

MASKS OF DARKNESS

SIN CITY: VOLUME THREE



AN ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD OF DARK CONSPIRACY

MASKS OF DARKNESS

SIN CITY: VOLUME THREE

**by
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An Adventure for the World of Dark Conspiracy



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FOREWARD



Masks of Darkness is a departure from the normal style of a role-playing adventure book. Its style is different enough to warrant this foreword to explain it.

I feel that published adventures never seem to be as intense as the games run at gaming conventions. Convention games are usually more focused and generally more memorable than campaign games played at home. I believe this is one of the reasons why gaming conventions are still popular.

Masks of Darkness is written in the same style as a convention module, albeit on a much broader scale. It tells the story from the viewpoint of the player characters (PCs), instead of making the Referee some sort of omniscient being floating above the city, knowing everything that is going on. The story is presented to show the Referee what is happening to the PCs, and it leaves everything else in the background.

I believe this will preserve some of the mystery of the events that are unfolding in Sin City. Things will happen in Masks of Darkness that will not be explained; this is purely intentional. I believe an adventure, like a good movie, should provide enough information to give PCs an understanding of what is going on, but it should also leave a lot of questions unanswered. The understanding comes from thinking about what happened and putting all the pieces together with hindsight.

I hope that you will keep these ideas in mind when you are reading through this adventure. I'm confident that Masks of Darkness should provide you and your players with something to talk when it's all over.

Geoff Skellams
Canberra, Australia
June 1999.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The cruiser rocked slightly as the inflatable boat pulled up alongside. All the running lights were out, the larger boat lit only by the lights of the Citadel blazing across the water.

Maddox turned and looked at the driver. "Stay about one hundred meters away," he said. "I'll signal you when I'm ready to leave."

He clambered onto the transom of the cruiser, the inflatable rocking sharply with the redistribution of weight. He waved to the driver, and the inflatable roared away into the darkness.

The cabin door slid silently open, and an older man with dark hair emerged. "You're late, Maddox."

The newcomer shrugged. *Like I care*, he thought. "Get over it, Darnell. Bruce wanted to see me before I came out to meet you."

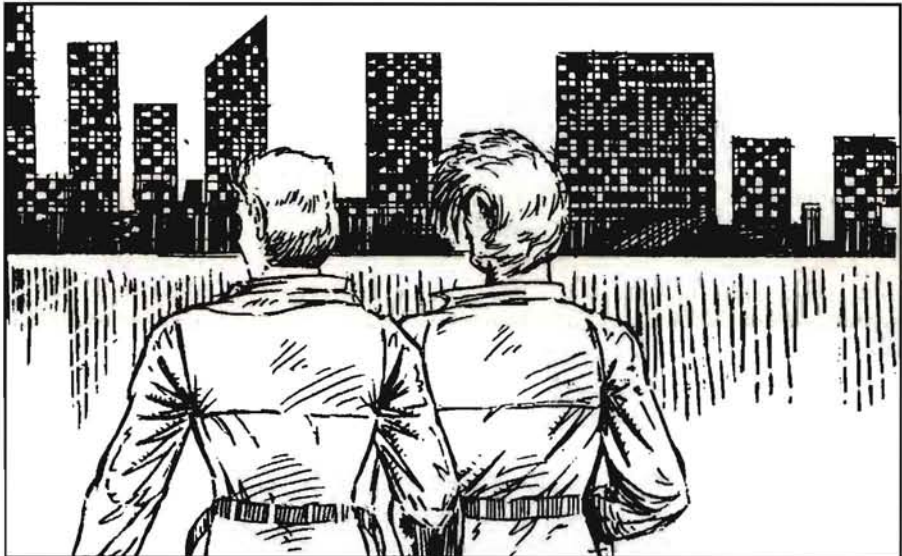
Darnell's eyes narrowed. "McMannos? What did he want?"

Maddox fished a packet of cigarettes from his pocket and shook one out. His face was lit brightly in the glare from the lighter. "He's not happy with the project's progress." He tilted his head up and blew smoke into the cold night air. "He thinks you're not doing enough."

The older man scowled, "Not doing enough? Does he think this is some sort of game?"

Maddox smiled as he scratched his goatee with his thumb. "Isn't it?" he said. "Power is always a game. You, of all people, should know that."

"Don't jerk me around," said Darnell, looking across the dark water to the lights of the Citadel. "It's far more than that, and you know it."



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"Whatever." Maddox took another drag. "What's so important that you have to get me out here in the middle of the night?"

Darnell turned and studied his companion. "I was supposed to have your report yesterday. What the hell is going on?"

Maddox leaned on the railing and stared across at the city. Control freak. That's what you are, he thought. "The second wave of targets have just begun using. K'tha'dnr is monitoring them all now. He's anxious for the hunt."

Darnell's face broke into an evil grin. "Excellent! This wave is closer to the top?"

Maddox brushed his blonde hair out of his eyes. "Of course they are. One or two more waves, and we should be able to give you the leverage you need."

"Outstanding! Have we learned anything interesting yet?"

Maddox blew smoke from his nose and shook his head. "Not more than we already suspected. The Trade Council is behind that mess in the Projects, but we still can't prove it yet. Give us a few more days and we'll get you something more substantial."

Darnell glared at his companion. "How many more days do you need?" he said with his lack of patience evident.

Maddox shrugged. You've already been at this game a year, he thought. A couple more days isn't going to kill you. "As long as it takes. We move too fast now and we'll alert the Trade Council. They're already on edge."

"I don't care if those bastards are standing on their heads," said Darnell. "I want them crushed. What's McMannos doing to help?"

Maddox flicked the cigarette butt out into the water. "He picks us the scape-goats. The Trade Council has learned of the drug and they want it stopped. We're setting some suckers up to take the fall."

"Good," said Darnell. "Get the Trade Council chasing its tail. Soon they'll be so confused, they won't see the hit coming."

Well they won't if you don't balls this up, thought Maddox. "That all? I have things I need to do."

Darnell looked back at the Trade Center. "Yes, let me know as soon as we can move into the next phase of the operation."

Maddox smirked. That bit should be fun. He pulled a hooded flashlight from his coat pocket and flashed it five times out into the darkness beyond the boat. The sound of an outboard motor starting wafted in across the dark water. "You'll know shortly after I do. We won't start the fun without you."

Darnell snorted and headed for the cabin. "I'll talk to you later." He slid the door open and stepped inside, just as the inflatable pulled up at the back of the cruiser.

Good night to you too, asshole, though Maddox, as he jumped back into the inflatable. "Get me back to the city. I have to see someone."

She watched intently as the smaller boat pulled away from the larger. The buoy

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rocked slightly as she craned her neck to watch it vanish into the harbor. Casting one last glance at the cruiser, she stretched her wings and flapped silently into the night sky...

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"The Dark Lords get away with so much because humans block out the information that doesn't make sense. They pretend the weird pieces simply don't exist.

"Everything is more complicated than it seems. Never forget that."

- Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

On the surface, Sin City appears to be functioning normally. People come and go in their daily lives, never stopping to think about the minor problems that they face every day. Buses run on regular schedules, dropping the mindless zombies off for their day jobs. Most citizens are comfortable in believing they live in a normal city.

But underneath the surface, sinister things are lurking. Nothing is as it appears to be. What people see and the reality of a situation are two completely different things.

Being a Minion hunter makes it different. You need to pay attention to the details. It is impossible to hide all the facts, some things slip through the cracks, and it is these things that can save you when you are in trouble.

Throughout Masks of Darkness, news headlines will be presented. These will be detailing events that are happening in Sin City as the story progresses. These items are designed to be read to the PCs at a suitable time (perhaps while they are travelling), or they could be modified so that the PCs could hear them as rumors.

The information contained in these sections, while brief, can help provide some necessary background information in a timely and unobtrusive fashion. What the PCs do with that information is entirely up to them.

MISSING PERSONS REPORT

***This hour's news in brief:** Fighting continues unabated as the gang-war in the Projects enters its fifteenth day. It is not known what the death toll will be, although there are unconfirmed rumors of it being in the hundreds, or possibly thousands. The New Centennial Police have issued a statement saying, "Where the gangs are obtaining their automatic weapons or ammunition is unknown. At present, we are managing to contain the fighting to one end of the Projects, and it is hoped that it will not spread any further." It appears that there is no end in sight for the bloodshed, so the sounds of gunfire will ring out across the city for many nights to come.*

INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

"The influenza epidemic continues to sweep New Centennial City. Most employers are reporting significant numbers of absentees as the city is brought to its knees by the outbreak. Experts expect the strain to subside within the coming month."

NEW BILL

"Mayor Bryant announced a new bill that will be introduced to the City Council tomorrow. Details of this bill are rumored to be linked to the crash of the 'Thermal Hammer,' which decimated an entire city block. My sources say that there will be severe fines levied against the offending corporations."

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"Hello? Umm, this is Brenda Fraser. I'm calling because my husband has gone missing and I've been told that you are the sort of person that looks for missing people. I've been to the police, but they don't seem interested. Can you help me? Please? I've been going crazy wondering if he's all right and not knowing what could have happened to him. I really need to talk to someone who can help me. Please call, I'm beside myself with worry and I really need to find out what is going on. I can be contacted on..."

One of the PCs will get this message on their answering service (either at home or on their mobile voice mail). None of the PCs will have ever heard of Brenda Fraser before, and there is no indication of how she came to get the PC's phone number. The one thing that is evident from the message is that this woman is emotionally distraught and needs someone to help her.

When the PCs call her, she will be incredibly upset, but at the same time, she will be extremely grateful that they have called her back. She will ask them to come over immediately as she cannot wait any longer. If asked, she will offer a small reward if that is what it will take to get the PCs to look into her husband's disappearance. She will supply an address, 2343 Primrose Avenue, Collings.

Collings is a quiet suburb about 5 miles from the Square. Like most suburbs in New Centennial City, Collings is mostly medium density housing, allowing the town planners to be able to squeeze more residences in per square mile than they could if everyone had a quarter-acre block to themselves. Primrose Avenue is a typical street in the suburb; it has been here for about 15 years, enough time for the trees to have grown up to provide a leafy canopy over the streets.

**BRENDA FRASER**

Brenda Fraser is a small woman in her early fifties. Her face is wrinkled with signs of premature aging and her short, blonde hair is streaked with gray. She has been putting on a little bit of weight lately, testimony to her lack of physical exercise. Brenda has been married and a housewife for the past 32 years and spends most of her time looking after the upkeep of her home. Since her son left home two years ago to join the Army, she and her husband have lived here alone.

Brenda is an avid reader and surrounds herself with all sorts of books and magazines. Her books cover a wide range of topics, from history books on Ancient Egypt, to gardening books, to romance novels, to a full collection of Ian Fleming's James Bond novels.



The Fraser residence is a small, one story vinyl-clad duplex. It looks completely unremarkable, although it does appear to be well maintained. From the outside, it would be difficult to realize that there is anything amiss with the inhabitants. An aging Subaru Electrostar is parked in the carport attached to the side of the house.

If the characters arrive by vehicle, they will attract some attention from the local inhabitants. This will especially be the case if they arrive in a vehicle that would not normally be seen in the 'burbs (such as a Hummer, or a loud Harley Davidson motorcycle). Curtains will be pulled aside, or venetian blinds bent down to let curious neighbors spy on the new arrivals. As soon as the PCs close the doors on the car, a woman will appear opening the screen door to see them quickly inside.

If the PCs have arrived by public transport, they will be able to approach the house without attracting any undue attention.

Brenda is obviously distraught; her eyes are red, and her face stained by tears. "I'm so glad you could come," she says. "I've been going out of my mind since my husband James went missing a week ago. The police have done nothing, and I have no one else I can turn to."

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Brenda will explain that James worked as a purchasing officer for the MedAdmin Corporation. He normally told her about everything that went on in his office, but three days before he disappeared, he came home troubled and refused to talk about it. "Just some office politics," he had said.

For three days, he would come home visibly disturbed, as though something was churning away inside. But Brenda could not get her husband to open up.

Then, on the night he disappeared, he rang around the time he would normally come home from work and said that he had to go and see someone and that he would not be home in time for dinner. He refused to say who he had to see or why, simply saying that he had some work related stuff to get off his chest. Brenda has not seen him nor heard from him since.

She tried phoning his office and managed to speak to Mia Lysander, one of James' coworkers, who said that James had not been in the office since the night he went missing. According to the official word, he had been transferred to a new section and was working in another building. Mia also said that if she were sensible, she would not ask any more questions.

If the players ask how Brenda got their number, she will explain although the police did not seem to be able to do anything about the case, a detective named Fader told her that she could phone one of the PCs and they might be able to help her. (If the players have not played through Sin City 1 and have not met Detective Fader, then substitute some other law enforcement contact as first choice, or possibly a government or social worker contact instead.)

If the characters ask about payment, then Brenda will say that she has a few thousand set aside for a new car and some house renovations and she would be able to give them that, but that is all she has. If the PCs press for more, she will burst into tears again and ask, "Why are you being so mean? My husband is missing and all you care about is money?"

Brenda will supply them with a photograph of James, should the PCs ask for it. It was taken on his 54th birthday, three months ago.

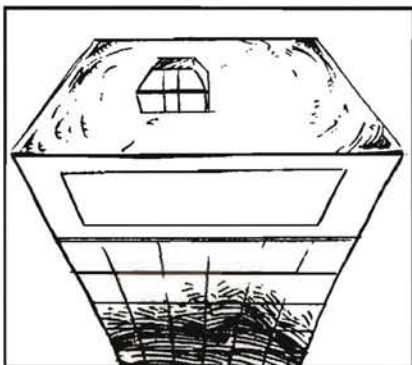
Level: Novice

Attributes: 5

Skills: As per Novice NPC

Initiative: 1

Motivation: Queen of Hearts: Brenda is completely devoted to her husband, a fact that has contributed to their 32 years of marriage. Since his disappearance, she is beside herself with worry about him. 4 of Hearts: Brenda is pleasant to all that she meets and tries hard to make her home a pleasant environment for herself, her husband and any visitors.



YOU'RE BEING WATCHED...

Once the PCs leave the Fraser house, they will be shadowed from a distance. It is important to give the PCs a sense of this. This should be done slowly at first, so as not to arouse their suspicions too much, but with increasing regularity as this initial investigation takes place.

As they travel around town, they will start to see the same faces appearing in odd locations. The same cars will be travelling down the same roads as the characters at strange hours. Shadowy figures will stand watching the PCs when they are going about their business. The PCs will come home to the feeling that someone has been in their houses, despite the fact that nothing is missing or out of place.

Empathic characters should be able to feel a gentle probing of their minds, as though someone was trying to get a feel for what makes them tick. This will especially be the case early in the morning as the PC awakes from sleep.

If, at any time, the PCs start to take an active interest in the people watching them, the presence will fade away for a time. As soon as the PCs have gone back to what they were doing, the presence will return to continue the surveillance.

SEARCHING FOR JAMES

The search for James does not have many leads to go on, but there are a few possible avenues for investigation. From what Brenda has said, something at work upset him a couple of days before he disappeared. This should give the PCs a place to start.

James Fraser worked as a purchasing officer for the MedAdmin Corporation. He worked in the corporation's headquarters, in one of the high-rise buildings in the Citadel.

If the PCs do not have any contacts within MedAdmin, they will have to go through reception to try and track him down. The PC's may try their liaison from



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Sin City 2, Kelly Wilson, only to find out that there are restricted from talking to him due to his "fragile" physical state. If they phone the switchboard or visit the reception desk, they will be told that there is no one of that name working for the MedAdmin Corporation.

Brenda also spoke of Mia Lysander, who worked in James' office. The PCs will no doubt try to get in touch with her. If they call her at the office, she will refuse to answer their questions, claiming that she doesn't know what they are talking about. The same will be true if they visit her at the office.

The only way the PCs can hope to get Lysander to talk is if they can approach her outside of business hours. After work on a Friday night, she goes to a club in the Strip, call "Manuel's". The PCs should be able to track her down there with little difficulty.

When the PCs corner her, she will be half drunk and can be convinced to talk. She doesn't know a lot about what was going on. James had been given a rush job about a week before he vanished. There was something in the documentation that accompanied the purchase order that upset him a great deal, although he refused to talk about it. He took it to the supervisor's office and there was a shouting match, although Mia could not make out what was said. James returned to his desk a short while later, visibly shaken.

Two days later, he broke down in tears at his desk late one afternoon. He refused to talk to Mia about it, because he did not want to put her at risk. Instead, he decided to talk to City Councilor Janice Whelan, who he thought would be able to do something with the information he had.

He made arrangements that afternoon to meet the councilor that evening. Mia wasn't sure, but she thinks that they were meeting near the pond in Smith Park at 6:00pm. Just before he left, James had begun to express concern about the meeting, saying that he was having second



MIA LYSANDER

Mia is a tall woman with rugged features. Her face is pockmarked with acne scars and she is somewhat self-conscious about her appearance.

She has been working in the same purchasing office as James Fraser for the past four years. Until recently, she had very little to do with him, but after he started acting oddly a couple of months ago, she made an effort to befriend him.

She does not know what happened to Fraser, but she is afraid that he has fallen afoul of someone and is terrified that the same fate could be awaiting her.

Age: 38

Level: Novice

Attributes: 5

Skills: As per Novice NPC

Initiative: 1

Motivation: Jack of Diamonds: Mia is terrified for her life. Something bad has happened to James,

because the company has covered up his disappearance. She is terrified that she could be next, even though she knows nothing. 3 of Spades: Mia wants to get a promotion at work, although she is less interested in it now than before.

MANUEL'S

Manuel's is a bar on the edge of the Strip, across the road from the Square. It is more upper-class than some of the other establishments in the area. Its clientele consists mainly of office workers and middle management, who simply want a relatively quiet place to have a drink after work.

The décor has a vaguely Spanish flavor, with pictures of the Spanish landscape painted on the walls. Every night, there is a live band or performer, mostly playing flamenco guitar.

Patrons can get a reasonable meal for a modest price and the bar and wine cellar are well stocked, although the more exotic or rare drinks are not available.

thoughts. He kept muttering something about "the park is too dangerous. Why did she want to meet me in the park?"

James never returned to work, and his desk was mysteriously emptied a day later. The staff was told that he had been given a priority assignment out of the building and would not be returning, although the phone calls from Brenda Fraser have convinced Mia that this is a lie; she is sure that some other fate has befallen James.

Mia begs the PCs not to tell anyone that she has spoken to them; she is terrified of becoming the next victim.

TALKING TO WHELAN

If the PCs decide to talk with Councilor Whelan, they are in for a rude shock. They will need to make an appointment with her for the following day, as she is a very busy woman.

When they are making the appointment, her secretary will ask what the appointment will be discussing. If the PCs say they are conducting an investigation they think the councilor could help them with, they will be well received (as the councilor can later claim part of the credit if the investigation proves successful). However, if the PCs mention James Fraser by name, the secretary



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will tell them the councilor will not see them.

The PCs will get the same reaction if they manage to get an interview with her and they ask her if she met with James Fraser. She will visibly pale at the mention of his name, and will conclude the interview as quickly as possible, with an "I'm sorry. I do not have any information about the whereabouts of Mr. Fraser. I am unable to help you at this time."

If the PCs are using Human Empathy on her at the time, they will get the distinct sense of terror and she will close off her normally open self.

The characters should definitely walk away from their encounter with the councilor thinking that she knows more about the disappearance of James Fraser than she is willing to talk about.

SMITH PARK

The last known location of James Fraser was near the pond in Smith Park. What happens in the park depends on whether the PCs go there during the day or the night. It is preferable for the events that follow that this section takes place during the night, although it is not mandatory for this to be the case.

DURING THE DAY

If the PCs investigate the park during the day, there will be a lot more people there, so they may well be spotted searching for something. None of the people who come to the park to relax during the day will be able to tell the PCs anything about the whereabouts of James Fraser. It will be entirely up to the PCs to hunt through the entire park.

If the PCs insist on searching during the day, it might be necessary to modify some of the information presented below into a form that the

COUNCILOR JANICE WHELAN

Janice Whelan, 56, is one of the most outspoken members of the New Centennial City Council. She is the consummate politician, always looking for a way to get her name and face into the news headlines.

Whelan used to work as a middle manager for the Federal government, until about 10 years ago, when her position was outsourced to a multinational company. This upset Whelan a great deal and she vowed to fight back against the big corporations.

Her chance came four years ago, when she was elected as an independent to the New Centennial City Council. She ran on a "keep the corporations honest" ticket and it has been a cause that she has championed ever since. Any piece of legislation that would give the corporations some benefit over the general populace is something that she will fight tooth and nail to oppose.

Her cavalier attitude sometimes gets her into trouble as she has a tendency to attack the corporations without enough evidence. This led to her being forced to issue a public apology; she has

tended to be more cautious and thorough with her investigations in the past six months.

Level: Experienced

Attributes: Intelligence 7, Education 7, Charisma 8

Skills: As per Experienced NPC, plus Act/Bluff 6, Bargain 7, Business 4, Luck 5, Willpower 3.

Initiative: 2

Motivation: Ace of Spades: Whelan is the classic model of a politician. She has a way of making everyone feel like she is on their side. Her natural charm makes her very easy to get along with in most circumstances. 10 of Spades: Whelan has ambitions that go much further than being on the New Centennial City Council. She is interested in finding her way into Federal politics.

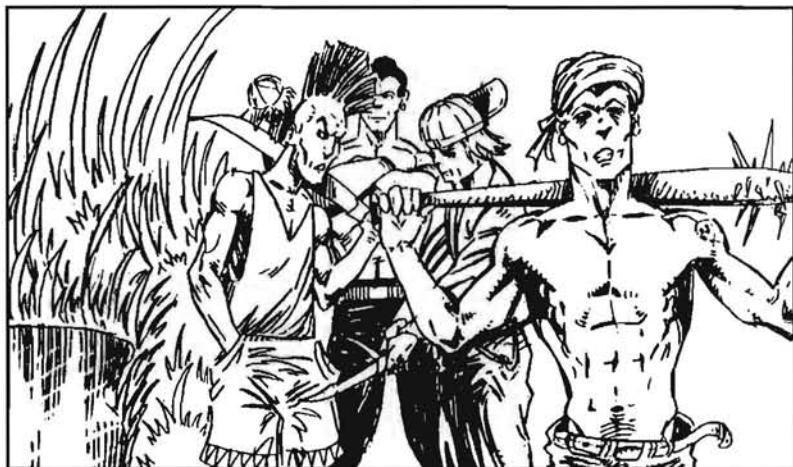
PCs could discover, but that still makes finding the fate of James Fraser extremely difficult.

DURING THE NIGHT

Smith Park is a completely different place at night. Once the sun starts to set, the people who use the recreation facilities by day go home and the nocturnal inhabitants come out; only the brave or the suicidal venture into Smith Park after dark.

Should the PCs be in the park after dark, it is important to impress on the players that this is a dangerous and foreboding place. As the PCs move through, there will be noises in the underbrush, as well as all sorts of strange shadows to make them increasingly apprehensive. The wind whistles eerily through the trees and the sounds of the city fade away to only accentuate their isolation from the world.

Once they are near the pond in the center of the park, they will encounter a group of twelve local gangers (Dark Conspiracy Referee's Guide Master Edition, P405, or Basic Edition P131) who treat the pond as their personal turf. They will try to ambush the PCs instead of a direct assault, as they have a better chance of success.



The gangers are more interested in mugging the PCs for their money and possessions than killing them. Being only armed with knives and clubs, they will back down as soon as the PCs pull a firearm on them.

