survival dome built to withstand the rigors of any conditions. Tested on the unforgiving slopes of Mount Everest, the Ultrasafe is a proven winner, keeping its occupancies alive for ten days with no outside help.

The 'Sectra Ultrasafe' offers you the latest, a fully sealed environment with its own Carbon Dioxide filter, good for 500 hours, a heat generated light source, which is an advance on the Heat Torch, and a unusually well padded skin which can resist up to million pounds pressure per square inch. If you don't believe us, just ask Mountain Climber Jean-Claude Turane who survived 6 days buried under an avalanche, to be rescued a safe and sound, if only a little hungry. The 'Ultrasafe' comes in either the one or two-man version, and can be fitted with optional extras including the 'Vermillion' Spaceheater, and 'Maxwell' Liquid Recycler.

Weight – 9.2kg (One man), 12.5kg (Two man). Plus 10kg for the optional extras.

Price - $1250 (One man), $1750 (Two man). Plus $1500 for the optional extras. (S/C)

`Maxwell´ Cling Boots & Gloves

Gone are the days were ones hands are the best way to climb any surface. With 'Maxwell' Cling accessories you can ascend even the most difficult slopes with a minimal of effort.

The Cling technology uses a special material, which molds itself with any surface it comes in contact with allowing an excellent bond between the boot or glove and the ground. This bond acts with a vacuum action giving the climber a solid and secure surface on which they rely. To release the bond between Boot or glove and the climbing surface is a simple matter of relaxing the muscles in that limb; this quickly becomes second nature to an experienced climber and allows for rapid ascent.

Please be warned however that the Cling accessories do not allow for vertical ascent on very smooth surfaces, as the principles involved are only an enhancement of the human climbing ability. Also please note that rough surfaces such as asphalt can over prolonged periods destroy the Cling surface.

In Game terms the use of both of these items allows any climbing roll to be taken at one difficulty level lower than the situation determines and the chance to reroll any failures. The use of just one allows only a reroll.

Weight – Neg.

Price – $200 (Gloves), $400(Boots) (C/C)

Ignition Sticks

These are the little wonders of the New World. Gone are matches, lighters or any other fire starters, Ignition Sticks are about to make all these redundant. By simply cracking the outside shell of one of these sticks you can produce your own portable fire. Incredibly the flames produced by the Stick can last up to 10 hours and yet can be extinguished by normal water. Also the Ignition Stick requires no other fuel, consuming itself, this means no more risk of starting uncontrollable fires nor is time wasted by collecting wood for the camp.

Amazingly these small sticks, which is no longer than 20 centimeters in length and 5 in diameter, can produce heat and light to the equivalent to that of a camp fire.

WARNING – For Outdoor use only and keep out of the hand of children.

Directions for Use – Stand by the spot that you wish to create as a campfire, ensuring that you have fully enclosed this space with a nonflammable material e.g. rock. Shake the Ignition Stick and then crack the end against a hard surface. The stick will now make a low-pitched whine,

immediately place the Stick in the desired location, and step away. Within 5 seconds the Stick should ignite and will be at peak performance within thirty (30) seconds.

Weight – 0.1kg

Price - $5 each

Israeli Military Weapons

By Eyal Faingersh

This is a list of weapons used by Israeli military forces. Like everyone in my country, I spent time in enlisted service, which gave me experience with several types of small arms (hey! I'm not Rambo. I was only a technician)

All stats are based upon personal experience with the weapons. No classified information here, sorry.

UZI (Submachinegun)

A popular SMG all over the world. There are actually two types of this weapon:

The first is the large and heavy one which is described in the ***Dark Conspiracy*** rulebook. This "regular" Uzi is used by military rear units, those which will probably will not engage in combat unless attacked.

The second is the Mini-Uzi, which, unlike the Uzi, is more suitable for single hand use, it is the weapon probably seen in all these action movies. The Mini-Uzi is good for short range automatic fire and is popular with commando units and criminal gangs. It is slightly harder to aquire then a regular Uzi.