If the PCs get into a situation where they can talk to the gangers, they might learn the following things:

- Someone matching the description of James Fraser was in the park as dark fell on the night of his disappearance.
- He was wandering up and down the length of the pond, as though he was waiting for someone and was becoming increasingly agitated. He was carrying a briefcase with him at the time.
- Before the gangers could mug him, he was approached from two tall men wearing black suits. They spoke in hushed terms before the men took the briefcase from Fraser and led him by the arm up the path into the trees, towards the Batts Rose Gardens.
- About twenty minutes later, there was the sound of a man screaming in pain, which was suddenly silenced.
- Shortly after the screams, there were a series of bright flashes of light from up in the trees, which came from the same direction as the screaming.
- Neither the guy with the briefcase or the two men in suits came back to the pond.
- The gangers went up into the bushes later that night, but they could not find anything.

If the PCs ask, the gangers will point out the direction the men took into the trees.

FOREBODING

If any of the PCs have the Foreboding skill, have them make a check when they go near the pond in Smith Park. If they go during the day, the test will be Difficult: Foreboding. If they go at night, it is only an Average: Foreboding task.

If they are successful, read them the following:

The smell of the damp earth fills your nostrils. It hurts when you breathe; the last kick in the ribs probably cracked a rib. You cough up some blood, your chest racked with pain. The water you are lying in is cold and you can feel the blood washing from the holes in your kneecaps. You raise your head slightly. The lights surrounding the pond are just visible through the trees.

The man in black towers over you. He squats down beside you and presses the cold metal of his pistol barrel to the side of your head.

"I warned you not to say anything, didn't I, Fraser?" he says. "It would be a lot easier for people like me if people like you learned to keep your big mouth shut."

There is a blinding pain in your left temple as the image fades from your mind.

FINDING WHAT'S LEFT OF JAMES FRASER

Leading away from the duck pond is a footpath that wanders through some of the thicker areas of undergrowth before emerging near the Batts Rose Gardens, close to the Expansion. About 100 meters from the pond, a small footbridge crosses a creek, roughly a meter above the water. As the PCs get close to the bridge, they will notice the smell of something rotting.

In a drainpipe under the bridge, the PCs will find a plastic bag containing all that remains of James Fraser, his head. The bag has been pushed up the pipe as far as a normal man could reach. The PCs will need to actually get into the water and crawl under the bridge to find the head. This is important, as it will mean their clothes are wet and muddy when they go back into the city.

The dismembered head shows a large caliber bullet wound to the left temple and it is covered with blood. His face is twisted into a grimace of shock and agony, as though he was immense pain when the end finally came. If any of the PCs have the Foreboding skill and have not had the vision above, finding the head will automatically bring it on.

OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

"What the hell are you guys up to? Half the damn police force in this town is combing the city looking for you. Your faces are plastered over every cop station in town. I've just got finished telling some gumby from Internal Affairs that I have no idea what you are up to and I don't know where you are..."

While the PCs are standing around trying to figure out what to do with the severed head of James Fraser, the mobile phone of one of the PCs will ring. (It is assumed that at least one of the PCs will have a cell phone.)

On the other end will be Detective Richard Fader. He will be quite agitated and will demand to see the PCs immediately. He has something urgent that he needs to talk to them about, which is directly related to them and could spell some big trouble coming their way.



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If the PCs tell Fader that they can't make it right now, he will say: *"Look, if you want to spend the next few years being the bed time toy for some tattooed giant in prison, then that's fine with me. I'm already laying my ass on the line calling you now."*

"But if you would prefer to stay out of prison, then you had better meet me at Zeldas, on Green Street in 20 minutes. I need to get rid of my partner for a while, and it will take me at least that long to shake him. Just make sure that you don't run into any cops between now and then."

If the PCs explain about the severed head of Fraser, Fader will sigh with exasperation. *"Look, just shove the head back in the bag, toss it back under the bridge and get the hell out of there. I'll report an anonymous tip-off about the head to the local section commander. Let them worry about telling the poor bastard's wife. Just get here as quick as you can, OK?"*

GETTING TO ZELDAS

This is a chance to make the PCs more paranoid than they already are. It is a couple of miles from the location of Fraser's head to Zeldas café in the Strip. Fader's warning should have put the PCs on edge. Getting to the Strip should now be a stressful time, especially if they are wet and covered in mud from fishing out Fraser's head from the drainpipe.

As the PCs travel the distance, have them encounter several police units. Their appearance should attract some attention unless they have a chance to get back to their residences and change, and still able to make it to the Strip in the twenty minutes before they are due to meet Fader.

As the PCs travel across the city, the police they encounter will react slowly to their presence. However, to make matters more interest-

THE LURKING PRESENCE

It is important to remember to increase the level of paranoia of the players by emphasizing the continual feeling of being watched by someone or something. This is a theme that will continue throughout the adventure and you, as the Referee, will need to continually make references to this fact to help keep the PCs on their toes.

NCC POLICE AND JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Because the police force in New Centennial City is a corporate body instead of a public service, the police force operates under different rules. The city has been broken into many sectors and individual cops are assigned to specific areas within in the city.

In practice, the corporate atmosphere of the police service has left the average beat cop terrified about losing his or her job if they make a mess of things on the street. For this reason, most of them will not go beyond their own jurisdiction in pursuit of a suspect, for fear of making a mistake and leaving their own beat unsupervised.

For more information, see the section on the NCC Police Department in *Sin City I: The Shadow Falls*.



ing, at least one group of officers should recognize the PCs and start to give chase.

However, given the attitudes of the individual police in New Centennial City, the chase will only last a few blocks before the PCs manage to cross a sector boundary and the police give up the chase.

By using this situation to your best advantage, you should be able to make the journey from the park to the Strip a stressful one for the PCs, who should now feel increasingly concerned and paranoid about what is going on.

MEETING WITH FADER

By the time the PCs arrive at Zeldas café, Detective Fader will be waiting for them outside the front door. He appears incredibly agitated and has been chain-smoking for the past half-hour. As soon as he sees the PCs approaching, he will usher them inside to a booth down the back of the café.

Before the PCs even get a chance to say anything, Fader will start. "Would someone please explain to me what the hell is going on"? I got hauled over the coals earlier because you people are allegedly pushing some sort of new drug in this town."

Naturally, the PCs will have no idea what Fader is talking about, so he will light up yet

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another cigarette and explain a few things.

"Apparently, there is some new drug called 'Escapee' on the streets of New Centennial. It's highly addictive and not at all good for your health, from what I hear. I don't know too much about it; they haven't told us what it does. It's on a need to know basis, or some such crap.

"But whatever it does, it's pissed someone off. The Trade Council has started making rumbling noises about its availability in the city. They want its supply shut down yesterday. Beats me why they care about this one and not about any of the other recreational chemicals people tend to fry their minds with.

"So, the powers that be have formed a special task force to look into breaking up the supply and distribution of Escapee. Most of the detectives in the city, yours truly included, have been pulled from their cases and forced to become vice cops looking for this stuff.

"This morning, one of the guys brings in a witness to one of the drug deals. They were incredibly happy, because it was the first decent break they have had in this case since it started. This woman gave a good description of the dealers, and even helped a police artist do a composite sketch.

"I just about fell off my chair when I recognized the pictures as you guys," says Fader, indicating a couple of the PCs. He'll light up another cigarette before continuing. "My partner, the stupid bastard, open his big mouth and dropped you guys in it royally. Next thing I know, I'm being called into the Section Head's office to explain my relationship with you guys and what I know about your involvement.

"So, now your faces are all over the most wanted list in the city. Whoever manages to bring you guys in is looking at a nice fat productivity bonus, probably signed by the Trade Council themselves.

"I know that you guys didn't do it, but I need-

DETECTIVE RICHARD FADER

STR 7 INT 8 EMP 4
AGL 5 EDU 8 INIT 2
CON 6 CHR 6

Age: 34

Skills: Unarmed Melee 3, Small Arms (Rifle) 2, Small Arms (Pistol) 5, Lockpick 2, Stealth 2, Swimming 2, Observation 4, Psychology 1, Streetwise 2, Wheeled Vehicle 2, Willpower 2, Computer Operation 1, Business 1, Language (English) 10, Language (Spanish) 4, Interrogation 4, Leadership 2, Persuasion 2, Foreboding 3

Armament: S&W Model 29/16.5 (.44 Mag Revolver), Browning Autoriot (loaded with alternating rounds of buckshot and 12-gauge shells), Kevlar Jacket (AV:1).

Description: Detective Richard Fader

Fader is an immigrant to New Centennial City, like much of the population. He arrived here from Chiwaukee to take up a position with the New Centennial Police Service. While his move meant that Fader has kept his badge, the transition from public servant to corporate employee hasn't been painless.

Fader feels out of place in

New Centennial City. Despite having lived in the city for close to a year, he still misses Chiwaukee, and constantly thinks how things were much better "back home." If he hadn't signed on for a three-year period, he would have packed the whole thing in and headed home months ago.

He is also incredibly frustrated with the corporate structure of the New Centennial Police Service. The constant need to answer to the higher level managers is hampering his normal style and has resulted in him being reprimanded for unauthorized actions twice.

Fader's biggest problem is that he can't trust his partner. Since the incident in the refuse tunnels under the Projects, Fader is constantly looking over his shoulder to make sure that his partner is not reporting him to the management or preparing to stab him in the back to further his own career.

After the incident in the Projects, Fader has given up any pretense of quitting smoking, and is back smoking a pack a day or more. There is nothing anyone can say or do that would convince him to stop now.

Level: Veteran

Attributes: 6; STR 7, INT 8, EDU 8, EMP 4.

ed to hear it from you. So, what do you know about what's going on? And what's the story with the head in the park?"

Give the PCs a chance to explain what they have been involved in over the past couple of days. Meanwhile, Fader will be increasingly agitated, looking over his shoulder to check out the door and looking at his watch. He will be listening half-heartedly to what they have to say.

Should the PCs mention that they have felt someone or something is watching them, Fader will look puzzled. "You've been watched? Someone's obviously setting you guys up to take the fall for this, so you had better find out what the hell is going on. I don't know if I can manage to keep the heat off for very long."

"Leave the head business to me. I'll report it in and it'll get passed to the section head for Smith Park to deal with. Serves the bastard right. You guys need to find out who is setting you up and why. And quickly, before the whole of the NCC police department comes down on you like a bomb."

"I've got to get back. I've already been gone too long, and people are suspicious of me as it is. Good luck guys. Find the bastards who are setting you up."

And with that Detective Fader gets up and leaves the café.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

At this time, the PCs should feel rather shaken. The sense that they have been watched over the past few days might have more to it than they first thought, now that they have been implicated in a drug-dealing ring in the city.

As the PCs are sitting there absorbing and discussing the situation they find themselves in, have them all roll an Average: Observation test.

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If any of them succeed in their test, choose one of them as the "target" (preferably one that was not named by Fader earlier) and then read them the following (if the PC chosen is female, you will need to modify the text accordingly):

You look around, glancing at the people in the café. Most of them seem to be enjoying their meals, and chatting quietly to one another.

In the far corner, you see a young man slip something into the inside pocket of his jacket and then stand up. He shakes hands with the person he is sitting with and then quietly slips out the door onto the street.

The man's companion stands moments later and heads for the door. Before he leaves, he glances around the café. He notices you sitting in the back, and a dark expression crosses his face as he rushes out the door.

Your eyes widen as you realize someone wearing your face has just left...

The PCs have just seen one of their "doubles" sitting in the same café. Given the mess they have been dropped in by this unknown party, they will probably leave immediately and try to apprehend the mysterious person.

ON THE STREET

It is always busy in the Strip. When the PCs leave the café, the sidewalks will be crowded with people, especially if they are there after dark. They will need to make a Difficult: Observation test to spot the double racing away down the other side of the road.

The PCs will chase the double down the street and around the corner. Whoever this person is, they can walk at a quick pace without looking as though they are in a hurry to get anywhere. The PCs are going to have to push their way

Skills: As per Veteran NPC, plus Unarmed Melee 3, Small Arms (Rifle) 2, Small Arms (Pistol) 5, Lockpick 2, Stealth 2, Swimming 2, Observation 4, Psychology 1, Streetwise 2, Wheeled Vehicle 2, Willpower 2, Computer Operation 1, Business 1, Language (English) 10, Language (Spanish) 4, Interrogation 4, Leadership 2, Persuasion 2, Foreboding 3.

Initiative: 2

Normal Armament: S&W Model 29/16.5 (.44 Mag Revolver), Browning Autoriot (loaded with alternating rounds of buckshot and 12-gauge shells), Kevlar Jacket (AV:1).

Motivations: King of Hearts: The gruff exterior is only a façade. Inside, he still instinctively cares for people and can be brought around to a new way of thinking. Five of Spades: Fader is an honest, hardworking cop. He detests the concept of letting the bad guys win and he is willing to bend the law to bring them in if he has to.

SHOOTING THE FLEEING DOUBLE

If the PCs decide to pull out a firearm and shoot the escaping person, remind them they are on a crowded city street and the police already want them on other matters. If they insist on shooting at the double, let them. As soon as the gun is drawn, someone will notice and yell, "Gun!" The street will erupt in panic, with people screaming and diving out of the way. If the shot misses the target, then an innocent bystander will be hit, further adding to the chaos. If they actually manage to hit the double, then fudge the rolls so that they are not able to kill them with a single shot. As soon as the shot rings out, one of the braver people in the street will attempt to tackle the shooter to the ground and restrain them until the police arrive. If need be, enough people will hold the PCs so that none of them can escape. When the police arrive, feel free to throw the book at them and make their lives extremely difficult. Fader will disavow any knowledge of them and will refuse to help them in any way. The PCs deserve it. They did something very stupid.

through the crowds to keep up.

Slowly but surely, the PCs should be able to gain ground on the imposter. This will be easier once the imposter turns the corner and heads down a dimly lit alley. A minute or so later, the PCs should be able to round the corner themselves.

The alley goes about 25 meters in before it ends in a 3-meter tall brick wall topped with razor wire. There are no exits from the alley and the PCs are certain that the person they are chasing did not leave the alley once they went in.

Whoever they were chasing has simply vanished...

...AND INTO THE FIRE

"Drop your weapons and put your hands on top of your head," says a voice from behind you. Glancing over your shoulder, you see six men standing with submachineguns trained on you. Each of them is wearing black fatigues, a Kevlar vest and has a hands-free radio set on. Two vans block the entrance of the alleyways, and you can see four more men with an assortment of heavier weapons in the backs of the vans.

As the PCs are looking around in the alley, two unmarked Volkswagen Kartoffeln vans will pull up in the street, blocking the exit. Six men, all armed with silenced MP-7 submachineguns, take positions with their weapons drawn and pointed at the PCs. They will order that the PCs drop their weapons immediately and surrender.



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Four other men, two armed with Armalite Stormcloud shotguns, one with a M249 SAW and one with a MM-1 grenade launcher, are covering the PCs from inside the back of the vans.

If the PCs make a hostile move, the men with the SMGs will fire controlled bursts, aiming for the PCs legs, attempting to incapacitate rather than kill them. Their aim is to end the hostilities as quickly and bloodlessly as possible. Should things get out of hand, the men in the back of the vans will open fire looking to end things.

However, it is the men's intention that the PCs are taken alive. They will insist on the PCs to lay down their weapons and surrender immediately. They will not discuss the reasoning for the demands at this time. If the PCs attempt to negotiate with the group, they will be told to "shut their mouths. You'll get a chance to explain if we're feeling generous."

Once the PCs realize that they are not going to get away easily, they will be handcuffed and blindfolded, before they are put in the back of the vans. Unit 8 will split the PCs into two groups, with half in the back of each van. This is to prevent the PCs from overpowering all of the men in one van. The PCs are incapacitated; any attempt to struggle free will result in them being kicked or bashed until they settle down. Should the PCs cooperate with the men, they will not be harmed, although they will be roughly manhandled when being moved.

At this stage, it is important for the Referee to impress on the players that the PCs are at the mercy of these men. They have the PCs in a position where it is very difficult to effectively attack back with any degree of success. The men of Unit 8 all have military training, so they are all well-versed in close-quarters combat techniques and should be able to overpower the PCs should any trouble erupt in the back of the vans.

The PCs will be transported through the city for fifteen to twenty minutes. The vans will trav-

UNIT 8

Unit 8 is a group of militant Minion hunters that work in Sin City. They work with the utmost in military precision and do things entirely by the numbers. For more in-depth details, see the section on Unit 8 towards the end of the book.

Level: Elite

Skills: As per Elite NPCs, plus Small Arms (Rifle) 6, Small Arms (Pistol) 5, Heavy Weapons 5, Stealth 6, Stalking 6, Melee Combat (Armed) 4. Individual members of the squad may also have more specialized skills such as Demolitions or Lockpicking.

Normal Armament: Most members of the squad carry integrally silenced MP-7 submachineguns, while the support members carry either Armalite Stormcloud automatic shotguns or a MM-1 Grenade Launcher. All members of the squad have a Colt Krait pistol and a knife as backup weapons.

el to a location in the 'burbs," about four miles from the Square. The two vans will take different routes through the city to avoid any undue attention. The vans' drivers will maintain radio contact for the entire trip, keeping track of each other's position using radio telemetry equipment. At all times, the two vans will be no more than _ of a mile apart, so that one could respond to an emergency within 2-3 minutes.

At the end of the journey, the PCs feel the vans descend a ramp and they will hear the sound of an automated roller door closing behind them. The vans descend two levels before coming to a halt. The doors of the van will be thrown back and the PCs removed roughly and thrown to the cold concrete floor.

A MATTER OF TRUST

"Since the Dark Lords invaded, they have infiltrated all levels of society. It's impossible to know if a person you meet on the street is working for them or not. The old man begging for change on the corner might be lusting after your blood.

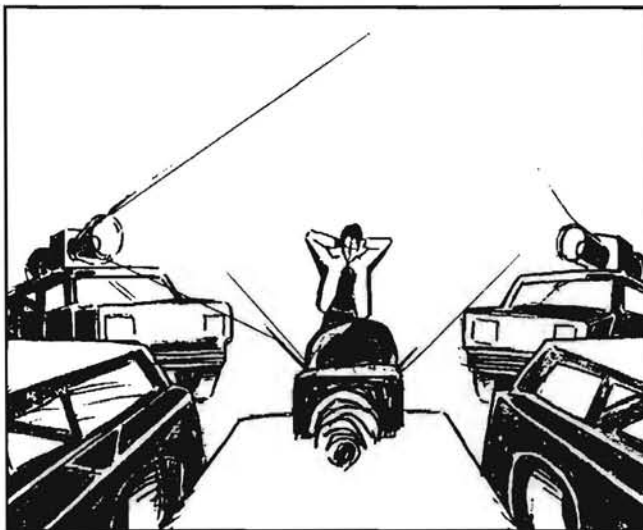
"It's far easier to trust no one, to simply assume that everyone is corrupted. But you end up driving away the very people who might be able to help you, ultimately leaving you more vulnerable to a Minion attack.

"You have to draw a line somewhere. You have to stay watchful, but you also have to give some people the benefit of the doubt.

"Damned if you do, damned if you don't."

- Zena Marley

(Early 21st century mercenary philosopher)



The men in black remove the PCs' blindfolds, but they will leave the handcuffs securely fastened. The PCs find themselves in a deserted underground car park, in the center of a circle of vehicles. All of the vehicles, mostly Hummers or 5/4-ton trucks, as well as the two vans the PCs arrived in, have their lights blazing, making things unbearably bright for the PCs.

Standing just inside the circle is a tall, well-built man. Colonel Patrick Mitchell is standing in the classic military "at ease" position, his feet a foot apart, his hands clasped behind his back. Dressed in the same black combat fatigues as the rest of the men, he still manages to look menacing, even in this resting state.

"So, you are the... individuals... who have been causing us so many problems over the past couple of weeks," he says. "There's a large part of me that wants to simply shoot the lot of you right now and be done with it, but for some peculiar reason, I can't bring myself to do it. Now, why do you think that is?"

Colonel Mitchell will demand to know what the PCs did with the missing six men from his unit. He knows the police want them for dealing in Escapee and he wants to know all about it. It is important to remember that Colonel Mitchell is a seasoned Minion hunter and has seen a lot of very strange things. He partially believes that the PCs are involved in the disappearance of his men, but there is a part of his mind that can sense that the PCs had nothing to do with it.

Several of the men in the unit are less trusting that the Colonel, and are simply interested in killing the PCs and finishing it. The unit has lost good men to the killers and most of the unit quietly believes that they are lying on the concrete floor in handcuffs. Sergeant Radcliffe in particular is in favor of simply putting a bullet through the skulls of the PCs and leaving them for the cleaners.

It is up to the PCs to convince the Colonel and his men that they had nothing to do with the disappearance of the other men. In fact, they have only just heard of the drug Escapee. This will not be an easy task, but it is possible.

One way is that the Colonel will reveal that Unit 8 had the drug dealers under surveillance for an hour before they apprehended the PCs. During at least part of this time, the PCs were still in the

COLONEL PATRICK MITCHELL

Patrick Mitchell is a tall man, at 1.87m. Despite being in his late forties, he is extremely fit and works hard to maintain himself in fighting form. His once black hair is graying quite dramatically now, but this only enhances his distinguished look. His gray eyes also seem to burn with a passion. Mitchell was once a US Marine Special Forces soldier. His career in the military was a distinguished one, with him seeing action in the Middle East in Operation Desert Storm, as well as missions in the Balkans around the turn of the century. He planned to continue as a career soldier, but the collapse of the US Government and the downsizing of the armed forces ended his career.

Mitchell instead became a mercenary, working covertly for government agencies and large corporations. This was how he ended up in Columbia intercepting drug shipments and fighting to save his life when his unit was attacked by a Dimensional Hunter.

After recovering from the attack, Mitchell formed Unit 8. The group travels to loca-

tions around the world where there seems to be a high level of Minion activity in an attempt to stamp it out. This was how they ended up in New Centennial City.

Level: Elite

Attributes: 6; AGL 8, CON 9, CHA 8.

Skills: As per Elite NPC, plus Demolitions 2, Heavy Weapons 4, Interrogation 6, Language (Spanish) 8, Leadership 8, Luck 4, Melee Combat (Armed) 7, Melee Combat (Unarmed) 6, Navigation 4, Observation 6, Parachute 6, Persuasion 3, Small Arms (Rifle) 9, Small Arms (Pistol) 5, Stalking 6, Stealth 6, Thrown Weapon 6, Tracking 6, Vehicle Use (Wheeled) 4, Willpower 6.

Initiative: 6

Motivation: Ace of Clubs: Mitchell has been fighting in combat for close to twenty years and he has seen action that would turn most people's hair white. Having faced Minions as nasty as a Dimensional Hunter, he knows that he can beat anything, and he instills that confidence in his men. 7 of Clubs: Mitchell has been a warrior all his life; using military action to solve problems is the way he normally tends to approach things.

park finding the severed head of James Fraser. If need be, Colonel Mitchell can send two of his men to Smith Park to verify that the PCs were in fact there and they did in fact find the severed head. The men sent to the park will be able to speak to the gangers that spoke to the PCs and be able to put them there at the time the doubles were under surveillance. The men should be able to visit Smith Park and return within an hour.

If the PCs can come up with another way of convincing Colonel Mitchell that they are telling the truth, let them. It is possible that they could get Detective Fader to back their side of the story. Fader can be discretely questioned by the Unit's trusted contacts without the members of the unit ever having to meet him in person.

Another way would be for the PCs to submit to a probing of their subconscious mind by Daniel Smith, Unit 8's mystic empath. If one or more of PCs submit to this, it is a chance to role-play the sensation of another person entering the subconscious mind of the PC to look around for the truth. It provides an opportunity for the Referee to force the player to look at some of the negative aspects of their character and possibly do something about them. For further details on a mystic's ability to enter and probe a subconscious mind, refer to the Dark Conspiracy 2nd Edition Player's Handbook Master Edition, P149.

The purpose of this section is to turn a possible enemy into an ally. The PCs and the members of Unit 8 are effectively on the same side, so there is something to be gained by both sides if they cooperate. However, to make the scene as dramatic as possible, do not let the PCs convince Colonel Mitchell and Unit 8 easily. Have them constantly under the threat of summary execution, which is what the Colonel plans to do should the PCs be the ones responsible for the deaths of his men. Only at the last possible moment should the PCs be freed from the blame and accepted as potential allies of the Unit.

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A TANGLED WEB

"Help can come from the strangest places. Be thankful and accept it. It's not everyday you get a lucky break."

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

Shortly after Unit 8 has accepted the PCs, the roller door at the top of the car park will rumble open and a single car will drive down. A red Mazda Firefly convertible will pull up and the driver and his passenger will get out.

Kyle Lachlan is the young man driving the car. Lachlan looks at the PCs and winks. He turns and looks at Colonel Mitchell. "So these aren't the droids you're looking for, eh?" he says with a smile.

His passenger is an older man in his early 50s. After a few seconds, the PCs should recognize the older man as Terrence Bryant, the Mayor of New Centennial City.

Lachlan will introduce himself to the PCs and he will then introduce them to the Mayor. Bryant will be interested in hearing what has been happening to the PCs. He is very concerned about the serious incidents that have started happening in the city of late, and he will express his regrets that the PCs have been caught up in the mess with the drug accusations.

"We all know that the police in this city are powerless," says Bryant. "I know that I may be a corporate representative on the city council, but I also have a duty to the people of this city; that goes beyond loyalties to the Trade Council. I'm glad that there are people like you who are willing to step in and help others."

Bryant will ask the PCs and Colonel Mitchell if they have uncovered any news on the source of the drug supply in the city. The Mayor will ask

THE PROBLEMS OF UNIT 8

Over the past three weeks or so, Unit 8 has been investigating some strange psychic phenomenon. About twenty-seven people in the past month have begun to experience "unexplained metaphysical phenomena." In some cases, these people have been responsible for brutal psychic attacks on innocent people who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Unit 8 learned of these cases and because of the apparent risk in approaching some of the victims, they volunteered to investigate in order to see what was behind the actions. They have a large amount of experience in cases of a similar nature and quite often, they have discovered and eradicated a Dark Minion plot.

The victims all seemed to be suffering from a rash of poltergeist activity, as well as being "haunted" by creatures from their imaginations; several of them reported seeing dragons or unicorns. In at least one case, the victim was killed when he was hit by a bus while running from an unidentified creature that allegedly resembled a cross between a "large dog and a crocodile,"

that stood about five feet high at the shoulder. The case may have been dismissed as the witness being under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs, had the sighting not been simultaneously reported by seven different people, several of which had not been under the influence of any drug at all.

Their investigation in this case was not able to initially determine the origin of the attacks as all of the people involved did not seem to have any common link in their backgrounds apart from they all worked for the corporations. However, after Unit 8 successfully "retrieved" several of the victims, they learned that all of them had taken a new drug available in the Strip. Known as "Escapee," the drug brought on intense inner journeys that were reported to have been incredibly real. Interviews with several of the victims provided descriptions of the drug dealers, which coincidentally happen to match the PCs' description.

Tracking down the source of the drug became the number one priority of the unit. They had started to make some inroads into the investigation, when two of the mem-

the PCs if they would be willing to join the hunt for the source. "The police force is out looking for you, because they think that you are responsible. They're not looking for the real source."

If the PCs mention the incident with James Fraser, Kyle Lachlan's eyes will narrow. "Fraser? Fraser? Where have I heard that name before"? He will then reach into the back of his car and pull out a laptop computer. Once it has booted, he will search through some information for a few seconds.

"How did you find him?" he'll ask. "Fraser is one of the missing corporates that no one has seen for a few days."

He will then go on to explain that there have been a series of short disappearances among the corporate ranks. Most of these people come back to work after a couple of days, complaining of suffering from the virus that is sweeping through the city. However, there were small differences in the behavior of these people and they had forgotten things that they had been working on. Some people had reported these symptoms after contracting the virus, but not to the degree that the missing people had.

These people had all reported into work saying they would not be coming for a couple of days. However, Lachlan has contacted the families of the people concerned posing as a corporate health worker, inquiring after the health of the individual. In nearly all of the strange cases, the families reported that the missing person had rung home and told them that they had been admitted to a special corporate health clinic so that the virulent disease could be stopped.

The other interesting thing about all of these people is that while they have been working for different sections in different corporations, all of them have been working in areas that don't seem to officially exist. None of the families seem to know exactly what it is that these people actually do for the corporations.

"There's something about this story that doesn't sit right," says Mayor Bryant. "Could this sort of thing be due to Minion activity? I've been lucky enough to avoid them personally, but I need to know if they pose any sort of threat to the city."

Mitchell will explain that the drug Escapée is having some strange effects on its users. Many of them have been suffering from hallucinations. Some have gone far beyond the victim's mind and started to manifest in the physical world. "We're convinced that this must be Minion sourced, somewhere along the line. All we need to do is find out where it's coming from."

Lachlan will indicate the PCs. "They guys should be able to help us. God knows they have a personal stake in it. Unless they find the source, then they'll be hunted by the cops until they get caught."

Bryant will agree. "You people have a slight advantage at the moment. The dealers are somehow disguising themselves as you, so perhaps you can reverse the process and surprise them enough to take them out."

Mitchell, Bryant and Lachlan will all try to convince the PCs that this is their best course of action. Unit 8 has something they need to do, and they feel that the PCs tagging along will hamper their normal operating style. To alleviate the strain for Unit 8, Lachlan suggests that he take them to meet some of the victims of the drug, who are being treated by the Hewson Twins.

As the conversation is taking place, Mayor Bryant will wince as though he is in pain, and will run his temples. Kyle Lachlan and Daniel Smith, Unit 8's empath, will both do something similar.

bers of Unit 8 disappeared. They had reported that they had spotted a dealer and they were following him to find out where he would head after the deal. They were never heard from again.

The rest of the unit scrambled a search party, who followed the tracking beacon one of the men had been carrying to a warehouse on the Docks. All they found was an arm from the elbow up reaching up out of the concrete floor. It was almost as if his body had been cast into the concrete slab. The tracking device was still attached to the man's wrist and functioning perfectly. When the others tried to retrieve the body, they found that the just below the surface of the concrete, the arm seemed to become part of the floor. The rest of the body was not found, despite extensive excavations.

Since that time, four other members of the unit have disappeared under similar mysterious circumstances. Each time, they have reported sighting a suspected dealer and shortly afterwards, they have vanished. No trace of them was found at all.

Colonel Mitchell was extremely concerned about the loss of six well-trained men. He ordered that they

were to continue the search for the source of the drug, but under no circumstances were any members of the group to pursue a suspect unless the rest of the squad was with them.

The unit's lucky break came today when a contact within the NCC Police informed them that the police were looking for some suspects in relation with the same case. It just happened that Unit 8 found the PCs first.



KYLE LACHLAN

Kyle Lachlan is a young man, in his early twenties. He is quite good-looking and tends to dress in stylish business suits. His brown hair is styled neatly, and he wears a pair of classy gold rimmed glasses, which only helps to accentuate his sparkling blue eyes. His face is constantly split by a beaming smile and he is always ready with a joke or a laugh.

Lachlan discovered his gift with computers at an early age. He constantly amazed his parents, who simply thought he was naturally talented. While he certainly fitted into that mould, his gift was far more complex; he could hear the computer "thinking" and could read those "thoughts." It was while he was attending university that he first encountered the empathic underground. One of his lecturers sensed his talent and quietly approached him. Professor Dagarty became Lachlan's mentor and initiated him into an underground cell of computer empaths. The Netwatchers use their skills to track the Dark Minions' machinations through the vast expanses of the world's computer networks.

To Lachlan, hunting Dark Minions is one gigantic game. No matter how hard they try to hide their trails, he can still find them. His positive attitude and quick sense of humor let him carry on his paper chases when most others would have given up long ago. But his deep hatred of what they are doing to people keeps driving him forward.

Lachlan is currently working as a contractor for the Pegasus Products and had managed to find a way to get some information out of SecureNet, the communications network shared by the corporations in the Citadel. Consequently, he has found himself able to access quite a lot of confidential material.

Level: Experienced

Attributes: 6; EMP 5

Skills: As per Experienced NPC, plus Computer Operation 9, Computer Empathy 8, Electronic 4, Luck 5, Observation 7.

Initiative : 2

Motivation: Ace of Spades: Unlike a lot of computer people, Lachlan is

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extremely charismatic. He is always ready with a quick joke and will do everything to make other people smile and feel comfortable. 8 of Hearts: Lachlan always looks for the best in others, but he despises what the Dark Minions are doing to the hearts and minds of people, so he is devoted to stamping out their operations by exposing them.

If any of the PCs are empathic (EMP 1+), have them make an Average: Observation check. If they are successful, they will pick up a throbbing inside their minds, similar to a low frequency bass signal heard from a long distance. The sensation will be quite intense, and bordering on being painful.

If any of the PCs ask what is wrong, those affected by the throbbing will ask them if they hear it. Colonel Mitchell is quite interested in it, although he cannot hear it himself.

THAT SINKING FEELING

If any of the characters have the Foreboding skill, have them make a Difficult: Foreboding check. If they are successful read them the following:

You see a luxurious room, paneled in expensive timbers. You are crouched, hiding in the corner of the room, huddled against the bed. The throbbing is intense, so intense you think your brain is about to burst.

You look at your assistant, who smiles maliciously at you. He slides the door open and five men enter. Four have flowing black hair and are all brandishing wicked looking knives. One is shorter, with dark, closely cropped black hair. The other is blond, with a short moustache and goatee.

One of them grabs you by the hair and throws you across the room. The new arrivals laugh evilly and approach you with a look of pure hatred on their faces.

As everyone is recovering, Lachlan's cellular



**MAYOR
TERRANCE BRYANT**

Terrance Bryant is an intense man in his early 50's. His graying hair is receding slightly, but he styles it to always make him look dignified. He wears a stylish pair of glasses and is always dressed in expensive suits. Bryant was an up-and-coming corporate executive before becoming Mayor of New Centennial City. He carved himself a reputation of being a "hatchetman". He took on management positions and found ways to streamline the operation of the sections. He ruthlessly purged deadwood from the organizations and made sure that everyone was pulling their weight. This got him

noticed by the Trade Council and when they had a spare seat on the City Council, they offered it to Bryant. He took it, looking forward to getting a chance to reform a whole city. The sheer number of votes that the Trade Council held guaranteed Bryant's election to the Mayor's position, which he has held for the past twelve months. He has since developed a real sense of civic duty, often making deciding votes in the best interests of New Centennial City, at times these decisions were against the Corporations that enabled him to be elected.

Level: Experienced

Attributes: 6, CHR 9, EMP 2

Skills: As per Experienced NPC, plus Bargain 6, Business 7, Human Empathy 3, Luck 5, Observation 6, Persuasion 8, Willpower 7.

Initiative: 2

Motivation: Queen of Spades: Bryant didn't get his reputation as a hatchetman for nothing. He is a very ambitious man, and he lets nothing stand in the way of his goals. 9 of Spades: Bryant is a master of getting other people to do what he wants. It's one of the reasons he was such a good manager and has become a good politician.

phone will ring. "Hello?" he says. "Yeah, we felt it as well. I have no idea what it was. What? Another one? OK, hang on." He looks at the assembled group. "It's Powell from the Twins. They've got reports of a woman who looks as though she's just taken some Escapee. All sorts of weird stuff." He looks at the PCs, "You guys up to taking a look?" he will ask.

If they object, Colonel Mitchell will point out that this is the perfect opportunity for the PCs to see firsthand the effects of the drug that they have been accused of selling. It will also give them a chance to meet the Hewson Twins cell and possibly learn something about the source of the drug.

Sergeant Radcliffe will interject at this point, holding a secure radio handset to the Colonel. "Mitchell. Where? OK, stand fast. We'll be over shortly." He hands the handset back to Radcliffe.

"Our scouts have got a rough location on the source of that signal. We'll leave you with one of the vans, seeing as you are currently without your own transportation," he says to the PCs. "You go and see if you can track down this woman and make sure she gets to the Twins before she gets into trouble.

Bryant looks at the PCs, "I'll leave my car here and go with you. We need to leave immediately, before it is too late." Mitchell, can you give the Mayor a lift back to where he needs to be?"

Mitchell nods. "OK people, mount up. We've all got work to do."

Mayor Bryant will shake the PCs by the hand. "I'm pleased to see you involved in this. It's good to know you're on the right side. I look forward to seeing you again. I'm sure that should happen before too much longer."

AN OVERACTIVE IMAGINATION

"We've just received reports of a gang attack on a Tashicorp supply truck heading to the cor-

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poration's welfare complex in the Projects. Details are sketchy at this time, but reports from our helicopter overhead reports seeing the flashes of automatic fire and the scattered bodies of the security forces assigned to protect the truck.

"It is not known what has sparked the increase in intensity of the gang's attacks, but a violent reprisal from Tashicorp's security forces could now well be on the cards."

- Radio Broadcast on Centennial FM

"Some belief systems hold that reality is just a manifestations of the thoughts and beliefs held by the human mind; everything is just a dream.

"If that's the case, then there are some seriously sick people around."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

"I really have no idea what to expect with this woman," says Lachlan as you are driving along. "Each person manifests their fears in a different way. It's like the drug takes whatever you fear the most and magnifies it a thousand-fold, until your mind has no choice but to bring that fear into reality.

"If we're lucky, we can get to her before her fear kills her. There's still a chance that we can save this poor woman."

The PCs' journey will take them into the center of the Expansion, the playground of the up-and-coming corporate types. All of the buildings in the Expansion are newer and more luxurious than any others in New Centennial City, with the exception of the Citadel. Expensive cars line the streets, a testament to the sheer amount of disposable income that resides in the area.

Lachlan will spot a Chrysler Conestoga Pickup parked just up from an intersection and he will tell the PCs to pull over. As soon as the van stops, Lachlan leaps out and walks up to the dri-

VANESSA POWELL

Vanessa Powell used to be an emergency ward nurse until the pain and suffering that she could sense in the patients became too much for her. She suffered a nervous breakdown and lived on the streets for a while.

Her life became increasingly self-destructive as she continued to battle with the imminent breakthrough of her empathic talent. Had it not been for a chance meeting with Aiwen Hewson, there is a good chance that she may have killed herself. Instead, Aiwen taught her to use her talent, not for personal gain, but to heal others in a similar situation as herself. Vanessa's training as a nurse already stood her in good stead in this regard. However, once she learned some of the fundamentals of empathic healing, Vanessa knew she had found her life's calling.

Level: Experienced

Attributes: 6, EMP 4

Skills: As per Experienced NPC, plus Empathic Healing 2, Foreboding 4, Human Empathy 5, Medical 2, Observation 3, Psychology 2, Willpower 4, Willpower Drain 2.

Initiative: 2

Motivation: 7 of Hearts:

Powell believes in the ideals of the "Hewson Twins" cell and is willing to work hard to help in their healing mission. 3 of Hearts: She is also a very friendly person, willing to talk and listen to anyone, especially people who are in need of a shoulder to lean on.

ver's side of the truck. He talks briefly with the driver, who then gets out and walks back to the van with Lachlan.

As they approach, the PCs can see that the second person is a young woman, who appears to be in her early 30s. She is plain looking, with coppery hair, which is tied back in a severe bun at the nape of her neck. She is wearing a pair of blue jeans and a leather jacket, which has a suspicious looking bulge under her left arm.

Lachlan slides the side door of the van open and the pair of them get into the back. "Guys," he says, "this is Vanessa Powell. She's a member of the Hewson Twins and has been out here looking for this woman. So far, there's been no sign of her."

"She's around here somewhere though," says Vanessa. "There's a strange feeling around this part of the neighborhood. The only other time I have felt it is when Colonel Mitchell and his men brought in a young guy last week. He had been chased by a giant spider apparently, about ten feet across."

Any empaths in the group should make a Difficult: Empathy check. If they succeed, they can sense the feeling that Vanessa is talking about; a heaviness rests on their minds. Any PCs sensing it will begin to feel slightly anxious and depressed, without any real reason. It is not the sort of feeling one would normally get in a place like this.

As this is taking place, a car will skid around the corner and slam into a light pole across the road from where the van is parked. The car, a BMW 1700xhi is bent almost in half, a testament to the speed it was travelling at. Its airbags will deploy and the horn will go off. Lachlan and Powell with both leap out of the car and run across the road to see if they can be of assistance. "Come on, this poor bastard looks as though he's in some serious trouble," Lachlan will call to the PCs.

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The driver of the car is a young man. He is well dressed, and it appears as though he is just coming home from work. He is slumped over the now deflated airbag, bleeding profusely from a cut to the head. The PCs should have a hard time freeing this man, as he is wedged into his seat by the dashboard. He is also suffering from a number of broken bones, some of which have broken through the skin, making the PCs job all that much more difficult.

Let the PCs concentrate on freeing the man for a few moments. His condition is serious and he is in need of some urgent medical attention. If the man is not stabilized immediately, there is a strong chance he will die. Try to impress this sense of urgency on the players.

As they are working to save this man's life, a snake will suddenly slither out of his shirt. It is a large taipan, one of the most venomous snakes known to man. Within seconds, the car is simply alive with poisonous snakes that seem to be coming out of every opening in the car. As far as the PCs can tell, the snakes are real, and should one of them be bitten, they will suffer the normal penalties of such a bite. Use the rules for poison on P132 of the Dark Conspiracy Basic Edition Player's Handbook or P200 of the Master Edition. Any PCs working on the man should make a Fear check or suffer the usual penalties associated with failure.

If any of the PCs happen to be not actively participating on what is going on inside the BMW, then they will hear a woman in her late thirties run past the wreckage and down the street. She is constantly looking over her shoulder and screaming "Get away from me! Get away from me!" As she runs along, snakes start appearing out of drains and from underneath parked cars. Most of them are extremely large cobras or asps and they seem to be chasing the woman as she runs down the street. As she runs past, any PCs who sensed the feeling of heaviness while in the van will notice a marked increase in the feeling while the woman is in sight.

The PCs are actually looking for this woman. She has taken a large quantity of Escapade and is now suffering from the effects of the drug. Consequently, she has started to create the thing that she fears the most - snakes. Anyone in close



proximity to her will also experience the effects of the manifestation.

The only way to stop the snakes from appearing is to knock the woman unconscious. This will stop the conscious part of her imagination from thinking about snakes and they will simply vanish. If a snake has bitten one of the PCs, then the effects of the poison will vanish shortly after the woman is incapacitated.

If the PCs cannot figure out what to do for themselves, then Vanessa Powell will yell, "Stop her! She's the one we're looking for!" as she continues trying to help the man in the car.

The noise from the car accident and the sudden appearance of hundreds of venomous snakes in the neighborhood will result in the police and paramedics appearing on the scene to investigate. One of the residents who lives in a nearby apartment has been bitten and called in the paramedics to help. This has also summoned the police to investigate.

This is a good time to remind the PCs that they are still wanted by the New Centennial Police Service. If the PCs are still on the scene when the police arrive, give the cops a couple of minutes to realize who they are talking to and then have them react accordingly.

The trick at this stage is to increase the pressure on the PCs, while not making it impossible for them to get away. With all the activity in the street, a group of bystanders will be watching the PCs with some interest, so should the PCs look like they are kidnapping the woman, then they will report the actions to the police. In turn, the police will add abduction to the list of crimes they want the PCs for.

If the PCs try to make a getaway once the police have identified them, then the police will give chase. However, it is important to remember that the police will not chase them more than a couple of blocks. However, the police will note the registration details of the vehicles the PCs escape in, and this information will be added to the APB as well.

HEALING HANDS

"The effect a Dark Minion can have on a person's psyche is quite devastating. Without help, the emotional scars may never heal and this can greatly increase the chance of coming under their influence later."

"While it is important to halt the influence of the Dark Minions, it is more important to heal the mental and emotion trauma of the victims, so they may in turn use what they have experienced and learned to assist in stopping the spread of the darkness."

"Unfortunately most of the groups opposing the Dark Minions forget this."

*-Aiwen Hewson
(Empathic Healer)*

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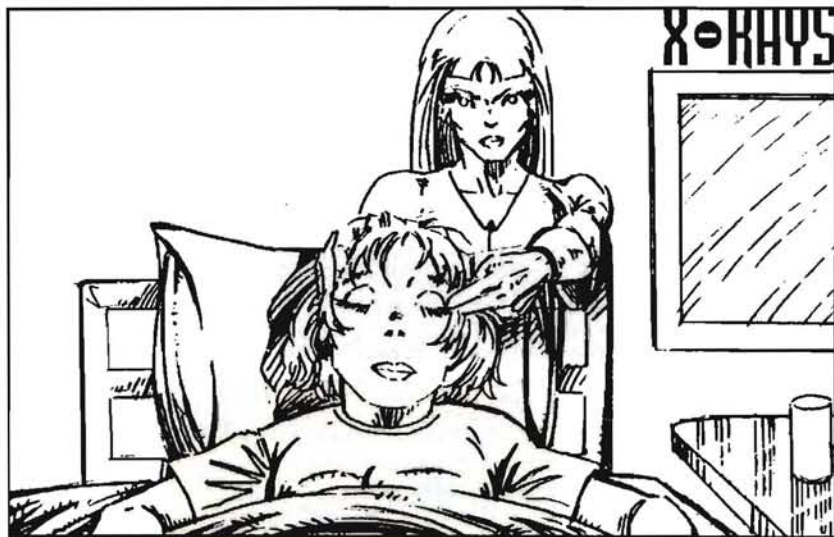
Lachlan and Powell guide the PCs to an apartment building just off Hillside Drive, close to the corner of Oak Street. The neighborhood, while still better than many in New Centennial City, is no where near the levels of luxury of the Expansion. Most of the buildings are unpainted concrete, which gives the area a cold, stark feel. Many of the apartment buildings have been covered in some form of graffiti, which helps break up the featureless expanses of concrete, if nothing else.

Powell will guide the van into the car park beneath a large multi-story apartment building. At the moment, the car park is reasonably full; most of the cars are fairly plain makes. There are a few newer cars spread throughout the building, but they are rare.

Powell will indicate an elevator to stop near. Give the PCs a chance to grab their equipment before Powell leads them up to the seventh floor. The woman they have been looking for will moan slightly as they are moving her, but she will remain unconscious.

When the elevator stops at the seventh floor, the doors will open to reveal an empty corridor leading past the front of the elevator. As the PCs step out of the car, they will immediately feel a sense of peace wash over them. Any troubled thoughts they may have been having will vanish and their bodies will begin to relax. Even the woman they are carrying will relax, her body going limp and her face easing to the point where she has a vague smile.

Kyle Lachlan breaks into a wide grin. "I love coming here," he says. "It always helps remind me what life is all about." Vanessa Powell will smile quietly and then lead the way down the passage to apartment 7D.



AIWEN HEWSON

Aiwen stands quite tall at 1.75 m and has long, strawberry blonde hair that she normally wears in a braid down her back to keep it out of the way. She is exceptionally beautiful; this however is more than simply just physical beauty. Aiwen burns with a deep love of mankind. It shows in her brilliantly blue eyes and this only adds to her beauty.

One of the quietly famous Hewson Twins, Aiwen is an extraordinary empathic healer. Together with her identical twin sister, Arienella, they formed the initial group of healers that bear their name.