Ammo: 9mm P
Wt: 3kg
Mag: 25 box or 32 box
Price: $600 (-/S)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	-Recoil- SS	Brst	Rng
Mini-Uzi	5	2	Nil	1/3	25/32	2	5	25

Galil (Assault Rifle)

The Israeli version of the AK series (Kalachnikov) designed from captured Syrian, Russian made weapons. These weapons can be found in Israel and several African and South American countries. Most Israeli military units replaced this weapon with the M16 in the 70's. The Galil was design to use the M16's standard 5.56mm ammo and not the AK's 5.54mm. Its magazines are not available, but can be self made from M16s magazine.

Ammo: 5.56mm N
Wt: 5kg
Mag: 25 box or 32 box
Price: $400 (-/R) (only through foreign Israeli/African/South American foreign contacts)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	-Recoil- SS	Brst	Rng
Galil	5	3	1-Nil	5	25/32	3	6	50

Glilon (Assault Rifle)

The heavy and bulky Galil was a prototype of this improved version. "Glilon" is actually a nickname for "short Galil". The Glilon replaced the Galil in most units. In spite of being better then the Galil, the M16 is still considered a better weapon

Ammo 5.56 N
Wt: 4kg
Mag: 25 box or 32 boc
Price: $550 (-/R) (only trough foreign Israeli contacts).

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	-Recoil- SS	Brst	Rng
Glilon	5	3	1-nil	4	25/32	3	6	45

Mini Glilon (Assault Rifle)

The last version of this weapon from the late 90's. Still under development, it is used only by high ranked officers as a personal weapon..

Ammo: 5.56 N
Wt: 2.5kg
Mag: 25 box or 32 box
Price: ??? (-/-) (Only trough Israeli foerign contacts).

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	-Recoil- SS	Brst	Rng
Mini Glilon	5	2	1-Nil	2/3	25/32	2	5	25

Negev (Machinegun)

The weapon that has started to replace the MAG machine-gun in the Israeli Military. It has the same stats as the MAG but it is much lighter in weight.

Ammo: 7.62mm N
Wt: 9kg
Mag: 100 belt
Price $2500 (-/-) (only trough Israeli foreign contacts. However, it is a new weapon and might become popular with other armies so it's actually for the GM to decide)

Weapon	ROF	Dam	Pen	Blk	Mag	-Recoil- SS	Brst	Rng
Negec	10	4	2-3-nil	6	100B	1	7	65
Bipod	10	4	2-3-nil	6	100B	1	7	90

M203 for M177 (Granade Launcher)

A grenade launcher with the same stats as for the M203, that can fit to the M16's short version.

Price: $600 (-/-) (Only trough Israeli foerign contacts)

If anyone thinks that his group of Demon Hunters will ever use a "Mercava" (chariot) tank (which is considered the best heavy tank in the world), then I might ask a friend of mine from the armored division about it...

Early One Morning...

By Marcus Bone

Grayson lay still in the wet grass, silently observing the house in the distance.

His target was in there somewhere, awaking soon to cause yet more havoc on the world that Grayson held dear. He lowered his binoculars and rubbed his forehead in a vain attempt to keep the rain from his eyes. Both his overcoat and hat where soaked through, a testament to the amount of time he had waited for the right moment to strike.

At last, a light came on in the old house. Grayson's target was awake.

Feeling more inspired to rid the world of the menace in the house, Grayson rose to his feet and leapt the small fence that divided the roadside from the yard. As he approached the old structure, he became aware of the times the house must have faced. It had obviously been a farm house in its better days, and it reminded Grayson of just how much life had changed since he had discovered that mankind was threatened by a number of ancient evils that lurked at the edge of Earth dimension.

Life had been simple for him, a soldier in the war against drugs in one of the metroplexes. He had been good too, a skilled negotiator, a crack shot and an incisive investigator, but that all had changed the day his team had encountered that strange creature in an abandoned warehouse. The thing had attacked them ripping them apart in seconds. He had only been knocked out himself, and was lucky to alive today. He was thankful that the creature obviously leaving him for dead.

But since that time he had been driven to hunt down and destroy all that was threatening his world. And so far, he had been most effective at it, all his skills needed to defeat monsters and creatures worse than his wildest nightmares.

And now one more would be destroyed.

Grayson reached the house; the light he had seen now blocked out by the front of the house. Grayson knew that his target was in the kitchen area of the house, situated in the rear.

Pressing his back to side of the house, Grayson reached into his jacket and drew his Colt Commandant. Readying himself with two deep steady breaths, Grayson began to inch his way around the side of the house.

He knew he needn't be scared, but his body was not listening to his crystal clear mind.

There is only one of them he reminded himself. That much he knew for sure.

Slowly but surely, he made his way to the back door of the house, crouching as he past the windows. His target was definitely in the kitchen. He could hear the rustle of paper, then the sound of a drawer being opened then closed again.

Closing his eyes for a brief second, Grayson composed himself and then he surged towards the backdoor. His shoulder hit it, cracking the frame.

"Oh my God...." came a cry from in the kitchen.

The door came loose and Grayson forced his way in the room, gun ready. At the far end of the room stood a large oak table, set ready for breakfast.

A startled middle aged man sat at the table, a newspaper at his feet, dropped in shock. He had obviously not expected the early morning visit.

Grayson paced the room, keeping his eyes on the man. This was his target; this man was part of a greater evil.

The man just sat there agog that someone would interrupt his breakfast, especially an intruder with a gun. Stopping some five paces from the table, Grayson glanced towards the other exit to the kitchen to make sure that no one else was going to ambush him.

When he looked back at the man Grayson had changed, his normally brown eyes now blazing red.

The seated man almost squealed in surprise, terror freezing him. What was this man, what did he want?

Grayson spoke, but with a voice that no man could have ever used. Rather a high pitched sound which seemed to be made up of a number of many lesser individual voices.

"Well my good Doctor, you look well..." the words repeating immediately afterwards, like an echo from some where deep inside Grayson's body.

"Now I guess you are wondering what I want with such a well respected man like yourself." Again the words echoed, and his eyes glowed even brighter.

The Doctor nodded slowly, still stunned from the entrance of the stranger.

"Well then ... you thought you would escape my view helping those people from the city, now didn't you? You thought that they could help you finish that gateway. Come now, tell me the truth."

"I...I...I... didn't tell them anything" blurted the Doctor.

"Don't lie to me, Doctor. I am all seeing… I am a God in your world"

The Grayson figure smiled.

"Never mind you shall pay... they shall pay..." the echo louder now. "Time to say 'Goodnight Doctor'!"

"Nooooo...." the Doctor screamed.

Grayson pulled the trigger and lead death rained from the Colt.

The Doctor's body collapsed in the chair and then slumped forward riddled with bullets.

Grayson shook his head. The target was dead. But like all the other times he had killed since that incident in the Warehouse, he had no recollection of ever pulling the trigger.

Never mind. Another minion of evil was dead.

Tomorrow the papers might be reporting the murder of a well-respected doctor and scientist... but Grayson knew the truth.

Quick Combat System

By Ken McKinney

Ever have one of those games when the combat just takes forever? Ever see someone with a remarkable SAP skill do tiny amounts of damage on a great roll?

The way I see it if a person has a good skill level they should be able to put the shots where they would do more damage. A person with less skill can still hit the target, just with not as much damage.

It was along this line of thought that I came up with the table below. It quickens combat by only rolling one die instead of three or more and gives a player with greater skill the chance to do more damage.

There is also what I call a "lucky shot" which is when the player rolls exactly the roll to make the shot and then rolls a successful skill check for luck. Luck is reduced by 1 just for the game every time this option is taken.