Some of the people she has helped have described her as an angel. She prefers to think that she is perhaps helping the angels with their work.

Level: Experienced

Attributes: INT 8, EDU 9, CHR 8, EMP 7

Skills: As per Experienced NPC, plus Aura Reading 5, Empathic Healing 9, Foreboding 4, Human Empathy 8, Leadership 5, Medical 2, Observation 4, Psychology 6, Project Thought 8, Project

As the characters approach the door, it will open to reveal a beautiful young woman, her long blonde braided loosely down her back. The woman will smile gently at the PCs, then stand aside to let them bring the unconscious woman into the apartment.

Instead of living quarters, the apartment is furnished almost completely with timber framed beds. Four of them are placed against the walls of the living room, and the PCs can see more in what would have been the dining room through the doorway at the other end of the room. Currently, none of them seem to be occupied. Soft lighting and music combine with the subtle fragrances of incense sticks to increase the sense of peace that the characters experienced as they stepped out of the elevator car. Stretches of softly colored silk have been draped carefully from the ceiling of the room; they only seem to add to the tranquility of the place.

"Please come this way," says the blonde woman. She leads the PCs down a short hallway and shows them into a small bedroom, decorated in much the same way as the rest of the apartment. She indicates that the PCs should place the woman on the bed, as she adds a few drops of oil to the water in an oil burner and then lights the candle underneath. She bows her head for a few seconds before turning to the PCs.

"Thank you for finding this woman and bringing her here," she says. "We think that you found her and brought her here before the drug has done irreparable damage to her mind. With love and care, we should be able to undo what has been done." She pauses briefly, closes her eyes and places her hand on the unconscious woman's forehead.

"I must get to work quickly. I can feel her mind already starting to slip away." Vanessa, if you would be so kind, please take our visitors to see Carlos. I believe he is in the relaxation room at the moment." She turns to the PCs. "Please forgive my inability to explain things to you at present. For

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now, I must bid you all adieu and help this woman. Please go with Vanessa. She will make you feel at home, and introduce you to Carlos. He will be able to answer and questions you may have."

Vanessa will quickly usher the PCs and Lachlan from the room and close the door softly behind her. "You'll have to excuse Aiwen. If you were to meet her under more favorable circumstances, she would be far more hospitable. But when she has someone to care for, she burns with a passion that leaves little room for anything else. Please, come. We'll go somewhere we can talk and explain things a little better."

She leads the way out of the apartment and down the hall to apartment 7G. She knocks softly on the door twice. Seconds later, the door opens to reveal a well-tanned man. "Vanessa!" he says, giving her a hug. "I'm so glad you're here." He looks beyond her and sees the PCs and Lachlan. "Kyle, it's so good to see you again. My friend, please come in." He will greet each of the others in turn by their names, without having to ask them.

Apartment 7G looks much more like a normal apartment than the one you were just in. It is decorated in a similar fashion to the other one, but instead of beds, there are the usual sorts of furnishings; chairs, tables and a large collection of large, colorful cushions spread over the living room floor. Bird song is playing on top of soft ambient music, coming from unseen speakers.

"Please, make yourselves feel at home. My name is Carlos Monteiro. I'm one of the healers here. Can I get you anything? Tea, Coffee, water?"

CARLOS MONTEIRO

Carlos Monteiro is a man in his early forties. He stands about 1.67m tall and is in remarkably good shape physically. His black hair is starting

Emotion 7, Willpower 8, Willpower Drain 6.

Initiative: 2

Motivation: Queen of Hearts: Aiwen loves people. Everything she does, she does so that her giving may bless others and enrich their lives. For her this is as natural as breathing. Her love of the innate goodness of the human spirit is what continues to drive her to continue healing those who have been touched by the darkness. Ace of Spades: She is an extremely charismatic leader, but in a quiet, gentle way. People who spend time with her recognize the sense of inner strength that she has, and are willing to help her in any way that they can.

to turn gray, mainly at the temples but his deep brown eyes burn with the intensity of a child's. His skin is perpetually tanned, a legacy of his Latin American heritage.

Monteiro once used to ride with a motorcycle gang in the Outlaw. He was one of the most vicious and sadistic men in the gang. He thought nothing of killing travelers simply for any food they might be carrying.

All that changed when he chased what he thought was a pair of rich kids into an overgrown village. He found himself in a different world; he had inadvertently entered another dimension through a patch of demonground. The rich kids he thought he had been chasing were in fact Dark Elves and he spent the next year in hell. He was captured and used as a slave of the Dark Elves in one of their home dimensions.

In that year, he suffered immense physical, emotional and psychological pain at the hands of his captors. There were times he thought he was going to die. It was only the love of another slave, Mei Ling, that managed to keep him going. She taught him that no matter how difficult the circumstances, keeping love in his heart will make all the other troubles seem small.

When the chance came to escape, they took it. Unfortunately, Mei Ling was killed when the Dark Elves learned of the escape and came after them. She managed to keep the Dark Elves at bay long enough for Carlos to get back through a dimensional portal.

Since then, Carlos has dedicated himself to using his talents for good. When he met the Hewson Twins, he immediately joined with them to offer whatever assistance he can. He is still learning the healing arts, but he spends most of his time making sure that the center is looked after.

It is important to note that while Carlos has combat related skills, he will not use them, because he now knows of the dangerous effect it has on him.

Level: Veteran

Attributes: 6, STR 7, EMP 2

Skills: As per Veteran NPC, plus Bargain 3, Empathic Healing 1, Human Empathy 4, Melee Combat (Armed) 5, Observation 4, Small Arms (Rifle) 4, Willpower 8.

Initiative: 3

Motivation: 10 of Hearts: Carlos is fanatically devoted to the cell, mainly because he sees his helping them as a way of repaying the debt that he owes Mei Ling. He is now a gentle caring man, a far cry from his days as a biker. Queen of Clubs: His time as a Dark Elf slave has made Carlos incredibly stubborn in some areas. Once he sets his mind to a task, he is almost unstoppable.

After getting the PCs some refreshments, Carlos will settle down cross-legged on one of the large cushions and begin to explain what is going on.

"People have taken to calling our group the 'Hewson Twins' after our leaders, Aiwen and Arianella. They are the core members of our 'family', but they are by no means the only healers here.

"All of us have, at some point, run afoul of the Dark Minions. It is our experiences and the pain that we were forced to go through which has brought us together here, in this place, to help make a difference.

"The sole purpose of our 'family' is to heal the psyches of those people who have encountered the forces of darkness. Some would think it a thankless task, but for us, it is a task given to us from heaven itself. There is nothing more important to any of us than to undo some of the corruption that is rampant in the world today.

"That is why we have this facility here. We have bought all eight apartments on this floor, and have fitted most of the rooms as healing rooms. At times, it is practically empty. Other times, there is barely room to move. But the most important thing about this place is that there is a solid sense of peace and love, no matter where you are on the floor. You probably noticed this when you stepped out of the elevator. For most people, simply coming here and experiencing it for themselves is enough to begin their healing journey. Others need more help.

"We have no warriors here. There are others who have that calling, you included. No, ours is a role of healing and love. Some call it the path of the adventurer, wandering through life's journey helping to increase the level of harmony in people's lives. The warriors bring victims to us, and we will help them recover from the anguish they have been subjected to. Then we enlist their aid in the cause to reduce the influence of the Dark Lords.

"There are about fifteen of us who work here. You have met Aiwen and Vanessa. Apart from me, most of the rest are sleeping, either in this apartment, or next door. There are a couple of healers who are working with our patients right now. We've got about 30 people in at present. We don't like to think of them as patients, but there really isn't a better term. Some of them are nearly ready to face the world again. Some have a lot further to go. Recently, we have begun to sense a shifting in the city. There is something afoot, but as yet, we have not been able to determine what is going on. All we know is that there is a new drug being sold on the streets of New Centennial. Some clown gave it the name of 'Escapee,' which is about as far from the reality of it as you can get.

"We have had a few victims in. Colonel Mitchell and Unit 8 have brought in most of them. I believe that you met the Colonel. I spoke with Daniel Smith earlier and he told me about you. Daniel is a good man, and would have made a fine healer if his heart were not that of a warrior.

"On top of that, there was the strange empathic signal earlier this evening. I don't know if you sensed it, but the signal was quite strong here. We are not sure what it means, although from the feeling of it, I sense that it does not bode well. We will all need to be vigilant, so that we can find out what is going on and put a stop to it as quickly as possible."

Carlos pauses for a moment, then takes a sip of his drink. *"Daniel has told us of the misunderstanding you found yourself in. It would appear that you have attracted the attention of some rather powerful enemies. It would seem in your best*

interests to get to the bottom of whatever plot you found yourselves involved in as quickly as possible. If nothing else, you need to find a way to stop the police from searching for you. Despite their inept management structure, they will catch up with you at some point."

"We will quite happily pass on any information that we learn. In the course of the healing process, people will reveal the strangest things, sometimes things they were not even aware of. We have been lucky like that; the information we have gathered has helped stopped many a Dark plot."

The door to the apartment opens quietly and Aiwen Hewson steps in, closing the door behind her. Carlos gets up and has a quiet word with her, before turning back to the PCs.

"It would seem that we would ask for your help one more time," he says. "The woman you brought in, Caroline Hedeon, has been using Escapee. Aiwen has just learned that her husband had been using it as well. We had not heard of him, so he must still be at their residence. We need you to go to his house and find this man, as quickly as possible. It may already be too late for him, but there is still a slim chance that you might be able to make it there in time to rescue him and bring him here so that we can help him in the same way as we helped his wife."

Aiwen will look at the PCs. *"You have already shown that you are caring people," she says softly. "You would not have brought this woman to us if you were not. You have also seen the effects of the drug. If the victim is not treated, then the effects can be much, much worse. There comes a point where the effects of the drug have become so ingrained in that person's mind that any attempts to heal them can be fatal. Unfortunately, so are the effects of the drug. They end up dying of fright, killed by their own inner demons."*

"This is why we need you to find Caroline's husband. We cannot simply sit idle while people are dying from things that we could have prevented had we acted sooner. The more people we can save from this insidious curse, the more likely we are to discover the source of it and allow people like you to shut it down permanently."

"So, please, will you help us? Will you go and find this man and bring him back here so that we can help him"?

LAYING IT ON THE LINE

"There comes a time when all of us have to stop feeling sorry for ourselves and stand up and take action. That's why they call us Minion Hunters."

"It's impossible to hunt if you're sitting there wishing the whole thing would just go away."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

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Andrew and Caroline Hedeon live in one of the more opulent areas of the Expansion. They have a large three-story townhouse that many who live in Sin City would consider to be a mansion. It is situated on Chandler Avenue, not far from the Citadel. The house is actually about 15 blocks from where the PCs found Caroline a couple of hours ago.

By the time the PCs arrive at the house, it will be dark and silent. From the street, it appears as though no lights are on anywhere in the house. The only noise is coming from the traffic that continues to cruise along the Expressway a couple of blocks away.

GETTING INSIDE

How the PCs manage to get inside the house will depend on how resourceful they are. The house itself is locked up, with deadlocks on all the doors and windows. Getting one of these locks open is a Formidable: Lockpicking task.

There is a garage on the right side of the house that has a large roller door. The lock on the door is an electronic one, normally opened using a small remote control unit. There does not seem to be any sort of key mechanism. Finding a way to get this door open is an Impossible: Lockpicking, or a Difficult: Electronics task.

On the roof of the house, there is a large glass skylight. While this is locked, it is three floors above the ground and the locks on this skylight are less secure than the ones on the doors and windows downstairs, mainly because it is so much more difficult to get to. Should the characters manage to get up to the roof, getting the skylight open is only a Difficult: Lockpicking task.

WHO IS ANDREW HEDEON?

Should anyone bother to check with anyone, such as Kyle Lachlan, Andrew Hedeon works for the MedAdmin Corporation, although his position is currently listed as "unattached." He had been a senior executive in the Operations division until about a month ago, reporting directly to the Board of Directors. A month ago, it appears he was quietly pulled out of the section and given a new assignment. Lachlan (or whoever the PCs contact to get the information) will not be able to provide more details than that.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

The house itself is tastefully decorated, in an understated sort of fashion. Most of the décor is predominately black and white, down to the black-and-white check floor in the main entry foyer. A number of modern art pieces hang around the house.

The exact contents of the house are not detailed. As the Referee, feel free to put in whatever you think is appropriate. Remember that this is the house of a relatively senior executive of the MedAdmin Corporation. He and his family have collected the best of everything and always keep their house immaculately clean, just in case there are any unexpected visits from Board Members.

Let the PCs explore for a while. It seems as though the house is deserted although there does seem to be a strange presence here. For any empaths in the house, this feeling is especially noticeable and seems to increase as they move upstairs.

The feeling is similar to the throbbing sensation the PCs felt earlier in the evening, although it is much lower in intensity. It certainly could not be felt by anyone outside the house. Let the PCs experience it in the same way they would a weak radio signal. As they move from room to room, they will find the signal stronger in some places and not at all in others. However, it is important that they start to sense that whatever is causing the throbbing appears to be upstairs in the house.

As the PCs move upstairs, they will begin to notice that the light in the upstairs portion of the house seems to be playing tricks on them. As they move from room to room, they will begin to sense shadows that seem to be watching them. These shadows will only be visible for fractions of a second in their peripheral vision. In addition, no two PCs will experience the same shadows. Only one of them will see a particular shadow, while the rest of the group will not see anything, or they will think that they see a shadow in a completely different part of the room.

The trick with this section is to try to unnerv the PCs as much as possible. Try to make them think that they are being watched by some sort of sentient creatures, who are trying to get control of them. If the PCs are empathic, then it is especially important to make the PCs feel paranoid. This is because they are starting to pick up on the empathic transmissions of Andrew Hedeon.

FINDING ANDREW HEDEON

The man the PCs are looking for is hiding on the top floor of the house. Hedeon is hiding in the back of the walk-in wardrobe in the master bedroom. When the PCs finally find him, he will be squatting in the fetal position, rocking back and forth slightly on the balls of his feet. His face is stained with tears and his eyes are red from crying.



Hedeon is in the final stage of Escapee. He has already been through the intense inner trip that the drug tends to induce, and is starting to come back to consciousness. However, this trip has been incredibly unpleasant, and the feelings of terror and anguish that he uncovered have continued unabated. He is suffering from extreme feelings of paranoia and is terrified of moving out of the closet. "They'll get me," he will mutter. "The Shadows will get me! Don't you people see them?"

Hedeon is indeed the source of the strange shadowy presences that the PCs have been experiencing as they have been searching around in the house. Like his wife, these manifestations will disappear as soon as the PCs knock the man unconscious, or provide some other means to incapacitate his mind.

However, the more important thing to note is the empathic throbbing is extremely pronounced when the PCs are in the same room as him. The drug has increased his empathic ability, and the blood pumping through his arteries seems to be causing the signal to be created. If the PCs come to within a half-meter of the man, they will notice that the throbbing is almost painful.

While the PCs are dealing with this, have them all make a Difficult: Observation check. Anyone who succeeds will hear the faint sound of crackling electricity, coming from downstairs. There will be a few seconds of this noise, then silence, then several more seconds, then more silence, then a final burst of the noise.

If any of the PCs have the dimension walk skill, and particularly if any of them are sorcerers, then they will feel the unmistakable sensation of the rippling of the dimensional boundary that always occurs during a dimension walk.

The Dark Minions have just arrived.

THAT EMPATHIC LOOK

The PCs may try to make use of skills such as clairvoyance in order to see who is downstairs. Technically, according to the rules on clairvoyance, the PCs will not be able to see downstairs, because they have not spent the required hour in the place learning how it feels, and there is no one downstairs that they can use as a "camera."

However, in the interests of a better story, you may elect to override the rules on this occasion and let the PCs look. Should you do this, read them the following:

Your eyes open and you are "standing" in the center of the tiled entry foyer of the house. As before, the black-and-white tiled floor extends off into the next room.

Looking through the archway into the living room, you see some people who weren't here when you arrived. Three men dressed in ankle-length black coats are standing in the living room, talking quietly to one another. The youngest of the men has shoulder length blonde hair, and a short goatee. The middle one has long black hair that seems to flow from his head and down his back. The third looks exactly

LIGHTING THE DARKNESS

If the PCs haven't already noticed, have something happen so that they will become aware that suddenly, they are no longer alone in the house. For example, have a vase fall off a table and smash onto the floor. Have a door creak open. However, make it reasonably obvious that whoever it is downstairs, they are tending to move as quietly as possible. Try to make the PCs think that they have been hearing things.

It is important that the PCs begin to move downstairs to intercept the people who are moving up. The longer the PCs wait, the harder it is for them to make sure that they have cornered them all.

Six individuals have just arrived in the house, via a dimension walk. They are to replace Andrew Hedeon with a duplicate. They will then take him away to another proto-dimension, where he will never be seen again. Had the PCs not been in the house at the same time, it would have been a simple matter for them to do that.

It would be too difficult (and indeed pointless) to try to determine the exact events that will unfold in the encounter between the Dark Minions and the PCs. Instead, only the basic required outcome of the encounter will be detailed. This should give the Referee a reasonable amount of scope to guide the action in the encounter, as well as providing a "target" to aim at.

At the end of the encounter, David Maddox (see below) should have dimension walked away to safety. It does not matter if he is wounded in the fight or not. It is, however, important that he survives. He is not stupid and will not fight to the death at this time. He values his life far more than that and will take steps to ensure that he lives.

It does not really matter if the rest of the Minions are killed. Again, in terms of impact, having at least one of the Dark(er) Elves die

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would hammer home that the PCs are definitely facing the forces of Darkness, and not just another group of Igors.

However, Andrew Hedeon does need to be dying by the time the encounter is over. It is not important if he is shot by one of the Minions, or he ends up being sucked into the vortex created when one of the Dark(er) Elves dies. In terms of impact, the latter would be more interesting, but it is not essential. What is important is that he needs to spend his last dying moments with the PCs so he can pass on some information.

THE MINIONS

The following section gives details on the six Minions who have just entered the house.

DAVID MADDOX

David Maddox stands about 1.78 m tall, and has shoulder length blonde hair. He normally wears a pair of stylish sunglasses, irrespective of the time of day, which has led some people to wonder if there is something wrong with his eyes. He has a short blonde moustache and goatee beard and a small gold ring through his left ear.

Maddox first learned of his empathic ability in a corporate test lab. He had been taken in for routine screening, which showed up an unusually high latent talent. Over the next three years, Maddox was subjected to a wide range of tests and drills, which began to open up his empathic ability. The testing however was slowly driving him mad and he resented the constant repetition he was subjected to.

That was when Bruce McMannos came to visit. McMannos claimed to be a friend of a friend, and he wanted to help Maddox get out of the clinic. McMannos gave Maddox a new exercise to practice whenever he had a spare moment.

like a sane version of Andrew Hedeon, only that's not possible as he is sitting in the same room as you.

From where you are watching, it's not possible to make out what they are saying. They are making small hand gestures as though they are discussing the best places to look, or how to explore the house properly.

That's when the darkest of the three turns his head and glares straight at you. His eyes narrow and burn with an intensely sadistic gleam, while the corners of his mouth curl into a malicious grin. He points directly at you, then throws his head back and laughs evilly.

Maddox was delighted, and two nights later, he and the other test subjects used their empathic abilities to kill the guards and escape.

Since then, Maddox and the rest of the cell have been using their empathic abilities for their own gain. They still work with McMannos and help him achieve his long-term goals.

Level: Elite

Attributes: 7, INT 8, EMP 8

Skills: As per Elite NPC, plus Act/Bluff 4, Clairvoyance 3, Disguise 3, Dimension Walk 7, Foreboding 4, Human Empathy 9, Interrogation 4, Leadership 5, Melee Combat (Unarmed) 5, Mental Attack 6, Mind Shield 4, Observation 4, Persuasion 6, Project Emotion 5, Project Thought 6, Psionic Scan 6, Small Arms (Pistol) 3, Willpower 6, Willpower Drain 5.

Initiative: 4

Motivation: Jack of Spades: Maddox knows he is good at what he does and likes to prove it to people. He doesn't hide the fact that he is a powerful psionist. In fact, he likes to show people, usually in the most direct and brutal way possible. King of Clubs: Maddox has never forgiven the corporation for the way he was treated when he was a psychic test case. He enjoys using his psionic skill to inflict the pain he felt on others, as he can take his pain out on others.

Armament: Kevlar vest (AV1) and a Desert Eagle .357 Magnum automatic pistol.

MARTIN KWENDE

Martin Kwende originally comes from Malawi. He stands 1.72m tall, and has a lithe, athletic build. He is completely bald, and likes the effect of the light reflecting off his dark scalp. He does not have any facial hair, but he does have a long scar running down his right cheek.

Kwende was a fellow inmate of Maddox when the breakout occurred. Kwende had been training rather heavily in the area of remote sensing and tracking. However, the training had brought about some serious psychological problems in Kwende. Once the escape bid was made, Kwende was right behind Maddox.

Like his friend, he has since used his empathic powers for his own personal gain. While he is not as brutal as Maddox, his is not averse to using violence to ensure his plans are met.

When the PCs first meet Kwende in the house, he is dressed so that he is covered from neck to foot. Even his hands are covered with a pair of soft leather gloves. However, what the PCs will notice first is that his face looks exactly like of the PCs (choose one at random). Kwende is using a facedancer to mimic the appearance of the chosen PC.

Level: Veteran

Attributes: 6, STR 7, AGL 8, CHR 8, EMP 5

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Skills: As per Veteran NPC, plus Act/Bluff 5, Clairaudience 7, Clairvoyance 8, Dimension Walk 5, Disguise 6, ESP 3, Forgery 5, Human Empathy 6, Navigation 6, Observation 7, Small Arms (Pistol) 4, Stalking 7, Stealth 8, Streetwise 6, Willpower 5.

Initiative: 3

Motivation: 10 of Clubs: Kwende is a very violent man, and thinks little about the value of a human life. To him, people are pawns to be used, and sometimes violence is a means of getting them to do the things you want. Queen of Spades: His time as a corporate empath has left him with a drive that will stop at nothing to get the job done. Kwende was one of the instigators that used the facedancers to mimic the PCs in the city.

Armament: Kevlar vest (AV1) and a Colt M1911A1 10mm automatic pistol.

GH'YND'K

Gh'ynd'k stands about 1.79m tall, and has long black hair that seems to flow out of his head and down his back. He has an extremely handsome face, with piercing black eyes. His face is almost constantly held in a sneer, which only seems to heighten the sense of maliciousness about him.

Gh'ynd'k has been working on Earth for a long time. He spent a great deal of time working in Chiwaukee, corrupting the City Services and causing mayhem and chaos on a large scale. Since then, he has worked on some increasingly elaborate schemes to undermine the fabric of human society.

He delights in causing pain and suffering to humans, who he considers to be beneath his race. It chafes him that he is forced to work with Maddox and his associates as equals, but up to this point, he has held himself in check.

Stats: as per the "Dark Elves" entry in the Dark Conspiracy Referee's guide.

Armament: Colt Scamp SMG and an h'thbk dagger.

SH'KDR'IN

Sh'kdr'in is the only female member of the Minion group. She is 1.66m tall, and has long black hair similar to Gh'ynd'k's. In human terms, she is extremely exotic and attractive, which has captivated more than one potential suitor (to the detriment of their long-term survival). She is dressed in a full length black latex catsuit, with a long black coat over the top.

Sh'kdr'in spends most of her time in the Strip. She has a perverse sense of humor and loves playing with the minds of humans. She regularly pretends to be a prostitute, only to torture and later kill her "clients." Despite many of her clients disappearing after an encounter, she has gained a reputation as one of Sin City's most skillful and desirable escorts.