Examples of chart usage:

Jim has a pistol that does 3 damage and his Small Arms (Pistol) is 12. He rolls a 7 to hit a target in short range with a quick shot. The shot would be resolved like this.

12-7 = 5 (Roll needed - Roll = Points Below Skill)
Weapon Damage = 3
Last digit of roll = 7 = Location: Chest
Points of damage from chart = 9

Jim killed his target but one more is trying to get away. The target is at medium range for his pistol and it is a quick shot so his roll needs to be a 6 or less. He takes two shots with rolls of 3 and 6.

First shot:
6 - 3 = 3
Weapon Damage = 3
Location: Right Leg
Points of damage from chart = 6

DARK CONSPIRACY WEAPONS DAMAGE CHART

NUMBER OF DAMAGE DICE OF WEAPON

POINTS BELOW SKILL	-1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	+19**
0*	1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	17%
1	1	1	2	4	5	7	8	9	11	12	14	15	17	18	19	21	22	14	15	15	23%
2	2	1	3	5	7	9	10	12	14	16	18	19	21	23	25	27	29	30	32	34	30%
3	2	2	4	5	8	11	13	15	17	19	22	24	26	28	31	33	35	37	39	42	37%
4	2	2	5	7	10	13	15	18	20	23	26	28	31	34	36	39	21	44	47	49	43%
5	2	3	6	9	12	15	18	21	24	27	30	33	36	39	42	45	48	51	54	57	50%
6	3	3	6	10	13	17	20	23	27	30	34	37	40	44	47	51	54	58	61	64	57%
7	3	3	7	11	15	19	22	26	30	34	38	41	45	49	53	57	61	64	68	72	63%
8	4	4	8	12	16	21	25	29	33	37	42	46	50	54	58	63	67	71	75	80	70%
9	4	4	9	13	18	23	27	32	36	41	46	50	55	59	64	69	73	78	82	87	77%
10	4	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	83%
11	4	5	10	16	21	27	32	37	43	48	54	59	64	70	75	81	87	92	97	102	90%
12	5	5	11	17	23	29	34	40	46	52	58	63	69	75	81	87	92	98	104	440	97%
13	5	6	12	18	24	31	37	43	49	55	62	68	74	80	86	93	99	105	111	117	103%
14	6	6	13	19	26	33	39	46	52	59	66	72	79	85	92	99	105	112	118	128	110%
15	6	7	14	21	28	35	42	49	56	63	70	77	84	91	98	105	112	119	126	133	117%
16	6	7	17	22	29	37	44	51	59	66	74	81	88	96	103	111	118	125	133	140	123%
17	6	7	15	23	31	39	46	54	62	70	78	85	93	101	109	117	124	132	140	148	130%
18	7	8	16	24	32	41	49	57	65	73	82	90	98	106	114	123	131	139	147	155	137%
19	7	8	17	25	34	43	51	60	68	77	86	94	103	111	120	129	137	146	154	163	143%
+19	8	8	17	26	35	44	53	62	71	80	89	98	107	116	125	134	143	152	161	170	150%

*At exactly the skill, roll under your Luck skill for a "lucky shot". Your luck is reduced one point temporarily each time this option is used. Optional.

** For damage above 19 use the following formula. (Damage Dice * 6) * Percent in column

HIT LOCATION DETERMINED BY LAST DIGIT OF D20 ROLL

Roll	Biped	Quadruped
1	Left Leg	Hindquarter
2	Left Leg	Hindquarter
3	Right Leg	Hindquarter
4	Right Leg	Abdomen
5	Abdomen	Chest
6	Abdomen	Chest
7	Chest	Forequarter
8	Left Arm	Forequarter
9	Right Arm	Forequarter
0	Head	Head

Note: This is reversed from the standard chart to give the head and arms a less chance of being hit. Rolls of 1 on a D20 should be handled as you normally handle them, such as "a 1 is always a head shot" or similar.