She moves with the stealth and agility of a cat, and often hunts like one. In fact, when she attends the nightclubs in the Strip, she often refers to herself as "Pantera."

She does not mind working with the humans, as she is thoroughly enjoying the sport they are providing. She is, however, keeping a close eye on their motives and will not hesitate kill them if they look as though they are turning against her group.

Stats: as per the "Dark Elves" entry in the Dark Conspiracy Referee's guide.

Armament: Beretta M92s automatic pistol and an h'thbik dagger.

RQ'JUOR

Rq'judr is the youngest of the Dark(er) Elves in the group. He is 1.69m tall, with the characteristic dark, flowing hair of his people. His youthful face makes him look as though he is about 18 years old, although in Dark(er) Elf terms, he is much younger.

Rq'judr has only recently managed to break through to Earth from the Dark Elves' home dimension. He is still in the process of completing his empathic anchor here and sometimes slips back when he is not paying attention.

This mission is one of his first out of his home dimension, and he is extremely keen to prove himself. This makes him somewhat rash in his judgements, because he is trying to impress his superiors and earn his h'thbik dagger.

Stats: as per the "Dark Elves" entry in the Dark Conspiracy Referee's guide.

Armament: Colt Scamp SMG.

THE "OTHER" ANDREW HEDEON

The sixth member of the Minion entourage is a replica of Andrew Hedeon. It is in fact a mystic changeling that the Dark(er) Elves had created to replace the real Hedeon. Exactly what this changeling was to do is not evident.

SETTLING OF THE FALLOUT

It is assumed that the PCs have somehow managed to survive the encounter with the Minions and that Andrew Hedeon has been wounded in the fight.

As the PCs recover from the encounter, they will be able to nurse Andrew Hedeon as his life slowly fades away. There is little any of the PCs can do for him, other than make his departure more comfortable. This will especially be the case if he has been sucked into the vortex and has now become a permanent part of the building.

"It's me they were after," he whispers as his life fades away. "They wanted me all along. I have access to things that they need. That's why they gave me the drug. Once I realized what it was doing to me, I hid the information they need. Giselle knows where you can find it.

"You must stop them. If you don't then they will make life impossible for everyone. The city could die unless they are stopped."

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He will cough violently, then close his eyes for a few seconds, taking only the shallowest of breaths. He will then open his eyes slightly again.

"There isn't much time. Find Giselle. She was hiding somewhere in the house. Promise me you will find her and take her to someone who will love her and be able to look after her. She needs someone who will take care of her better than I ever did. She has what you need. She will help you find them, or rather, she will help you to make them find you."

With that, he will close his eyes for the final time.

LOOKING AROUND

After Hedeon dies, give the PCs a chance to have a quick look around. Let each of them make and Average: Observation check as they survey the aftermath of the encounter with the Dark Minions.

If any of them succeed, they will find three objects. Where they are found will depend on the outcome of the encounter. It is possible that they are found on the body of Martin Kwende. If Kwende survived and managed to Dimension Walk away, then these objects could be found scattered about the room, thrown by a dying Dark(er) Elf. Remember that should a Dark(er) Elf or the changeling die, their bodies will be sucked into a portal that leads back to their home dimension, taking with it anything that they were carrying, as well as whatever else happens to be nearby.

The three objects are two large crystals and something that looks remarkably like a metallic chrysalis.

The two crystals are empathic crystals. They are used to store information about a person and their empathic states. Should any PC bother to concentrate on the crystals, they will begin to get

THAT SUCKING THING

When one of the dark(er) Elves or the changeling are killed, their empathic link to this dimension is severed. Within seconds, their physical bodies succumb to the pull of their home dimension of Faer'eah. When this happens, a swirling vortex of darkness will appear beneath the body and will begin to suck the corpse in. Any physical objects that happen to be nearby will also be sucked into the vortex along with the corpse, including any unfortunate PCs. The strength of the vortex is extremely powerful. The problem is that the vortex will stay open for only a finite amount of time, directly related to the power of the dead darkling. When the vortex closes, anything that is only partway through will be severed just below ground level, and several inches of the object will be irreversibly combined with what existed in the location before the vortex opened. For humans, this effect is usually fatal if anything more than a limb remains caught when the vortex shuts. For more details on the Vortex, see the entry on the Dr'oehlv in the Welcome to the Underground section of this book.

a sense of someone else. A vague image will appear in the surface of the crystal, as though their picture is being dragged to the surface. An Average: Empathy check will bring the crystal to life.

One of the crystals holds a detailed empathic imprint of the PC that Martin Kwende was impersonating using the facedancer. The crystal has a picture of the PC that is the functional equivalent of the rotating hologram, as well as a large amount of empathic information about the PC – things that they fear, things they like, how they would tend to react to given situations, etc.

The other crystal contains a picture of a person that the PCs do not recognize. However, the amount of empathic information available is minuscule in comparison to the other crystal.

The chrysalis object is vaguely warm to the touch and any empathes holding it will get the vague sense that it is alive in some form. This strange object is actually a dimensional beacon, although there is no way for the PCs to know that at this stage.

FINDING GISELLE

Hedeon's last request to the PCs was for them to find Giselle, his 14-year-old daughter. All he knew is that she was hiding somewhere in the house.

Giselle is currently hiding in the back of a wardrobe in the basement of the house. She has seen some of the things that began to appear after her parents took the drug and it has frightened her almost to death. She was hysterical at the time, but is now in a state of shock.

It should be a relatively simple matter for the PCs to find her, especially if they use some sort of empathic sensing. However, she has heard all of the commotion upstairs, and has sensed the presence of the Dark Minions in the house, and she is hovering dangerously close to the edge of sanity.

The PCs are going to have to be very calm and comforting if they want to coax Giselle out of her hiding spot. They will need to convince her that they do not mean her any harm, and that she will be safe with them. However, considering that the PCs have just been through a major battle and probably still have weapons visible, Giselle will have an extremely difficult time believing them.

They can attempt to get her out of the cupboard by force, but this will only upset her even more. If they resort to physical violence, it will send her over the edge, and she will lapse into a catatonic state, unable to communicate in any way.

It's about then that the PCs should start to hear the sirens approaching.



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THE CHASE

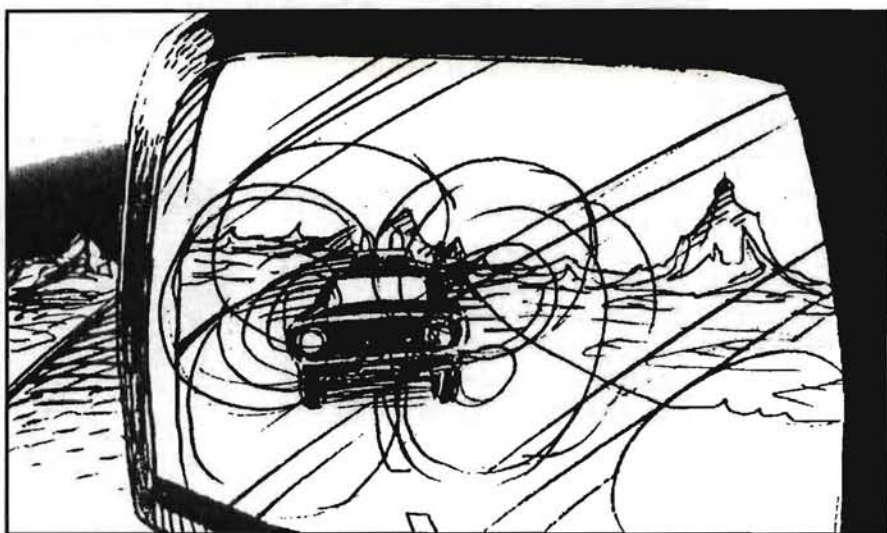
During the commotion with the Dark Minions, several of the neighbors heard the sounds of the fight going on in the Hedeon residence. Afraid that there was some sort of home invasion going on that could spill over to their own houses, they called the New Centennial Police to report the incident.

Luckily for the PCs, the NCP have been having an extremely busy night. Several small groups of gang members from the Projects have been roaming the streets of the Expansion and the nearby suburbs, breaking into houses and threatening people with automatic weaponry. Several people have already been murdered while trying to stop the youths. This has meant that the NCP has been stretched far tighter than it normally would, and it has not been able to respond to calls for help as fast as it normally would.

It is important to impress on the PCs that the sounds of the sirens seem to be getting closer and closer. If need be, have Lachlan remind them that they are already wanted by the police in connection with the drug supply problem, and that he suspects that they are wanted after the incident with the snakes and Caroline Hedeon. If they were to get caught, it would be look particularly bad for them.

Give the PCs enough time to get out of the house and back to their vehicles before letting the police get into sight. If the PCs have been finding the going too easy, then it would be perfect time for the vehicle they are in to develop engine trouble for a few seconds.

The PCs should be able to get moving just in time to avoid capture by the



police. However, the police should be close enough to identify the PCs' vehicle and recognize whom they belong to. This will then begin a car chase through the streets of the city.

How long the chase runs for is left entirely to the Referee's discretion. The PCs should be made to feel as though they have a chance of escape, but it should be a relatively slim one. By this stage, the police have come close to capturing the PCs on a number of occasions and their constant failure is beginning to cause consternation at the executive levels of the police service.

While this does not mean that the police cars will continue the chase beyond their sector boundaries, it does mean that the cars in pursuit will radio ahead and get the adjacent sectors to prepare to begin the pursuit once the PCs cross the sector boundary. Use this to your full advantage when running the chase. The police in an adjoining sector will set up ambushes for the PCs, allowing them to think that they have broken free of the pursuit, only to find themselves being chased again moments later.

The police in pursuit will use whatever means are necessary to stop the PCs' vehicle. This will include firing on the PCs vehicle to try and blow the tires out. The police will also bring in a helicopter to help in the chase, and coordinate the pursuit efforts from the air.

The result of all this will be that it will be quite difficult for the PCs to get away. There should be numerous occasions in the chase where they are almost caught, only to escape by some fancy driving or some bad luck on the part of the police pursuers.

When it seems an appropriate time, the PCs should find a way to shake the pursuers and make good their escape. Once this has happened, give them a chance to catch their breaths and decide what they are to do next. This should hopefully involve them returning to the Hewson Twins quarters with Giselle. If need be, Lachlan may have to suggest it to them.

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A LONG AWAITED REST

"Hunting Dark Minions is an exhausting task. But so many hunters have failed to recognize that and pressed on when they should have rested. Alas, most of those hunters are no longer with us. They were too tired and simply missed the tell-tale signs of Minion activity."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

The PCs should arrive back at the Hewson Twins quarters sometime shortly before dawn. It has been an exhausting night for them, and they should all be feeling increasingly tired and irritable. If Giselle did not slip into the catatonic state when the PCs were trying to convince her to get out of the wardrobe, she will have passed out from a combination of the stress of the whole night and sheer exhaustion.

As with the previous visit, the PCs mood will settle as soon as they step out of elevator onto the seventh floor. Carlos will be waiting for them in the hallway, and he will beam at them when the elevator doors open.

"Thank God you're OK," says Carlos. We heard of the police chase and we were beginning to think you'd been caught." He will look at the PCs with a puzzled expression on his face for a second, "Where's Mr. Hedeon"?

Once the PCs have explained what happened to him, Carlos will express his deep regrets and will lay his hands on Giselle's forehead and close his eyes for a moment. Giselle will relax slightly and Carlos will open his eyes again. "You were wise to bring her here. Her mind is in turmoil, even now, and she needs some help. You all look as though you could do with some rest as well. It has been an extremely long and tiring night. Here, bring the girl in with her mother, and I will look after her myself. But before we do that, I had better find you a place where you can get some rest. I have a distinct feeling that this is not over yet."

Carlos will get Giselle settled in another small bedroom in Apartment 7D and then will guide the PCs to spare bunks in 7G. He will not hear of them staying awake a moment longer. If they do not want to rest, he would calmly ask that they trust him. He knows that they will need their energy for what is yet to come.

Once the PCs settle down, they will all feel the stress of the night's events fade away as they quickly drift off to sleep.

DAWNING OF A NEW DAY

"Breaking news this morning. A spokesperson for the Pegasus Products Corporation has reported that the corporation's founder and CEO, Olsen Haast and 27 other people were tragically killed last night while enjoying a private function on board Haast's yacht. No details were given, but an unnamed source in

Pegasus reports that the boat exploded sometime before midnight last night. No survivors have been found. No explanation for the accident has so far been reported."

- Radio Broadcast on Centennial FM

When the PCs finally surface, Carlos will be waiting for them in the relaxation room. As they appear, he will rouse himself from his meditation and prepare the PCs something to eat and drink.

"Giselle is resting comfortably this morning. She's a tough girl, much like her mother. She has the gift as well. I feel that given time and the right training, she could be a powerful healer."

If the PCs mention what Andrew Hedeon said about Giselle being "the key", or they mentioned it the previous evening, Carlos' eyebrows will look puzzled. "I don't know anything about a key. Nothing like that came up while I was healing her. There was this one strange thing though. During Giselle's therapy, I kept getting images of a box with a picture of a lion on the side. It was in what looked to be the basement. There was as strong sense of connection with her father associated with the image, but there was also a sense of protection mingled with it. She kept mumbling something about 'Daddy gave it to her', but I had no idea what she was talking about, and whatever it was, it seemed traumatic enough to her that she has locked it down really tight in her memory. It may be nothing, but I have learned to look at these feelings when they have come up, for they tend to be significant in some fashion.

"Now, tell me again of exactly what happened in the house. Do not leave anything out, because something small may well prove to be vitally important."

Give the PCs a chance to recap the events of the Dark Minions attack. Carlos will be particularly interested in learning about the Minions that the PCs attacked. If one of the PCs used clairvoyance and experienced discovery by Gh'ynd'k, then Carlos will question them at length about it.

Carlos will explain to the PCs about the Dark(er) Elves if they have not yet figured it out for themselves. He did not realize that they were working in the city, although it does not surprise him that they are. He will also explain his personal hatred of them and why stopping them means so much to him.

The PCs should also give Carlos a look at the empathic crystals and the strange chrysalis-like object that they managed to find after the encounter. The conversation may need to be subtly steered in this direction by one of the NPCs if the PCs are reluctant to mention it, or they simply forget about it altogether.

Carlos will look at the crystals, and then throw them back to the PCs with a sneer on his face. "Bah! I hate those things," he says. "The Dark Elves use them to record empathic information about a victim they plan to kill. Using these crystals, they know what they look like and even what they feel like. The crystals are then given to someone else, who can use the information to hunt down the target. For

the Elves, it's a game, a sick and twisted game. You mentioned one of them was using a facedancer? Hmmm, the crystal has enough information in it to provide a good three-dimensional picture of the target. It would be more than enough for the facedancer to use to create the target's face. Still, I'd be damn careful if I were you. Finding one of these with your face in it is like finding a bullet with your name on it. It means they have your number and it's only a matter of time before they track you down."

He will then turn his attention to the chrysalis. "I have no idea what this is. I've seen a lot of DarkTek in my time, but this is something new. Whatever it is, it's alive. You can feel it when you hold it. The signs are reasonably faint, but it is rather obvious. How the hell you activate it, or what it is supposed to do I have no idea." He looks up at the PCs. "Can I hang onto it for a while? A few hours ought to be enough. I've had a bit of luck in the past with figuring out what something like this does, so I should be find out what this little baby gets up to."

"While I'm doing this, you should go and see if you can find whatever it was that Hedeon hid. He felt it was important enough to tell you about as he was dying. Perhaps you owe it to the guy to track it down and see if you can figure it out."

"One last word of advice, Facedancers don't like electricity in large doses. They use a small electrical signal as an activation mechanism and they seem to draw energy out of whoever is wearing the repulsive thing. But if you hit the wearer with enough energy, it seems to overload the 'dancer to the point where it just drops off. A high enough jolt of energy and you'll kill it. You may also kill the person wearing it. I know it's unfortunate, but there are times when the people who use these things almost deserve something like that."

SHOCKED BY THE POWER

If they do not already own some, the PCs will want to get their hands on some sort of stun weapons. This will allow a small sideline for them, as they have to get in touch with contacts to try and find these weapons.

As the Referee, try not to make it too simple for the PCs to obtain these weapons. While they will be useful later on, they are by no means essential to the rest of the story. How they manage to gain possession of them and what they will have to pay for them is left entirely to the Referee's discretion.

GOING BACK TO HEDEON'S

The PCs should not have too much difficulty getting back to Hedeon's place, particularly if they are being careful. The police presence in the area has subsided to some extent, so the PCs should be able to get around without the police noticing them.

Once they get to the house, the PCs see that the police have examined the house, as there is a crime scene seal across the front door. By the time the PCs arrive, the police will have already been through the house and dusted for fingerprints and other evidence. This will become especially evident once the PCs figure out a way to get into the house and see the fingerprint dust everywhere.

Let the PCs get into the house without much difficulty. They have already figured out how to get in before, so that method should work again. To increase the tension slightly, a car may drive down the street slowly, the driver carefully looking at each of the houses.

Once the PCs get inside the house, they can head quickly to the basement. There has been a lot of activity down here, with the police searching around for more clues. The PCs would have noticed that the boxes had been stacked neatly when they came down looking for Giselle. They are now scattered around the place, and many of them have been torn open and their contents rifled through.

The box the PCs are searching for is in fact an old shoebox belonging to Caroline Hedeon. There is a picture of a lioness on the side of the box, the logo of the particular brand of shoes. When the PCs open the box, it appears to contain nothing but a pair of old running shoes.

Have each PC who examines the box make a Difficult: Observation check. If



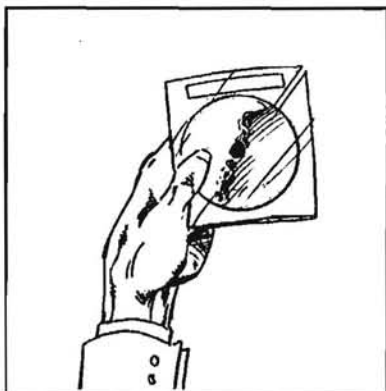
one of them is successful, they will find a small computer disk hidden beneath the innersole of one of the joggers. This disk bears the logo of the MedAdmin Corporation, although there is no other identifiable marks on the disk.

If the one of the PCs has a portable computer with them, they can read the disk immediately. If they do not have one, then a successful Average: Intelligence check will remind them that Hedeon had a computer upstairs in his study.

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CONTENTS OF THE DISK

Whenever the PCs finally get to examine the contents of the disk, they will first find what appears to be a large personal schedule. Details are given of a range of meetings and other scheduled events. Included with each of these events is a cross-referenced list of security arrangements, including details about guard numbers and armaments. For each meeting, a complete list of attendees is provided. One of the meetings listed in the schedule is a video linkup to the Trade Council.



If the PCs succeed in a Difficult: Observation check, they will see that one of the meetings scheduled two days ago mentions "the Fraser incident" and a linked document mentions that the problem has been "dealt with."

Also linked with that document is a collection of financial information, detailing shipment of a large cache of automatic weaponry and ammunition from a container on the docks, to the basement of a government owned building in the Projects. The accompanying analysis suggests that the resulting chaos should encourage up to 25,000 people to sign on with the corporations, increasing MedAdmin's vote count by a substantial margin. Similar estimates are provided for several of the other corporations that are members of the Trade Council.

The final set of files on the disk seems to be an intelligence report on a man named "Darnell." The data describes him as being 1.74m tall, with short-cropped black hair and a clean-shaven face. It also a recorded sample of his voice taken from a phone tap, and the reports of a number of unnamed agents who have been assigned to follow him. Each time, the agent watched Darnell enter a building or a quiet room in a public place and each time, he appeared to simply disappear. On each occasion, the agent was sure there were no other exits from the room that Darnell entered, and there was no way that he could have managed to escape before the agent arrived in the room.

As the PCs are finishing their reading of the information on the computer disk, have any characters with EMP 1+ make an Difficult: Observation check. Any of them who are successful will notice an empathic throbbing, very similar to the one they experienced when they were captured by Unit 8. Again, the signal will be intense enough to be painful and insistent enough to make ignoring it a Formidable: Willpower task.

THAT SINKING FEELING AGAIN

If any of the characters have the Foreboding skill, then a successful Average: Foreboding check will reveal the following:

You can see the relaxation room back at the Hewson Twins apartment. Carlos is rolling around on the cushions on the floor. From the way he is clutching at his temples, it is obvious that he is in a lot of pain.

Suddenly, a swirling mist appears in the corner of the room, and six figures step through. One of them is the same blonde-haired man you encountered at the Hedeon house. Four of the others look similar to the man's previous companions.

The sixth figure has short-cropped black hair and a clean-shaven face. He walks over to Carlos and kicks him viciously in the ribs several times. He then looks at the others and nods towards the door. They pull guns or knives from the coats and all six head for the door.

If the PCs think of it, they can attempt to try and locate the direction the signal is coming from. This is a Formidable: Navigation task, or a Difficult: Psychic Tracking task. Should one of the PCs succeed, they will discover that the source of the throbbing seems to be coming from the same general direction as the apartments of the Hewson Twins.

The throbbing sound will go on for several minutes, and then it will cease as abruptly as it began. The headache induced by the throbbing will continue for several minutes afterwards.

Shortly afterwards, the mobile phone of one of the PCs will begin to ring.

"Mitchell here. I'm presuming that some of you people heard that noise again? Smith was damn near doubled over with it this time. From as near as we can tell, it came from over in the 'burbs this time. Did any of you people sense where it was coming from?"

Mitchell's information will enable the PCs to determine that the signal did indeed come from the direction of the apartment of the Hewson Twins. Mitchell and the other members of Unit 8 will arrange to meet the PCs there in ten minutes.

OUT OF THE RUINS

"Every now and again, you will get a lucky break. Then, just when you think that it is starting to go your way, a darkling will come along and really foul things up.

"It's then that you need to strike back. If you don't, then they've already won."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

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The floor belonging to the Hewson Twins is a real mess. The first thing the PCs will notice when they step out of the elevator is the sense of peace that normally resides on this floor has been shattered, replaced by one of fear and pain.

Bullet holes and bloodstains cover the walls of the corridor. A bloodstained blanket lies on the floor, covering a strangely shaped mound. There is the sound of sobbing coming from somewhere down the hall.

Should the PCs look under the blanket, they will find the head and one arm of an elderly man protruding from the floor. His face is twisted into a mask of sheer agony and there is blood still oozing from a bad cut on his forehead. As the PCs look around, they will find more bodies and more damage. Most of the silk hanging from the ceilings has been torn down. Whoever went through here was very thorough and left a trail of death behind them. It is important to impress on the PCs the scale of the carnage in the apartments. Everything that the Hewson Twins cell stood for has been shattered in this attack.

The PCs will find Carlos still lying on the cushions in the relaxation room of Apartment 7G. Aiwen Hewson will be standing over him, putting a dressing on the bullet wound in his leg. Aiwen's sister is tending to another woman on the other side of the room.

"Thank goodness you are here," says Aiwen. "Arienella and I were off getting some fresh air when this happened. We sense that signal, or whatever it was and came back here straight away. By the time we arrived, it was all over.

"Carlos is still alive, but only just. We found him in the corridor, a bloodstained knife in his hand. We found old Kelly like that. We couldn't stand to even look at it, so we threw the blanket over him. We have no idea how something like this could have happened. Most of the people we were treating are all dead; most of them have had their throats cut, or they have been shot."

From down the corridor, the elevator chime will ding, followed shortly by some quiet cursing. Moments later, Colonel Mitchell and several of his men, including the mystic, Daniel Smith, will enter the room. Mayor Bryant is with them, an obviously concerned look on his face.

Bryant extends his hand to Aiwen. "My dear, I can't express how sorry I am that we have to meet under these circumstances. I wish there were something I could do officially to help you and your group. Your work in this city is extremely important. I've heard of all of the good work that you and your people are doing to help those affected by the darklings."

"Just what the hell is going on here?" asks Mitchell. "We heard the signal and came as soon as we figured out where it came from. Mr. Bryant called us because of the last beacon and asked if he could come along as well."

The PCs can explain their side of the story, including the events that unfolded in the Hedeon house and what they found. Bryant especially will be interested in what they have to say. He will mention that he knew Andrew Hedeon and had worked with him a couple of years ago. The last Bryant knew about him, he was working for MedAdmin's Trade Council delegate.

As they are finishing, Carlos will begin to stir. His head is badly cut, and he looks as though he has taken on a street gang single-handed. Both Aiwen and Arienella will try to calm him down, but Carlos will refuse. He will struggle to sit up, so that he can look at the PCs and the members of Unit 8.

"I'm sorry," he says. "This is all my fault. I was working with that chrysalis thing you found. I had been probing it for a while when I managed to make a connection with it. All I thought was 'how do I turn this thing on?' Next thing I know, the damn thing is shrieking at me. It was so painful to hear up close that it was all I could do to keep conscious.

"That's when they arrived. It was almost as if they answered the call. They just walked in here out of nowhere. The short one with the dark hair kicked the crap out of me. I think he broke a couple of my ribs. I think he would have killed me if the blonde one hadn't said something and gotten him to move out. I don't know what it was the blonde guy said to him. All I caught was the name - 'Darnell.' It wasn't until they were leaving that I realized that the dark bastards were elves."

Carlos pauses, wincing with the pain of breathing with several broken ribs. "That's when I heard the screaming and the sounds of the shooting. They had silencers on, but it was still loud enough for me to hear. I thought I had seen the last of that sort of thing, but it still comes back to haunt me.

"So I did something I vowed I would never do again; resorted to violence. I took a knife from the kitchen and went after those bastards. I took two of the elves out before they even knew I was there. They were too busy cutting up Danielle over in 7B. I had forgotten the vortex thing. Damn near got sucked up in it.

"After that, I don't remember a whole lot. I must have gone off on autopilot or something. Next thing I remember is coming to on the floor in the corridor with a gun in my hand. There was a vortex opening on the floor in front of me, and I was being sucked into it. Old Kelly came to my aid, but the thing sucked him in as well. Somehow, the old man managed to get me out of it. The old fool sacrificed himself for me..." Carlos suddenly breaks down, his chest racked with heavy sobs that lead to bouts of coughing.

Aiwen and Arienella will both lay their hands on Carlos and close their eyes. Moments later, a peace settles on Carlos and he lies back, his breathing returning to a more subdued level.

Aiwen turns to face the PCs and Unit 8. "Please. Find those



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responsible. Stop them from doing something like this again. I abhor the use of violence, but... do what you need to do. Good people have died needlessly here tonight. We'll rebuild from here. But you people must stop Darnell and the others before this goes any further."

"Please, go now. Find Darnell and the others as quickly as you can. The sooner he is stopped, the safer it will be for everyone. If you need anything from us, then ask. If it is within our power to give it to you, it shall be yours. If you won't do it for us, then do it for Carlos and old Kelly."

Colonel Mitchell will signal to his men to leave. "Come with us. We need to figure out what to do about these bastards." He hands them a card with an address in the Square written on it. "We have to drop the Mayor off again, but we will meet you at that address in half an hour."

PHONE CALLS FROM A STRANGER

"The problem of synchronicity has puzzled me for a long time, ever since the middle twenties, when I was investigating the phenomena of the collective unconscious and kept coming across connections which I simply could not explain as chance groupings or 'runs.' What I found were 'coincidences' which were connected so meaningfully that their 'chance' concurrence would be incredible."

-C.G. Jung

(Synchronicity – An Acausal Connecting Principle)

As the PCs are travelling across the city to the Square, they will have to stop at a red traffic light. To make matters more frustrating for the PCs, the light will go red despite the fact there is nothing on the cross street.

While the PCs are sitting in the car, a woman will knock on one of the windows. She has a mobile phone in her hand and she is pointing at it. When the PCs wind down the window to talk to her, she will say that there is a man on the phone who wishes to speak with them. The man on the phone will not identify himself, but he will call whichever PC answers the phone by their name. He will not explain how he knew which number to call for the woman, or how he knew where the PCs were in the city at that precise moment.

"You have something that belongs to us," he says. "Andrew Hedeon had it, but he was remiss enough to remove it from its correct location. We would like it back."

If the PCs try to say that they have no idea what the man is talking about, he will interrupt them, saying "Don't play games with me. We know that you have the disk and we will have it back. I suggest that you do not try us on this matter. People have already died because they did not listen, and we will take the disk by force if we have to."

"I suggest that you come immediately to the car park on the corner of 17th and Clark. You will proceed down the ramp to Sublevel 5, where you will park your vehicle. You will leave all your weapons behind and take the stairs up to Sublevel 4. You will meet us there. You have 10 minutes to be there."

If the PCs reply that they are already on their way to a meeting, the man will interrupt again. "I don't care where you are going. You will come straight here." Should the PCs continue to object, the man will tell them to look out their front window at the young couple walking down the sidewalk.

Suddenly, the young woman's head will snap back and she will collapse to the ground. Her partner will begin screaming "Oh my God! Somebody help me! She's been shot!" If the PCs run to help, there will be nothing can do; she was killed immediately when the large caliber bullet removed the back portion of her skull.

If the PCs look around the surrounding buildings, they will not be able to locate a sniper. In fact, there does not appear to be a decent position from where a sniper could have taken that shot.

"This was only a demonstration. You will come to the 17th and Clark, or more people will suffer the same fate. We already know that the police are looking for you. If you give us what we want, then we might be able to do something about that. If not, then we will have no option but to provide the police with information about your whereabouts and physical evidence linking you with the shooting murder of that young girl."

The caller is true to his word. If the PCs do not make their way to the car park, additional people will be shot at random until they do comply. Each time, it will be close to where the PCs are and no one saw or heard where the shot came from.

AN OFFER THEY CAN'T REFUSE

"There comes a time when you are forced to make decisions that you will regret. But the alternatives to those decisions are so painful, there is no way that you could choose otherwise. Dark Minions have a nasty habit of manipulating things that way."

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

As soon as the PCs are obviously making their way to the car park, the random shootings will cease. The PCs should have no trouble getting to the Strip; every set of traffic lights they have to pass through will be conveniently green for them.

When the PCs arrive at the car park, it will be displaying a "FULL" sign out the front. As the PCs pull into the building, the boom gate will swing up automatically, waiting for them to enter.

As the PCs travel down to Sublevel 3, they will notice that the car park is completely empty. There are no cars visible anywhere, and nobody seems to be there

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are all. If they stop to have a look on Sublevel 2, the floor will be deserted. However, most of the lights on this level are not working, leaving large portions of it shrouded in shadow.

They should proceed down to the next level, as they were instructed to do. Unsurprisingly, when they get down there, the floor will be deserted, and it also is shrouded in shadow like Sublevel 2. One of the few remaining lights that are functioning is close to the stairwell leading to the higher levels. Sublevel 3 is as far down as the building goes, so there is no way that anyone could hide in a lower level to ambush the PCs on their return.

The PCs should take the stairs to the next level. As soon as they are all inside the stairwell, the door will close behind them and lock with an audible click. As Sublevel 3 is the lowest floor, the stairs only go up from here.

As they reach the top, four men in black suits will step out of the shadows all armed with M177 submachineguns, which they have trained on the PCs. Each PC in turn will be frisked extremely thoroughly for hidden weapons of any kind. If necessary, the men will use force to ensure they can get their jobs done. Should any of the PCs try to stop them, the men at the top of the stairs will open fire, aiming mostly for the legs of the PCs. If the PCs are carrying the disk on their person, it will be found and taken from them before the group is escorted out of the stairwell.

Once the PCs have been cleared, they will be ushered through the door into Sublevel 2. The lighting here is just as dim as it was before and the floor remains deserted.

The PCs will be herded into the middle of the floor and the suited men will take positions where they can cover the PCs should they make a move. Nothing at all will happen for a couple of minutes. The suited men will remain alert but silent, keeping a watchful eye over the PCs. None of them will bother to speak with the PCs,

THE SUITED MEN

The PCs have no idea who these men are, but they are incredibly well built physically. All of them are dressed in double-breasted black suits, and each one has a small earpiece in their right ear.

Level: Elite

Attributes: 7, STR 9.

Skills: As per Elite NPCs, plus Melee Combat (Unarmed) 8, Observation 7, Small Arms (Pistol) 8, Small Arms (Rifle) 9, Stalking 8, Stealth 9.

Initiative: 4

Armament: M177 submachinegun, Colt Krait pistol.

JACOB RODERICKSON

Jacob Roderickson stands 1.92m tall, and has dark brown hair and piercing hazel eyes. He usually dresses in a black double-breasted suit and is never seen without a small earpiece in his right ear.

Roderickson used to work for the US Secret Service as a presidential bodyguard. He was one of their best marksmen, and excelled in all aspects of the personal protection detail.

However, he was lured away from the Secret Service by the megacorporations who offered him ten times more than he was being paid by the government. With an offer like that, he could not refuse. Since that time, he has continued his training and is now even more potent than he used to be. There are times when he has almost a sixth sense for what is going on which, when combined with his almost supernatural speed in combat, has helped him succeed against overwhelming odds on more than one occasion. He is an extremely effective tactician and leader and he does not tolerate failure of any kind.

Level: Elite

Attributes: 7, STR 8, AGL 9, INT 9, EMP 2.

even when they are addressed directly.

Once the PCs are edgy enough, the stairwell door will swing open and a tall man in a black suit and a long black overcoat will stride out on the floor. He has the same earpiece as the other men, but he does not appear to be carrying any weapons. One of the suited men will hand the new arrival the missing computer disk.

"Ahhh, splendid," he says. "I'm so glad you could make it. It would have been such a shame had we been forced to tell the police where to find you." The PC who spoke to the man on the phone should be able to recognize this man's voice as they one they spoke to on the phone. "We've been watching you for several days now. You've made yourselves extremely unpopular in a number of circles."

The PCs can ask whatever questions they like of the man. He will be extremely evasive in his



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answers, especially if the PCs ask who they are working for and what they want with the disk. He will also refuse to answer any questions about how he knew who to call on the street so that he could talk to the PCs, and he will not mention who was responsible for the shootings that may have convinced the PCs to come here.

"I do know that none of you are personally responsible for the distribution of that drug. Someone else is responsible for that, but unfortunately, we have not yet been able to locate them and shut down their operation. I'd like to hear what you people know about it."

This should hopefully get the PCs to tell Roderickson what they know about the distribution of Escapee and whom they think is responsible for it. He will listen impassively to most of what the PCs have to say. Should they mention Darnell, he will raise an eyebrow. "Darnell? Why doesn't that surprise me? He has been extremely quiet for the past couple of months. I had hoped that we had seen the last of him. He has proven to be an extremely slippery individual in the past. The number of times we have trailed him only to have him literally vanish into thin air is quite remarkable."

If the PCs mention the attack on the Hewson Twins headquarters and the strange incidents with the Dark Elves, Roderickson will again look intrigued. "Curious, I had not heard of this group before now, and I am usually aware of most groups in the city. That's my job. If they are involved with the supply and distribution of Escapee, it would explain why we had not been able to track them down as yet. The fact that they like to pretend to be you people also makes things incredibly difficult."

"I tell you what I am going to do. I'm going to have the police stop looking for you people, but only when it suits me. At the moment, I don't know if I can trust you or not, so this is my insurance policy. You keep your noses clean and the police will forget that you even exist."

Skills: Act/Bluff 5, Demolitions 3, Disguise 5, Foreboding 5, Interrogation 8, Leadership 9, Luck 7, Melee Combat (Armed) 5, Melee Combat (unarmed) 8, Observation 11, Persuasion 7, Small Arms (Rifle) 9, Small Arms (Pistol) 12, Stalking 6, Stealth 8, Streetwise 5, Vehicle Use (Wheeled) 6, Willpower 6.

Initiative: 6

Armament: Kevlar vest, Colt Krait (with silencer) in a shoulder holster).

Motivations: Ace of Clubs: Roderickson has seen action many times and he is no stranger to the stresses of a gunfight. His ability to think quickly and clearly under combat conditions enables him to be an extremely effective leader. Queen of Spades: Roderickson's only real loyalty is to his mission, whatever that happens to be at the time. He will use any means to achieve that goal, regardless of the legal or ethical implications. He has killed many times to ensure that a mission is not compromised, and he sees nothing at all wrong with that theory.

With that, he smiles maliciously at the PCs and walks back to the stairwell. Just as he reaches it, he turns and faces the PCs again. "Oh, I nearly forgot. Mr. McMannos asked me to tell you that the person you are looking for is Nigel Medwin." With that, he turns back and vanishes back into the darkness.

The PCs will be escorted back down the stairs to Sublevel 3. Once they are all through the door and into the level, the suited men will close the door to the stairwell and leave the PCs alone.

By the time that the PCs recover their weapons, the suited men will have disappeared as though they were never there in the first place.

WHAT? NO DISK?

If the PCs did not have the disk on them at the time of this meeting, then Roderickson will be annoyed to say the very least. He will demand to know where the disk is. He will then give them an ultimatum: they can either deliver the disk or he will have them all killed. If the contents of that disk become public, he will be forced to deal with the PCs in the same manner as he has dealt with several other people who have said too much.

He's not joking either.

A FRIENDLY FACE

Because of the little detour, they are going to be about 45 minutes late for their appointment with Unit 8 and Lachlan. By the time they get back to the street, their mobile phones will start ringing.

"Where the hell have you guys been?" asks Kyle Lachlan. "Mitchell was furious! He kept raving about how you guys had sold out and how he had been a fool to trust you. I tried to calm him down, but one of his scouts reported in with something.

"He didn't tell me what was going on. Because I helped you guys out, he thinks that I'm tarred with the same brush. I did overhear some of the conversation though, and I'm sure I caught something to do with the harbor and I think it was Nightwatch. If the PCs have not experienced Sin City 2, Nightwatch is an undercover agency hired by the Darnell to see that his agenda was being met.

"But listen," he says. "We have to figure out what the hell we are going to do about this. Come to address on the card that Mitchell gave you. I'll meet you there in ten minutes to let you in."

The PCs will have no trouble getting to the address on the card. The building is an older three-story brick office building in the Square. From the outside, it looks as though a range of small companies, none of which the PCs will have ever heard of, occupies it.

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As promised, Lachlan is waiting for them just inside the front door. As soon as he sees them coming, he will unlock the door, take a careful look around out in the street, then close and lock the doors behind them. He escorts the PCs to the top floor and ushers them into a well-appointed boardroom, lined with expensive timbers.

Lachlan will get the PCs to tell him what happened to them that caused them to miss the appointment with Mitchell and the rest of Unit 8. He will be extremely surprised by the news that the computer disk has been taken (or alternatively, that some people are desperate enough to recover it that they are willing to kill people to get it back).

He will try to get the PCs to remember what was on the disk that may have been important. This is essentially two main things – the personal schedule of MedAdmin's Trade Council representative, and the details about the corporate involvement in the gang war in the Projects.

If the PCs mention that Roderickson had mentioned someone named Nigel Medwin, Lachlan will look puzzled. "Medwin? I know him. Well, sort of. He's one of the senior executives for Corsa. I believe he reports directly to Angela Corsa. I've only met him a couple of times. I dated his personal assistant a couple of times."

With luck, this should make something click for the PCs. One Trade Council member is already dead. Olsen Haast died shortly after the PCs first experienced the strange empathic throbbing.

Andrew Hedeon was reporting directly to the MedAdmin Corporation's Trade Council representative when the Dark Minions arrived at his house to replace him with a changeling. After the PCs foiled the attack on Hedeon, they found the metallic chrysalis, which Carlos triggered and attracted the vengeance of the Dark(er) Elves. Just as that happened, the PCs again experienced the empathic throbbing.

Now, the PCs have been given the name of a senior executive of a third major corporation, who is in direct contact with a Trade Council member. The PCs should be able to figure out the link by themselves. If they cannot, then Lachlan will be the one who manages to put the pieces together for the PCs.

ONE MORE PIECE OF THE PUZZLE

"I used to laugh when people said 'it's not what you know but who you know.' I thought it was a load of crap. But there are times when a quiet word in the right person's ear really can result in the Dark Minions failing."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

The PCs should be able to convince Lachlan to give his ex-girlfriend a call and find out about Medwin. He will step outside the room and make a call on his mobile phone, only to return a few minutes later.

"Medwin's been away sick with the flu for a couple of days," he reports. "He only returned to work this morning and apparently, he is still suffering from the illness. There are certain things he can't remember."

"To top it all off, he's supposed to have a meeting with Angela Corsa in two hours. Felicity has agreed to get us into the meeting room before Medwin arrives. As far as I can tell, it may be the only chance we have of stopping him."

The PCs have about an hour to get whatever they think they need before they have to get to the Citadel in time to intercept Medwin.

IT'S A LONG WAY TO THE TOP

The characters will have little trouble getting into the Citadel. Lachlan works there and can get the PCs inside. They will have to travel to the Sky Tower, the corporate headquarters of the Corsa Media Corporation in New Centennial City.

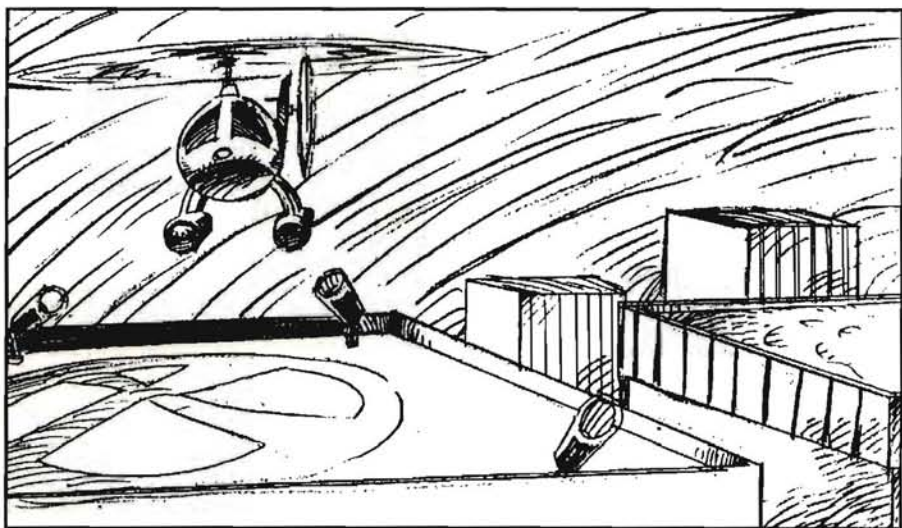
Felicity Ainsworth will meet the PCs and Lachlan as soon as they pull up in the underground car park. She will give Lachlan a brief hug before she leads the way to the staff elevator. If any of the PCs are obviously carrying weaponry, she will quietly suggest that they find a way to conceal them. The security forces do monitor the elevators, and they will shut them down if they see unauthorized personnel carrying firearms into the building.

Felicity will slide her identity pass into the slot below the control panel, and then press her eye to the scanner. A second later, the elevator will shudder slightly as it begins its ascent. "They're paranoid about security here. Especially when you are going up to the top levels. I've had to pull quite a few strings to get you guys up here. If anyone asks, you're a special operations team that is meeting with Ms Corsa. We occasionally get them in. As long as they are booked in, then the security goons don't seem to mind so much."

The rest of the ride to the executive suite at the top of the tower is rather uneventful. Any PCs making a successful Difficult: Observation check will notice the concealed security camera in the elevator.

When the elevator doors open, the PCs will find themselves standing in a plushly appointed lobby. A glass wall looks out over the rest of New Centennial City. The view from this high in the tower is quite spectacular. It seems that the only thing higher than this level of the Sky Tower is the Trade Council Building itself.

Felicity will sign the PCs into the computer system at the security desk. The guard on the desk will glare at the PCs, but he has seen this sort of operation before and knows not to ask too many questions. He will run his eye over each of the PCs in turn, looking for obvious signs of weaponry.



Once the formalities are over, Felicity will lead the PCs through a security door and down a long curved passageway. The building is extremely well appointed. The carpets are a soft, deep burgundy color, which is only accentuated by the soft yellow glow of the downlights in the corridor. The walls are lined with a range of photographs; some are portraits of important people, others are obviously action shots from the news. The PCs will walk about halfway round the tower before Felicity opens a door.

She will show the PCs into the boardroom. The room is about 15 meters long and about six meters wide. It has been decorated in the same style as the rest of the floor. It possesses a confident warmth about it that seems to make the PCs feel relaxed. A large oval table, made from a polished timber stained with a rich burgundy color, dominates the room. Sixteen chairs are spread around the circumference of the table. A large glass wall with a locked door in it provides the wall at the far end of the room. The door leads into a small airlock chamber, which in turn leads to a concrete helipad on the outside of the building.

"Make yourselves at home. Ms. Corsa is not due for another 20 minutes yet. Medwin should arrive shortly before she does. I'll buzz you as soon as Medwin arrives on the floor. There's coffee in the pot at the side. Help yourselves." With that, she leaves and closes the door of the boardroom behind her.

If it seems necessary, have Lachlan remind the PCs not to kill Medwin before they can get the dimensional beacon from him. "If you kill him too early, his body will probably open one of those vortex things and suck the whole lot away with him."

The PCs and Lachlan will have about five minutes to prepare themselves before the intercom will buzz and Felicity will announce that Medwin is on his way up in

the elevator. They have about an additional five minutes before he opens the door to the boardroom and steps inside.

What happens next is up to the PCs. The PCs will have the element of surprise, so long as they are careful. If they take too long, Medwin will simply trigger the beacon in order to summon the Dark(er) Elves. However, if they are clever, they should be able to overpower the changeling quickly and easily. When they do, they will find the dimensional beacon in one of his pockets.



THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

"Fear is the greatest weapon of the Dark Minions. They will do anything to foster that to prevent humanity from acting. Some of them even thrive on fear itself. It seems to give them more power."

"Control your fear and you begin to get control over them. Most of them are surprised when you go on the offensive."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

Whenever the PCs are ready, they will be able to trigger the dimensional beacon. Alternatively, if the PCs fail to ambush Medwin properly, he will trigger the beacon himself.

However the beacon is triggered, the result will be the same. As soon as the activation command is given, the beacon will begin transmitting its empathic signal. Because the PCs are close to the source, any PC empath will need to make a Formidable: Willpower check to remain in control of their actions. Should any of them fail, they will be forced to make actions at one level of difficulty higher than would normally be the case; they will also not be able to surprise the arriving darklings. Should any of them suffer a catastrophic failure, the mental throbbing caused by the beacon will be so painful, they will be unable to act; all they can do is curl up on the floor and whimper. Similarly, any PCs who achieve an outstanding success will be able to get a free action when the darklings arrive.