Second shot:
6 - 6 = 0

Jim wants to try for a lucky shot. His Luck skill is a 10 and he rolls an 8, granting him the shot. Treat a lucky shot as an outstanding success. In this situation, the GM decides that the shot hit the target at the base of the skull, dropping it like a sack of flour.

Jim takes one more shot at another target. He rolls a 2 on a quick shot. This target is wearing armor in that location of AV1. Jim's pistol loses 1 die of damage so it is now a 2.

12-2 = 10 (Roll needed - Roll = Points Below Skill)
Weapon Damage = 2 (3 - 1 for AV)
Last digit of roll = 2 = Location: Left Leg
Points of damage from chart = 10

Jim's d20 is immediately confiscated by the Referee.

Beefcake Shadowkiller has a hopped-up 40 Megawatt plasma rifle that does 65 dice in damage and he has a SAR skill of 26. He rolls a 16 for a quick shot on a target. Because his weapon is above 19 damage, he should make a special chart for it using the percentages in the last column of the chart.

26 - 16 = 10 Points below skill
Location: Abdomen
Damage from chart: (65 * 6) * .83 = 323.7 round up to 324

This chart takes a little getting used to, but it speeds up the combat and adds some interesting flavor to the game.

"How do we fight them?

"If we wish to battle the Dark Ones, we must recognise the nature of our struggle. First, we have to understand that most people do not even know they exist. Of those that do know of them, the majority are their servants. That leaves only a scattering of us who actively oppose them.

"Like their own Minions, then, we must use secrecy as our greatest weapon. Fortunately, the world has become a chaotic welter of political states, megacorporations, and citizens' groups all struggling for power. Often, we can strike and then retreat in the chaos before the Dark Minions can respond.

"But there will be no quick or easy victory."

- Zena Marley,
(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Tabloid Articles

By Marcus Bone and Michael Marchi

Man Attacked By Beach Towel!

Fred Hunter, 39, used to love the beach. Not any more!

Last week Fred was at his favorite spot on Mt. Sacred Beach, enjoying the sun, surf and the ladies when something beyond belief happened.

"I was just sitting there minding my own business, getting a tan. All of a sudden like, my towel started to wiggle, and squirm beneath me. So being the inquisitive type I stood up expecting to find some bug under my towel."

"But I never got the chance to see what it was, cause as soon as I stood up the towel attacked me. I mean it actually leapt up and covered my face. It was trying to kill me I tell you! I could feel it wrappin' around my neck and tightening.

Brad Johnson, 25, was on the beach when he saw Mr Hunter in distress.

"Yeah I saw it happen… I was playin' Frisbee with me dog when I saw him. He was a shaking and a fighting with his towel … it looked like he was trying to strangle himself … his hands up around his neck like that."

"Anyways I when up there to see if he was okay, and he started to choke and cough, and I sort a knew something was wrong. So I grabbed the towel and, boy, did it hate that. Shaking and slappen' in the wind!

After a brief struggle the two men managed to remove the towel and threw it aside.

"Aha, after we got it off," relates Mr Johnson, "it just disappeared. I mean, one second it was there, the next it wasn't. If you ask me it took off. The Bloody thing was alive."

As of today, there is no sign of the towel, and what actually occurred is still matter for debate.

Touched by an Angel

You may not believe you have a Guardian Angel, but don't express that opinion in the presence of any passengers from last Monday's Trans Atlantic Airlines flight 25. You'll get an argument.

None of the 218 passengers aboard TAA-flight 25 could have guessed upon take-off from Chiwaukee's O'Hare airport that they would soon be counted as an airline statistic. Yet, as the London-bound 767-300 reached the halfway point, disaster struck.

"I looked out the window of the plane," says 58 year-old passenger Evelyn Dickson of London's east side, "and then I saw him, standing on the wing – an angel. I couldn't believe my eyes. He wore a long robe, had long, white feathered wings, and as I watched him, he seemed to glow with a golden light. It was a miracle."

Evelyn apparently wasn't the only passenger to see the vision. Jason Smith of Devonshire reports a similar sighting, "I was trying to take a nap after the meal-service had finished. Suddenly I had a terrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. I could hear some woman behind me saying something about an angel, so I looked outside. There was a man on the wing of the plane!"

What happened next is unclear, and investigators are still trying to piece it together from flight recorder data. From the passenger's point of view, those who had actually paid attention to the oft-ignored flight attendant demonstration at the beginning of the flight were rewarded. There was a huge tearing sound, followed by explosive decompression of the passenger cabin.

"Stuff was flying everywhere! Papers, books, drink cups. The oxygen masks dropped out of the ceiling compartments and the plane went into a steep dive," said flight attendant Melanie Evans. "I was sure we were going to crash into the ocean!"

The plane dropped nearly 30,000 feet in the space of a few minutes as the pilots struggled to get the plane down to an altitude where cabin pressurization wouldn't matter. For reasons that have yet to be determined, the pilots overshot and the jetliner reached a dangerously low altitude, dropping completely off radar in the process.

"People were screaming and crying all around me. I knew that I had seen the angel for a reason," Evelyn continued, "Then I saw him, walking past my seat in the passenger cabin. He glowed with a heavenly power, and I just knew we were going to be okay."

The plane levelled out over the ocean, and slowed to compensate for the tattered breach in the hull. Twenty passengers lost their lives in the tragedy, including five who were apparently beheaded by flying debris. Another ten passengers were ejected from the plane through the two-meter hole moments into the crisis. The remaining five appear to have died of suffocation.

Sara-Lynn Devereaux, the passenger who was sitting closest to the five beheaded victims declined to comment on the "miracle" of the angel. Instead she insisted that the so-called "angel" was instigator of the disaster, rather than saviour.

TAA spokeswoman Angela Bennet has scoffed at the very suggestion that an angel…benevolent or otherwise had anything to do with the disaster. "It was metal fatigue in an aging plane, nothing more. The skill of the pilots alone is all that averted a complete loss of life."

But Evelyn Dickson remains convinced of the angel's part in saving her life. "My faith has been strengthened by this event. I feel as though someone is watching over me."

Amazing Teleporting Corpse!

Late last night, fishermen hauled the body of an unknown man from the Bay in Boston. Although this in itself is not unusual, sometime afterwards left the body of its own volition.

Alex Timons, aged 43, and Jeffery Mason, aged 19, help recover the floating body from the dark waters of Boston Bay shortly after midnight. Yet according to them, when they had returned port and proceed to retrieve the body from the boat's cold storage, it had somehow vanished.

Or had it? Both Timons and Mason swear that the body had been placed in the fish freezer only moments after it had been recovered on deck, and both agree that the man, aged probably in his late 30's, was most definitely dead. Yet there were no signs of any body, or any evidence to lead to the conclusion that there was ever a body present in the cold storage, and this has police baffled.

"It's not as if the body would have just got up and left," stated investigating Officer Norman Wates, "and we know enough about Mr. Timons and Mr. Mason to say that they would not hoax such a serious matter, so this truly has us guessing. It's like it just teleported off the boat."

Boy Finds Secret Military Staff Under Tree

When Tony Connors, aged 17, found a six-foot pole, he had no idea that it would make him the focus of media worldwide.

Tony Connors was just a regular kid before one fateful day. He recalls finding the staff on a Saturday, as he returned home after his football game.

"It was just laying there in the trees and all, I thought it was just a branch that had fallen of a tree at first," he said. "But it was all smooth like and really it looked like nothin' I've seen before."

And the rest is history, as you may know that staff somehow has the ability to disappear on command. All Tony has to do is concentrate on it and it vanished before your eyes, and fantastically it reappears, just as easily.