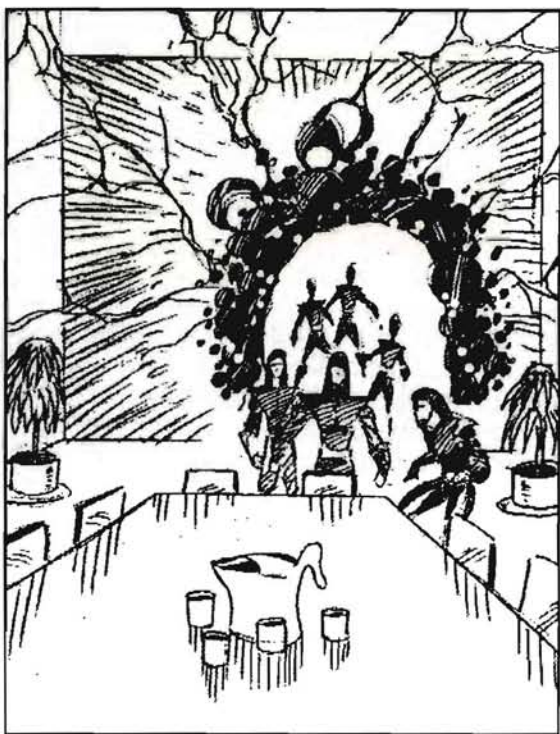
Within five seconds of the beacon beginning transmission, a swirling cloud of energy will materialize in the center of the room. It will grow to about six feet in

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diameter in about two seconds. Two seconds after that, the first of the darklings will step through.

The darkling party consists of six Dark(er) Elves, David Maddox, and a man with short dark hair. If any of the PCs received the foreboding vision when the first dimensional beacon was triggered, they will recognize this man as the same one from the vision.

The darklings did not expect to meet armed resistance when they stepped from the dimensional portal; this should give the PCs a few seconds in which to act, provided they were able to resist the signal from the dimensional beacon.



Play the combat out normally. It is important to remember the confined quarters that the battle will take place in, and to play things accordingly. It's important to remember to try and make the combat as "cinematic" as possible; describe the chunks of wall thrown around the room by the bullets and how the darklings throw themselves across the table to try and get out of the way. At some point in the fight, one of the darklings will call out to the dark-haired man, calling him "Darnell."

All of the Dark(er) Elves will be carrying a Colt Scamp and a h'thbik dagger. David Maddox will have a Scamp and his Desert Eagle .357 Magnum. Darnell will be armed with a Scamp and Colt Krait pistol.

If the PCs managed to acquire any stun weapons, they will come in very handy. If any of the Dark(er) Elves are stuck, they will need to make a Difficult: Willpower check in addition to any damage they would normally take. If they fail, then their link to their empathic anchor is momentarily disrupted and they will be whisked back to their home dimension. It is important that the vortex created when this happens will draw in anything that happens to be nearby at the time. Any Dark(er) Elves that die will also be returned to their home dimension via the vortex.

Should Darnell be hit with a stun weapon, he should make a Formidable: Willpower check. If he fails, then his facedancer will return to its natural state



and look like a lump of putty with veins. If the result is a catastrophic failure, the facedancer will immediately die and drop off the man's face.

If David Maddox is wounded, he will do what he always does when things are going bad for him – he will try to open a portal and dimension walk out of the boardroom. Use the tables in the Empathy Section of the Dark Conspiracy Player's Handbook to determine the difficulty level for the task and if he actually succeeds in escaping.

When the battle is over (or when the PCs manage to kill the facedancer), they will be able to discover the true identity of Darnell. When the mask is removed, the PCs will find themselves

looking on the face of Terrence Bryant, the Mayor of New Centennial City. He should be either dead or dying by this stage. Ideally, the best thing for him would be to have him dragged into the vortex of one of his allies and be caught there when the vortex snaps shut.

If he is still alive, he will be full of vitriol for the PCs. "You bastards have no idea what you have just done," he will spit. "The Trade Council is destroying this city. Can't you people see that? They sucking this city's life blood. I was trying to stop that. They won't thank you for this. They'll probably kill you to silence you instead."

Hopefully at this point the PCs will finish him off.

The noise of the fight will attract the attention of the corporation security personnel. They will burst into the room carrying assault weapons and wearing body armor. Once they have sealed off the room, they will demand that everyone left standing immediately surrender and lay down their weapons. They will open fire on anyone who fails to comply with their orders.

Once the shouting and shooting starts to die down, an expensive civilian helicopter will touchdown on the pad outside the room. A group of six people, all dressed in expensive suits will stride across the pad and enter the building through the airlock.

As soon as they have entered the boardroom, they will stop short and look at the wreckage from the fight. Angela Corsa's face will twist into a mask of rage. "Would someone be kind enough to explain to me just what the hell happened here?"

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The PCs should have a chance to explain to the media magnate exactly what was going on, and how the Mayor had been planning to kill her in the same way he killed Olsen Haast. Corsa will listen incredulously, especially to the more "outrageous" sections of the story like the Dark Elves opening vortices that suck in everything around them, and how people can move through other dimensions to get to other places on Earth.

Once the PCs have finished with their story, Corsa will instruct the security guards to escort the PCs out of the executive suites and have them held until she can figure out what to do with them.

THE AFTERMATH

"Sometimes the waiting is more deadly than the result."

-Zena Marley

(Early 21st-century mercenary philosopher)

The PCs will be escorted down several levels in the tower and put into a meeting room. Unlike the luxurious appointments of the executive suites, this room is Spartan in comparison. The walls are painted in a light gray color and there is nothing apart from two whiteboards decorating the walls. A cheap, prefabricated meeting table fills most of the room.

The door to the room will be locked and four armed guards will be posted to watch the door. They have been instructed to shoot to kill anyone who tries to leave.

About an hour after the PCs are locked in the room, the door will open and Jacob Roderickson will enter, flanked by three of his suited henchmen. "Well, well, well," he says sarcastically. "We have made quite an impression, haven't we? You made quite a mess of the boardroom upstairs. Ms Corsa was livid about that. It is going to cost them thousands to fix that. She was talking about suing you people for the damage you caused. Luckily for you, I was able to talk her out of it, by pointing out that despite the way it looks, she is only alive now because you people intervened to stop Darnell, or should I say Mayor Bryant.

"I have to thank you for that as well. Darnell had been a thorn in the side of my organization for quite a while now. It would seem that you have done us a favor in destroying him. I was mildly surprised when I discovered who Darnell really was. Ms. Corsa quite liked the man, although I cannot for the life of me determine why.

"But enough of this small talk. You people are free to go; Ms. Corsa will not be pressing charges. I convinced her that the publicity would cause far more trouble than good. My men will escort you to your vehicles and you are to leave immediately. As of this moment, the New Centennial Police are no longer looking for you either. Nothing more will be done about this incident. If you all keep your mouths

shut and the events of the past few days remain a secret then you will probably grow old and die happily in your sleep."

Roderickson's eyes will narrow and he will begin speaking through clenched teeth. "But I warn you now. If news of these events leak out and we find that you people are the source of the leak, then we will hunt you all down and terminate you with extreme prejudice. Do not think for one moment that you can get away with it. We will be watching your every move with great interest from now on.

"Now get out of here before I change my mind."

Roderickson's men will take the PCs to the elevators and deliver them back to their cars in the basement. The suited men will say nothing to the PCs for the entire trip. Should any of the PCs complain about their personal weapons being returned, the suited men will draw their own weapons and point them at the PCs. "You should have thought about that before you destroyed the boardroom."

The suited men will watch calmly as the PCs drive up the ramp and back onto the streets of New Centennial City. All the PCs have to do now is figure out just what the hell happened.

EPILOGUE

"In news this morning: A spokesperson for the New Centennial Council has issued a press statement saying that Mayor Terrance Bryant was tragically killed in the Projects last night. Mayor Bryant was apparently inspecting the damage caused by the recent gang war when his car was attacked by an unknown number of assailants using automatic weapons. The Mayor's car was riddled with bullets and then incinerated when a petrol bomb was thrown through a shattered window. Also killed were two bodyguards and a driver. Official funerals will be held later this week.

"A major shipment of arms and ammunition believed to be destined to supply the fighters in the Projects has been uncovered by New Centennial Police. Details are sketchy at this time, but it is believed that the arsenal contained enough firepower to inflict serious losses on corporate security forces.

"More news as it comes to hand..."

- Radio Broadcast on Centennial FM

Continuing to use New Centennial City in your campaign

Questions that the players still have to find answers to:

- Why did the gang war start and why does it seem to be limited to the gangs on the government side of the Projects?
- What happened to the suppliers of "Escapee" and has its distribution ceased?

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- Who was responsible for telling the police that the PCs were the ones selling "Escapee"?
- Why was Mayor Bryant working with the Dark Elves to kill members of the Trade Council?
- Who is Jacob Roderickson, who exactly is he working for and how was he able to determine exactly where the PCs were in order to force them to meet with him?
- Who is Bruce McMannos and where does he fit into the scheme of things?

**SIDE PLOTS TO KEEP YOU BUSY
UNTIL THE NEXT PART OF THE SIN CITY SAGA BECOMES AVAILABLE**

DREAMS OF MY MURDER

A heart transplant patient in Centennial General hospital continues to have a recurring nightmare about being face down in a dark part of the wood in extreme pain. A man with a gun taunts him before shooting him in the temple.

The patient received James Fraser's heart and is now suffering from empathic visions about Fraser's death. Once the PCs investigate, they will discover that Fraser's body was cut up after his death by a group of Reapers, who sold the internal organs to the hospital.

REBUILDING WITH THE TWINS

The PCs can assist the Hewson Twins cell to rebuild their facility and can help them recover people suffering from darkling interference. There will be several more cases of people suffering from the effects of Escapee, so the PCs will have to deal with more manifesting hallucinations.

HUNTING THE NIGHTWATCH

Darnell had employed a group of mercenaries who called themselves "Nightwatch." Now that Darnell is dead, the PCs can assist Colonel Mitchell and the other members of Unit 8 in cleaning up the rest of this unit.

TANGLING WITH THE DARK(ER) ELVES

Dark(er) Elves still run their syndicate down in the Strip. The PCs can have many more encounters with these Minions.

WELCOME TO THE UNDERGROUND

- A GUIDE TO SIN CITY'S UNDERSIDE

Unlike the previous two books in the Sin City series, *Masks of Darkness* is not so much about a particular set of locations in the city; it is about the people. In particular, the story revolves around the interaction between the PCs and various groups in the empathic underground movement, who happen to be active in New Centennial City.

As mentioned in the *Dark Conspiracy Referee's Guide*, not all empathic underground cells work together. They do not all have the same driving force. Some are more militant in their outlook; others cells have been subverted by the Dark Lords. About the only thing they have in common is that they have some connection to users of empathy.

This section of *Masks of Darkness* gives details of the empathic cells that are present in the story. It should not be considered an exhaustive list of all the cells in the city; it is merely a listing of those that are important for the plot. The Referee should feel free to invent or include other empathic underground cells that the group of PCs may have encountered before in the campaign. How the other groups interact with the groups presented here is left for the Referee to decide.

Enough talk. There are people to see.

UNIT 8

Goals: Hunters

Methods: Gunslingers

Empathic Philosophy:

Mixed

Organization: Dictatorial Unit

Assets: Quality resources (around \$400,000 annually)

Size: 26 members, 3 of which are the units patrons

Level of Activity:

Highly Dedicated

Relations with ETs:

Distrustful, as the unit has been burned by ETs in the past.

Relations with Other Cells:

Mixed. Unit 8 tends to gather intelligence on another cell before it will form an alliance with them.

Headquarters:

Currently based in New Centennial City

Description: Shortly after the turn of the century, the US Drug Enforcement Agency suffered a severe cut back in funds, which limited its effectiveness in inter-

cepting drug shipments coming into continental USA. This had a severe impact on the crime rates in the city. Drug related crime skyrocketed as the increased amount of illegal drugs forced turf wars amongst dealers who were working to maintain a certain profit margin.

The US Government set up a secret task force to investigate ways to bring down the supply of illegal drugs before the crime rate worsened. The task force's report suggested that the supply of drugs needed to be stopped before it reached the country, not after. Unfortunately, the sheer cost required to bankroll the operation was beyond the capacity of the government at the time.

It was not until six months later that the report found its way into the hands of a select group of extremely wealthy businessmen. They had all been suffering increasingly large asset losses because of the impact of the drug wars and they wanted to do something about it. This report was leaked to them, and they decided that they would form a cartel of their own and try to protect their own interests.

Within months, mercenary units were inserted into the jungles of Central America and they began to seek out and destroy drug processing and shipment facilities. Working as small squads, they operated without support for extended periods of time, only returning to civilization every couple of months to unwind.

Their tactics were extremely successful. The amount of illegal drugs entering the US shrank drastically. The drug cartels were not able to meet the demand on the streets for drugs such as cocaine, and dealers resorted to attacking one another to try and get enough product to meet the demand of their users.

Unit 8 began its life as one of the more successful of the mercenary units. They were regularly dropped into the mountains of Columbia, where they stalked and destroyed the drug production facilities with an extremely high success rate. Colonel Mitchell has since surmised that they were possibly too successful and that was why the hunters became the hunted.

Colonel Mitchell and his men were working in an area controlled by a Cartel who had allied with a Dark Lord. The Dark Lord delighted in the way humans were constantly craving a chemical solution to their problems. To make matters worse, he had provided the Cartel with a special chemical that made the users more susceptible to empathic suggestion. This was allowing the Dark Lord to develop a virtual army of empathic slaves.

The mercenaries began to destroy the shipments before they could even get be shipped to the USA. This began to have a severely limiting effect on the Dark Lord's plans. When the Cartel failed to stop the mercenaries, despite numerous threats and the deaths of three Cartel leaders, the Dark Lord took matters into his own hands. He sent in a Dimensional Hunter to wipe out the soldiers. (For details on the Dimensional Hunter, see the Dark Conspiracy adventure Hellsgate).

The creature stalked the soldiers through the jungles, as they were stalking the drug dealers. One by one, the hunter killed the mercenaries, taking great delight in the chase. Colonel Mitchell lost more than half his squad before they were able to pull out of the jungle and regroup.

Unluckily for them, the hunter continued to dog their moves and kill more of the men. It was not until the mercenaries were able to acquire some anti-tank weaponry in La Paz, Bolivia, that they were finally able to kill the dimensional hunter and put an end to the threat.

Colonel Mitchell was shocked when he finally realized that the threat he was facing came not from human enemies, as he had suspected, but from something entirely alien. Until then, he had not even given credence to the stories of aliens from other planets or that such things as ghosts actually existed. This realization rocked him to the core and he was convinced that it was no coincidence that this creature had attacked his men.

The mercenaries went back into Columbia, this time hunting the Cartel and not the drugs. They took their time and spent months carefully gathering intelligence about the Cartel leaders, their movements and most importantly, their allies. What they learned shocked them even more than the thing they had killed in La Paz.

The fight to stop the Dark Lord cost Colonel Mitchell and his men dearly. Seven of the ten men in the unit were killed and one had both legs torn off by a Dark Minion. But when the dust settled, Colonel Mitchell and his men had destroyed the shut down the machinations of the Dark Lord permanently.

Colonel Mitchell returned to the USA and contacted the group of businessmen who had bankrolled the drug interdiction operation. After a series of meetings over the course of many weeks, most of the group had dismissed Colonel Mitchell as a crackpot, and vowed never to hire him for operations ever again.

However, three members of the group were intrigued by Mitchell's story of "aliens and other bug eyed monsters" enough that they hired another group to look into the allegations. When the report came back confirming what Mitchell had reported, the businessmen were stunned.

They discussed what they were to do about this for several months. In the end, they decided that the long-term ramifications of a Dark Invasion were so great that they would do whatever was in their power to stop it.

Thus, Unit 8 was created. Mitchell was given authority to recruit whatever members he saw fit and was tasked with hunting down and destroying Minion activity wherever it occurred. The unit's patrons would continue to bankroll the operation indefinitely, so long as the unit was continuing to be effective.

Mitchell could not have been happier with the outcome. He had been haunted by nightmares about the event in Bolivia and Colombia, and he saw the permission to undertake anti-Minion operations as a way he could avenge the deaths of his men who had fallen. He immediately began to recruit additional men, seasoned combat veterans who had all come in contact with the Dark Invasion and who wanted to do something about it.

For the past eight years, Unit 8 has been travelling all over the world, conducting operations to eradicate the threat of the Dark Lords. They have seen a great deal of combat over the years, and have lost many men along the way. They do not seem to have any trouble finding replacement members however.

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Unit 8 arrived in New Centennial City about six weeks ago after hearing reports of Minion activity following the plane crash in the Projects. Following their standard operating procedure, they have been busy gathering intelligence since that time.

THE MAKEUP OF UNIT 8

Unit 8 is unusual for an empathic underground cell, in that most of its members are not empathic. There are only four fully empathic members of the unit, and two more who have strong latent abilities.

Daniel Smith and Enrico Hernandez are the only members who have received formal training as empaths. Smith is a mystic, training with Harvey Grey Wolf, a Native American shaman. Hernandez is a trained psionic and also one of the most fanatical members of the unit in combat. The other members are all neuropaths with differing levels of confidence and ability.

Unit 8 is organized along similar lines to most military groups. The main fighting force consists of two eight-man infantry squads; they are armed predominately with silenced submachineguns, although there are heavier weapons available if required. In addition, there is a support squad, which consists of a medic, a communications expert, an intelligence analyst, a weaponsmith, a demolition expert and a pilot.



At present, only Colonel Mitchell and his second-in-command, Major Andrew Perkins (the other remaining survivor of the Colombian mission) know the identity of the unit's three patrons. The men of the unit know that they are paid by a number of wealthy benefactors, although they are unaware of who they are.

With the exception of the three patrons, all members of the unit have had personal encounters with the Dark Minions before they joined the unit; without exception, all of them bear personal grudges against the forces of darkness. This is one of the criteria for Mitchell hiring anyone as a part of the unit.

THE NETWATCHERS

Goals: Hunters, Information Brokers, and Liberators

Methods: Pencil Commandos

Empathic Philosophy:

Mixed

Organization:

Anonymous Alliance

Assets: Superior resources (around \$24,000,000 annually)

Size: 10 members

Level of Activity:

Highly Dedicated

Relations with ETs:

Ambivalent

Relations with Other Cells:

Good. The Netwatchers tend to pass the information they find onto cells that can act on it.

Headquarters:

Worldwide

Description: The growth of the computer network worldwide enabled a level of communication the world had never seen before. People from all over the globe could communicate in ways that were unrestricted by governments or any other organizations.

As the influence of the Dark Lords grew, people began to experience an increase in empathic powers. For some, it meant that they could relate to humans or animals better. Others found they could get visions about the future. For some though, their empathic powers meant they could sense what was going on inside a computer.

For some Minion hunters, the computer network is a gift from God. Thousands of corporations use the Net for transacting business on a daily basis. With all of the information buzzing around, it becomes a lot easier to find out things that the Dark Minions wish to remain hidden.

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The Netwatchers are an anonymous group of computer empaths who have been using their skills to track down the activities of the Dark Minions across the world. Despite the best efforts of the Minions, there are always anomalies in the computer records; things that just don't add up. If enough of them get put together, they begin to suggest activities that might otherwise have been hidden from view.

An individual who went by the online handle of "Eyespy" formed the Netwatchers four years ago. No one is really sure who Eyespy really is. The general consensus is that the individual is a woman, although this has never really been confirmed. What is known is that she is one of the world's most successful computer empaths. She has the ability to reach out with her mind and access data as though she was playing with it in her hands.

According to the story, Eyespy was working as a computer contractor for the Nagoda Corporation, back in 2009. She had been working on a personnel payroll database and discovered that there were certain individuals working for the corporation who seemed not really to be working there. They were being paid a salary every pay period, but they were assigned to a department listed as "executive services."

Out of sheer curiosity more than anything else, Eyespy began to look for information about what the executive services department actually did. No matter where she looked, there didn't seem to be anything concrete. The executive services department just seemed like a black hole. Wherever she looked in the computer system, she just seemed to keep running into impassable walls.

She was working late one night when she sensed a flow of data through the mainframe that she had not felt before. Reaching out with her mind, she discovered a network link had formed between the mainframe and another computer, which she had never encountered before. She was able to use her talents to quickly slip into the new computer and look at the data there.

At first, she did not recognize what she had found. She had stumbled across one of the computer systems used by the executive branch. It contained critical personnel information about members of the Nagoda staff. But instead of information like date of birth, addresses and phone numbers, this information dealt with the relative empathic qualities of each member of staff. Some of the people in the files had recently left the company according to the personnel data that she had been working with. According to the executive service computer, they had been taken to a special laboratory and they were being tested for all types of empathic abilities, and the effects of drugs and special surgery on those abilities.

Eyespy was stunned. She had never encountered anything like it before and did not know how to react to the information. She quickly downloaded several of the files she had found and got out before anyone noticed the unauthorized connection. Seconds later, the link to the personnel mainframe shut down.

Not knowing what else to do, she went home and logged onto the Net. She quickly began searching through the information on the thousands of conspiracy

theories that had abounded for many years. Over the course of the next few weeks, she read through as much information as she could on the subjects and made contact with a few people who she thought she could trust.

Since then, the group has grown in size to six. All six members of the group are highly empathic when it comes to computers. The group tends to be able to track down other computer empaths with relative ease, as if they had a particular feel online.

To keep the members of the group safe, they have mostly withheld their true identities from one another, using only online handles as the only way of identification. There have been several occasions when an existing member has actively recruited an empath they have known personally. However, because they have a way of linking their minds to the Net, the other members have come to know what all the other members "feel like" and they can quickly spot an imposter.

They meet every couple of nights to share the information they have found. Not all of this information is related to darkling activities. Some of it is information about the stock market trends. The members of the group skate dangerously close to insider trading, using the information they glean from the various databases they examine to make decisions about where to invest their money. So far for them, it has proven to be very lucrative.

As time went by, the group put more pieces of the puzzle together and realized that the things that Eyespy had stumbled across were far worse than they had originally thought. The corporations were regularly covering up incidents that would have harmed their public image. People's deaths were covered up, as were incidents of darkling activity.

The more the group discovered, the more they realized that they could not keep this information to themselves. They began to search out ways they could give this information to other Minion hunting cells around the world and allow them to act on the information that the Netwatchers were finding. They also used some of the money they were making to finance several operations against Minion activities.

The group exists to use the computer networks to follow the trails of the Dark Minions. Most of them have taken jobs as computer contractors for the larger megacorporations around the world. While they are working on the projects they are hired for, they spend their spare time prowling through the databases, looking for the small hiccups in the records that can often point to Minion activity.

Recently, the group has started funding missions to help free empaths who were being held against their will in psychic test labs around the world. One of the newer members of the group, Ariadne, had been one of the subjects in these labs before she broke out. She is now driven to track down other labs and help free any empaths who are being held as prisoners.

Other members have their own areas of specialty as well. Eyespy concentrates on personnel records and looks for staff who are on the payroll, but don't tend to show up anywhere else. Accounta works with financial systems, tracking money laundering operations and where black money gets spent. MedicineMan hunts

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through hospital databases for patients showing symptoms indicative of Minion activity, or for people who tend to die under mysterious circumstances. Kyle Lachlan, who calls himself Cypher, specializes in computer security and looks for data that is being encrypted for no readily apparent reason. General Chaos works with the military and military contractors, looking for technology that may not be of human origin. Cameraman works in the media, keeping an eye open for stories that are being covered up, or information that doesn't appear to make sense. Brainiac covers the science and engineering departments, both of academic institutions and corporate research and development groups, looking for strange research. Psyker concentrates on the psychological community, keeping an eye out for patients who may be displaying signs of empathic ability and passing their names to a cell to be picked up before they fall foul of the Dark Minions. Monger spends his time prowling the rest of the net, keeping an eye on all of the tabloid sites as well as cross-referencing whatever the others find with the conspiracy theorists, to see how the ideas hold up.