So what is it. Scientist from MCU, are at this moment, examining the staff and preliminary reports state that it is made simply of normal oak and yet somehow a young man can make it vanish. What makes this more amazing is the fact that Tony has tried this vanishing trick with other commons items without success.

So is it the Staff or is it Tony? An unnamed source believes that this staff may have some connections to secret military technology. "It went missing a few weeks ago. They want to hush the whole thing up, but it's got too much publicity now."

Tabloid Hooks

By Marcus Bone and Michael Marchi

Man Attacked By Beach Towel!

This could have many outcomes. Here are two possible suggestions:

- **Kidnapping Aliens:** There is a race of morphing creatures that can take on any shape that they wish. They are planning on introducing themselves to human society, however first they must do some research on mankind. The best way is to perhaps kidnap a human and then studying them.
- **Animated Assassin:** Hunter has crossed a Dark One and now he must die. Perhaps this Dark One kills all his enemies with animated objects. How many times have you heard of people dying from innocuous household items, it's more common than you know! Maybe the party is next on the Dark Ones hit list and is now about to be attacked by domestic utensils. Watch how far you put you hand in the letterbox now!

Touched by an Angel

Eyewitness reports are a wonderful tool for misinformation in any adventure scenario.

Let's assume for a moment that there really was something out on the wing of that plane. Perhaps the awestruck passengers were mistaken as to the motivations of the visitor. Investigation into the matter would reveal that the leading edge of the hull breach was in fact a clean slice in the aircraft aluminum hull. The tearing and widening of the hole was caused by passenger seats in the vicinity of the slice being pulled through by the decompression of the cabin.

The five beheaded passengers were located in the two seats in front of, behind and next to Sara-Lynn's window-seat. Each victim was beheaded by a sharp, blade that cauterized the wound as it was inflicted. Further, each wound was delivered at a different angle, implying five aimed blows, rather than one swipe for all five.

The article mentions three passengers by name, one flight attendant, and a spokesperson for TAA. Any of them could be questioned for clues. One thing that the article fails to cover, is what happened between the time the plane dropped off radar, and the time it landed. There are hours unaccounted for. Did this "angel" come on board mid-flight and attack the passengers around Ms. Devereaux? Why? Was she the intended target of the attack? How was the attack repelled?

Another possible use for this information is to have your players be passengers on the plane. Remember that no airline will allow passengers to carry firearms, so an attack by a creature wielding a sword capable of slicing through metal would be a formidable opponent.

The Loose Ends

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Some Zena Marley quotes are from the Dark Conspiracy 1st Edition rulebook. Used with the kind permission of Ken Whitman.

New Zena Marley quotes written by Geoff Skellams and Michael Marchi.

Submissions

Like all fanzines, we need articles by you, the fans of *Dark Conspiracy*, to keep this magazine alive.

We're looking for articles solely related to the *Dark Conspiracy* universe. Any material that would help a new referee or player would be ideal.

Use the departments from this issue as a rough guide to the areas of material we are looking for.

In particular, we need more

- Dark Races
- Equipment/DarkTek
- Dark Conspiracy Related Fiction
- Tabloid Articles
- House Rules
- NPCs

If you think you can help, then please send your submission to Marcus Bone (MARCUS.BONE@xtra.co.nz).

We would prefer all submissions to be in a format readable by Microsoft Word 97. Our main preference is a Word 97 file.

If you are sending in tables, please send them as a word processor table or a tab-delimited text file. Do not send HTML files.

Please keep the formatting in your submissions simple. We will be responsible for formatting your submission when the magazine is being laid out. Fancy formatting makes our job that much harder.

We reserve the right to edit your submission and to correct spelling and grammar if necessary. If you have a problem with us doing this, please contact us and we will see if we can come to some sort of arrangement.

We look forward to seeing your submissions. Your involvement is important, not only to the success of this fanzine, but also to the continued survival of *Dark Conspiracy*.

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