How the members of the cell deal with other cells is left to the individuals. Some members prefer to remain anonymous in all aspects of their work, communicating with other cells in the same way they communicate with members of their own cell. Other members, such as Kyle Lachlan, are more gregarious and prefer to get involved personally. This is one of the few areas where there is division of opinion amongst the members, but it has yet to cause any lasting problems with the group dynamics.

THE HEWSON TWINS

Goals: Healers
Methods: Pencil Commandos
Empathic Philosophy: Mystic

Organization: Democratic

Assets: Adequate
Size: 12 members

Level of Activity: Highly Dedicated

Relations with ETs: Ambivalent

Relations with Other Cells: Good. The Twins rely on other groups to help bring victims of the Dark Minions in for healing, and they pass reports that might require action back.

Headquarters: New Centennial City

Description: Mystical healers have been around for thousands of years. Even indigenous tribes had some form of medicine man or shaman they could turn to help heal diseases. Modern medicine disregards such techniques as "mumbo-jumbo." Nevertheless, with the reappearance of empathic powers among the human race, empathic healing has become a viable technique once again.

Aiwen and Arienella Hewson are identical twins. They were born to Byron and Belinda Hewson, who spent their lives working for one of the major corporations. For the Hewson family, everything in life revolved around the corporation. The company was the pivot around which everything else rotated.

When the girls were six, their parents gave permission for them to take part in a study the corporation was conducting into the supposed mental telepathy talents shared by identical twins. The tests were a highly developed empathic screening process, looking for individuals with a high degree empathic talent that the corporation could exploit.

The girls showed an extremely high latent ability. The corporation instantly recruited the girls into the empathic development program they were setting up. The corporation gave Aiwen and Arienella's parents preferential treatment, giving them a new house and better working conditions, on the proviso that the girls be permitted to remain in the program.

What the corporation did not tell the girl's parents was the nature of the tests the girls would be subjected to. They were subjected to brutal treatment, which was designed to cause enough pain in the minds of the girls to shock their empathic talent into full operant status. The girls had to endure electric shock treatment, sleep and food deprivation, periods in a full sensory deprivation tank and many other horrific exercises.

Most children would have buckled under the pressure and given in. The Hewson girls clung to each other for solace and learned to endure the tests without complaining. They knew that if they did what they were told, they would one day be able to stop all of this from happening.

The tests continued for four years. As time wore on, the corporation refused to let the girls' parents visit, trying to use the separation from loved ones as a catalyst for the awakening of the empathic talent. It was this that finally made the parents realize that something was wrong and that the girls were in a situation they should never have been subjected to.

Byron Hewson began to look around for help. It took him four months, but he finally managed to get in touch with an underground empathic cell that had taken it upon themselves to free people who had been used as psychic test cases. The cell was shocked to learn of the horrific nature of the tests the girls had been through in the past four years and agreed to get the girls out.

Two weeks later, the cell raided the corporate laboratory and freed all of the test subjects. They also managed to kill three of the research personnel who were unlucky enough to be on duty that night, before deleting all of the records from the

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computer system and then setting the laboratory on fire. By the time the fire brigade managed to bring the fire under control, the lab was completely gutted.

The corporation was furious and immediately set to work trying to locate the leak that had resulted in the raid. It did not take them too long to realize that Byron Hewson was behind the tip-off. As punishment, the corporate security chief tortured and murdered Belinda Hewson in front of Byron, before executing him as well.

When the girls learned that their parents had been killed, it finally managed to do what the corporation had been failing to do all along – it pushed them over the edge into full operant status. For two weeks, the girls were completely catatonic as their brains almost exploded from the pain caused by their grief.

In desperation, the cell that had freed them took the girls to see an old Shaman Healer named Mamut. Mamut recognized what the girls were going through and took responsibility for them. Over the next six weeks, he worked with both of them, performing psyche surgery on both of them to help bring them back to some sort of sanity. For the entire time, he maintained an empathic link to both girls and continued to send a sense of love and acceptance to both of them.

In time, Mamut's work brought the girls out of their catatonia. They began to speak with him about what had happened to their parents and what had just happened with their minds. Mamut explained everything patiently to them, knowing just how vulnerable they were at the moment. In turn, the girls began to see Mamut as their grandfather, and did everything they could to make him comfortable and happy.

For the next fifteen years, Mamut trained the girls in the mystic art of healing. His selfless devotion to helping others rubbed off on the girls, and they began to feel that using their talents to make someone else's life better was one of the most important things a human being could aspire to. They made excellent pupils, and before too long, Mamut was allowing them to treat people by themselves. In some cases, they were able to work together and help people that Mamut had been unable to assist.

It was in this time that the girls first encountered the handiwork of the Dark Minions. Several patients had come to Mamut with deep emotional trauma from their encounters with the Minions. The girls talked at length with the patients about these encounters, trying to get a feel for the sorts of things that the Minions were doing. Before long, the twins realized that the constant invasion of the Dark Minions was such a threat to mankind that they began to devote most of their time and energy to healing the victims of the Minions plots.

Not long after this, Mamut passed away quietly in his sleep, at age 90. He had sensed that his end was approaching, but he waited until he knew that the girls were prepared to carry on his legacy, and to continue to help those people who needed it most. Once he was sure that they had learned all they needed to know, he let himself go.

The twins sensed this and once they had laid Mamut to rest, they began on the journey they are still on today – to bring compassion, love and healing to a world that desperately needs it. They continue to use their empathic talents to heal people's diseases, both physical and mental.

For a while, the girls worked by themselves, but before long, some of the people they had helped expressed interest in giving something back. They asked to be taught the healing arts as well, so they could help expand the scope of influence the girls had. At first, the girls were not sure how to react; they were more than busy treating people and they thought that they did not have time to teach as well. But then Mamut came to them both in a dream and reminded them of how he had taught them while he was still treating others. The next morning, the first of many pupils began the long journey towards becoming a healer.

Since then, the cell has grown to a dozen members, with Aiwen and Arienella still continuing to carry Mamut's legacy on. The love that the twins show towards people has become infectious, with many people continuing to spread the emotions once they have left the cell.

These days, the whole cell is referred to as the "Hewson Twins" because people are still sent to see the twins by other empathic cells. None of the other cell members seem to mind, as they know that they are helping the twins perform their healing work and they give of themselves willingly and gladly.

The whole cell has recently moved its center of operation to New Centennial City. After the Calendite Movement was shown to be a massive hoax, many people contacted the twins and asked them to come and help with the treatment of some of the victims. The twins recognized the urgency of the situation and came quickly to help. Since then, they have discovered the effects that the drug Escapee is having on people, and they have made the treatment of the users their number one priority.



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BRAVO-TWELVE

Goals: Gain of power

Methods: Shadows

Empathic Philosophy:

Psionic

Organization:

Subverts

Assets: Superb resources (around \$2,350,000 annually)

Size: 6 members

Level of Activity:

Highly Dedicated

Relations with ETs:

ETs are nothing but tools to be used and discarded.

Relations with Other Cells:

Non-existent.

Headquarters:

New Centennial City

Description: Bravo-Twelve began as "Project Bravo-Twelve," an experiment in psionic research by TojiCorp in New York. TojiCorp was convinced that they could develop a powerful group of psionics who would use their abilities to spy on the competition and steal valuable secrets. There are certain sources who have apparently traced the project's theoretical basis back to a secret KGB project at the height of the Cold War.

Subjects in the trial were given differing amounts of psychotropic drugs in an attempt to "rewire" certain parts of the brain. They were also injected with a range of hormones, which were designed to increase the effectiveness of certain bodily reactions, in the hope that this would lead to heightened empathic ability.

While the tests were successful in increasing empathic strength, they also had a wide range of negative side effects. Some subjects were struck down with dementia; others were haunted by nightmares or experienced some sort of poltergeist-like activity. More than 50% of the group began to suffer from extreme homicidal tendencies, which required the use of heavy sedatives to keep under control. There was not a single subject on the trial who did not suffer from some form of negative effect from the trial.

Several members of the project died; some perished under extremely suspicious circumstances. Others committed suicide when they found themselves unable to cope with the mental torment they found themselves in. For the rest, not a day went by without them talking of taking control and breaking out of the center.

It was probably this intense concentration on the desire for freedom that helped them get out. On what would have been an otherwise boring Thursday afternoon,

one of the Project Bravo-Twelve subjects, David Maddox, had an unexpected visitor. The man introduced himself as Bruce McMannos, a friend of a friend who wished to see Maddox and the other members of the project freed immediately. Maddox was skeptical to say the least; McMannos refused to name the so-called mutual friend, so Maddox felt McMannos was not to be trusted.

To gain Maddox's trust, McMannos convinced him to try a simple mental exercise. McMannos claimed that if Maddox and several of his friends were to use this exercise, they would find that they would be able to break out of the center with little effort. Maddox agreed to try the exercise, mainly to shut McMannos up and get him out of the building.

That night, curiosity got the better of Maddox and he began to wonder if the exercise might actually work. Thinking that there was no harm in trying, he began to practice the technique that McMannos had suggested. Within two hours, Maddox sensed something in his brain shift, and the psionic powers the tests and training had been trying to awaken suddenly snapped to their fullest potential. Something else snapped at the same time – Maddox's morality.

Maddox spent the rest of the night learning how wield his newly discovered powers properly. By dawn, he was able to perform clairvoyance and clairsentience with little or no effort. He also discovered he could focus the power of his mind and use it as a weapon. One ward guard was found dead from a stroke early the next morning.

For the next 36 hours, Maddox taught five of his fellow inmates the exercise that McMannos had taught him. In each case, the same result occurred – full psionic operancy.

Once they were all in charge of their powers, David Maddox, Martin Kwende and four others used them to get out of their cells, murder all of the guards and get free of the laboratory. For them, it was a dream come true. They had been suffering at the hands of the corporate testers for years and now they had a chance to strike back. They torched the place, making sure that the damage inflicted to the corporation was far more than the loss of their precious test subjects.

And as soon as they got clear of the building, Bruce McMannos was standing across the road waiting for them.

Bravo-Twelve seemed to vanish after that. TojiCorp was livid about the loss of one of its most promising projects and the damage that the inmates had caused on their escape. Several teams were dispatched to track down the group and bring them back in. Every one vanished without a trace after reporting that they had found a lead and were homing in.

Bravo-Twelve resurfaced briefly in Seacouver three years ago, leaving a trail of destruction and chaos behind them. They had been working on a hostile takeover of a subsidiary company of TojiCorp when they were discovered by a group of Minion hunters who didn't realize what they had found. Police found the Minion hunters hanging by their ankles in an abandoned building, their brains appearing to have been cooked from within.

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The group has only recently begun making their presence felt in New Centennial City. It is not known how long they have been active in the city, although it is possible that they have been here for some time, working behind the scenes. There have been several unexplained deaths in the city over the past few years, and the cause of death is very similar to some of Bravo-Twelve's previous atrocities.

The members of the group take great delight in using their psionic powers to get an advantage over another human being. For some, David Maddox and Martin Kwende in particular, the thrill of using their mental powers to kill another human is one of the most pleasurable experiences possible.

The group is rabidly anti-corporate and will do anything within their power to bring down the corporations. Sometimes, this means that they use the stock market as a weapon against the corporations; other times, they will simply kill important corporate personnel. It doesn't matter to them how they do it. The intense hatred of corporate policy continues to drive them to this day.

Their recent alliance with the Dark(er) Elves is a means to an end for them. They share some of the same passions as the elves and have found that the understanding between the two groups is to their mutual benefit. They realize that not all of the elves feel this way. However, the members of Bravo-Twelve are more than happy to turn on their partners should the need for such an action arise. For now, they are willing to work along side the elves, undermining the power base in the city.

THE DR'OEHLV (DARK(ER) ELVES)

Dark Elves have been considered among the best of the Dark Minions for many years. The race's strong resemblance to a normal human makes them virtually undetectable in the post-modern world of DC. A Dark Elf can approach in a crowd without arousing suspicion, and disappear just as quickly into that same crowd.

Dark Elves have a nasty streak a mile wide. To say that they derive pleasure from slaughtering humans is an understatement of the highest order. Dark Elves have been responsible for many of the legends and folklore in human history, particularly those involving the "little people," "fey folk," or "fairies." It is these Dark Elves of legend that are described in the DC Referee's Guide.

The term Dark(er) Elves still refers to the same basic group of Minions, but there is an important difference. If one were to compare a Dark Elf to a wild wolf, then a Dark(er) Elf would be its domesticated counterpart. They are the Dobermans, Pit Bulls and Rottweilers of the elven community.

DARK ELF ORIGINS

Dark Elves are apparently very human in appearance, although fairer than average. Legend is that they dwell in subterranean caverns, where they maintain entire underground civilizations.

DARK CONSPIRACY REFEREE'S GUIDE

As a race, the Dr'oehlv (as they call themselves), inhabit a dimension they call Faer'eah, a paradise of rolling hills and towering forests. The Dr'oehlv live in clans; extended family groups that inhabit the land. They are masters of their realm, having long since subverted all lesser creatures with whom they share the verdant fields of Faer'eah.

Faer'eah has a discontinuity of 1 (nearly identical to Earth in proximity and form) and an assimilation value of 10 (extremely high). It is this high assimilation value that requires the Dark Elves found on earth to possess strong empathic powers. One empathic ability that all Dark Elves found on Earth automatically possess is dimension walk. Without that ability it is unlikely that the Dr'oehlv would ever have found their way to Earth, let alone found a way to stay there.

This is because Faer'eah have an extremely powerful grip on the creatures who call the land home. This grip is so strong, that it is impossible for any creature (including the Dark Elves themselves) to ever truly escape. A Dark Elf in our world is constantly fighting the "pull" of their home dimension. To aid in fighting the pull of Faer'eah, a Dark Elf will attempt to form an empathic anchor on our world. This is a Formidable: Empathy task, and may be attempted once per hour until success is achieved. If at any point in the process of forming the anchor, the Dark Elf should have a critical failure, they are immediately, and unceremoniously whisked back to Faer'eah (see The Vortex below).

Once established however, the Dark Elf is able to use the anchor to resist the pull of their home dimension. An empathic anchor must be something that is native to Earth, and it must be a living thing. The elf cannot stray too far from his/her anchor. For each day spent without having physical contact with the anchor, the Dark Elf will have to make a successful Dimension Walk test (starting with Easy, and progressing one level of difficulty per each additional day, until failure occurs).

For this reason, the Dro'ehlv tend to choose an object for their anchor that they know they can stay near. In the past, some Dro'ehlv have anchored themselves to trees. This bond with an unmoving (but living) object is probably the basis for many of the myths about Dryads. Sometimes a small animal is used as an anchor through the use of Animal Empathy, and then becomes a constant companion for the Dark Elf. This is the basis for the legends of magician familiars. Another possibility is to anchor oneself to a particular person using Human Empathy. Humans can attempt to oppose being used as an anchor using their Willpower stat.

THE VORTEX

When a Dark Elf loses the fight to stay anchored in our world, a startling phenomenon takes place. A gateway to Faer'eah immediately forms around the hapless Dark Elf, drawing them back to their home. This gateway usually appears on the ground as an inky black cloud that seems to flash sparks of even darker anti-light. The gateway cloud will slowly rotate, appearing to form a vortex in the floor, through which the elf will be drawn. The size of the gateway is proportional to the power of the Dark Elf. The gateway will be one meter in diameter for point of Empathy the Dark Elf possesses. The duration of the gateway is also proportional to the empathy attribute, causing the gateway to remain active for one combat phase per point of Empathy.

Any item or person near the Vortex is in danger of being drawn into the gateway as well. The items appear to slowly sink into the inky depths of the gate. If the object has not passed completely through by the time the gate closes, it is severed just below ground level. There remain a couple of inches below ground where the ground and the object seem to merge completely. Note: The object has not sunk into the ground itself, but into another dimension. The formation of this Vortex may explain why humans (erroneously) believe the Dark Elves live underground.

The Vortex is formed automatically when a Dark Elf loses their empathic anchor in our world. It also forms upon the death of the Dark Elf. This can be very distracting during combat! Imagine a tense situation between a small group of Dark Elves and your player characters. As soon as one of the elves is killed, the vortex begins to form around the body. Anyone or anything immediately surrounding the body will begin to sink into the ground along with the body. The vortex size and duration is dependent on the empathy rating of the dead elf. Unless the PCs act quickly, they may be drawn halfway into the vortex, and sliced in two by the closing of the gateway.

Anything that passes through the vortex is brought to Faer'eah, where it immediately begins undergoing assimilation. Once assimilated, earth creatures that are still alive run the risk of becoming connected to that dimension. If they don't possess the Dimension Walk skill, chances are they could be trapped in Faer'eah forever!

DARK ELF SOCIETY

Dark Elves have always taken a great interest in humanity, a perverse interest that derives pleasure from human suffering and ruination. As a result, individual Dark Elves often join human society, where they pass themselves off as human, generally preferring to pose as artists, poets, musicians or magicians.

The clan structure of the Dark Elves is extremely rigid. It is unusual for one clan to even interact with another clan, much less intermingle with them. It was originally thought that all Dark Elves had similar features. As it turns out, this is only true within the clans themselves. While members of each clan will undoubtedly bear a strong family resemblance, the details of that resemblance are as varied as they are in humans. Skin tone, hair color, height and accent are all examples of features that can vary from clan to clan. For instance, the Dark Elves who first began tormenting inhabitants of the British Isles hundreds of years ago were all from the same clan, and tended to be smaller, with reddish hair, and a strong Irish-sounding accent.

Out of necessity, the Clans were very careful in dealing with humanity, generally limiting their dealings to a select few individuals. Their dealings took the form of mischief and generally centered around finding ways to trick the humans into making decisions that would, in the long term, cause greater suffering for the individual.

As time passed, the Dark Elves became bolder. They grew bored with spending time on a single human, preferring instead to maximize the damage they could do, horrifying and even killing many humans at once. However, they still worked in secret. Setting up elaborate traps was fine for some of the Dark Elves, but others found such simple sport to be less than satisfying.

One particular clan of Dark Elves completely ignored the "rules" to remain unseen, and actually flaunted their presence in front of humanity. Nothing happened. Oblivious as ever, the humans assumed that the figure standing before them were just as human as they were. This was a turning point for this particular clan. Since they discovered they had a talent for passing as human, they would exploit that.

DARK(ER) MOTIVES

What distinguishes Dark(er) Elves from their Dark brethren is their organization. The Dark(er) Elves have formed a veritable crime syndicate in many major cities. Running themselves like a ruthless business, they get their fingers into anything they can. Posing as humans, and working side by side with them, these Dark(er) Elves are constantly on the lookout for a new score that could advance the position of the Clan.

Dark Elves have been active in New Centennial City for some time now. They have spent most of their time in the Strip; slowly taking over the organizing crime rings in the city. Groups such as the Mafia and the Yakuza have invested a lot of time and effort to get a foothold in the city, only to discover that their people get viciously killed within months of their arrival.



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The recent alliance with Bravo-Twelve has been to the mutual benefit of the two groups. Bravo-Twelve get to use the elves as a weapon to further their own goals, while the elves benefit from getting their influence further entrenched in the seedy underbelly of the city. Some members of the clan have grave misgivings about the alliance with the humans, but they have kept their criticism to themselves, as they can see the overall benefit for the clan in the longer term.

PLACES TO GO

SMITH PARK

Nestled against the hill on which the Projects stand, Smith Park is one of the largest areas of nature left within the boundaries of New Centennial City. It is certainly the most popular. Every weekend, thousands of people flock to the park to exercise. Running, walking, skating and cycling are by far the most popular pursuits.

The concept for the park was conceived back in 1905 when Leslie Smith, one of the leading industrialists in Centennial made a visit to New York City and fell in love with Central Park. She was enamored with the design; she loved how it felt as though she was out in the countryside, despite being in one of the largest cities in the world.

Upon her return to Centennial, she purchased a large expanse of land, which had, until that time, been simply rolling grasslands. She hired some of the best landscape designers in the country to create the vision that she had. She wanted an area that would remain pristine for years to come, giving people whom lived in the city a place to escape and be in touch with nature.

The designers more than matched the vision Leslie had. They exceeded it in many ways. Today, the park's wooded slopes and quiet corners really do make visitors feel as though they have stepped out of the city and into the wilderness. Even the traffic noise somehow seems to be swallowed by the park, leaving a tranquil zone in the middle of an incredibly hectic city.

The park is centered on the large duckpond that is one of the most prominent features of the park. The pond was created in the bowl between two gentle slopes. Several man-made creeks flowing through the park all empty into the pond, with the one closest to the Citadel tumbling gently down the rocks in a small but beautiful waterfall.

The area surrounding the pond is a large, open grassy field, which rises slightly to the tree line closest to the Citadel. On the hillside, the ground is relatively flat; hundreds of people congregate here every week, either to throw balls to one another, or simply to lay in the sun and relax after a hectic week. While the grassy area doesn't have an official name, the residents referred to it as "the prairie."

The corner closest to the Square is normally referred to as "the Grove." Oak trees were planted there when the park was first designed and they have grown well for over 100 years. They have weathered remarkably well; the Grove has not suffered from the vandalism attacks that have plagued some of the other areas of the park. Rumors have abounded about a group of druids who use the Grove and have taken the responsibility for its protection. These rumors have been fueled by a north-south-east-west oriented ring of standing stones with a fire pit in the center, which is located in the center of the grove. However, no one has ever managed to see the druids in action.

The bottom corner of the park, between the Grove and the hill, was designed to resemble a temperate rainforest. Careful planning of water usage and natural landscape features allowed the designers to encourage the growth of ferns, creepers and other plants that would normally not grow in these conditions. The rainforest area is one of the more popular areas in the summer months, as it remains cool even in the heat of the day. There is a small waterfall up close to the hillside; it flows down into a small pool that is surrounded by dense vegetation, most of which bring forth colorful flowers in the springtime. The Grotto is perhaps the most beautiful and secluded part of the park and few of the residents even know of its existence. The handful of people who do know about it keep it a jealously guarded secret.

The strip of land between the duck pond and the hill was planted with a variety of conifers. The smell of the pine, birch and spruce through this area is unmistakable. This strip of the park has one of the longest stretches of relatively straight bike path, and plays host to a cross-country mountain bike competition each year.

The area at the base of the hill below Canada Blvd. holds many sporting fields. Every weekend, these fields host a huge variety of different sports. These are predominately children's competitions, although there are a range of adult competitions here as well. Instead of simply making the area an open expanse of fields, the designers broke them up by planting several rows of trees between each field. This gives the impression that each field is alone in the park; the backdrop of trees towering over the fields makes the area far more scenic than it would have been otherwise. Several of the larger ovals have Edwardian-era grandstands, complete with wrought iron panels. These have been well maintained and upgraded by the Smith Park Consortium over the years to ensure that the historical look and feel of the park remains.

The corner of the park closest to Broadway is home to the Centennial Amphitheater. Seating about 10,000 people, the open-air amphitheater hosts important cultural events throughout the year. Every summer, the Centennial Repertory Society puts on a production, which is quite often a Shakespearean play. The amphitheater is also the location for many of the major rock concerts that come through the city.

The edge of the park parallel with Parkside Drive is predominately an area of wooded hillside, with several small gardens planted in the clearings. The most

famous of these is the Batts rose garden. Many of the couples who get married in New Centennial City come to the gardens at the top edge of the park to have their wedding photos taken. On any given weekend, it is not unusual to find up to a dozen bridal parties getting photographed amongst the roses.

PERSONALITY: THE VISITOR

"I love coming to the park. After a hectic week slaving at the office, the chance to get out in the fresh air is something that keeps me going. I know that a lot of people feel the same way – there are some I only ever get to see here in the park every weekend."

"I used to spend a lot of time on my bike racing around the cycleway that winds its way through the area. It's really spectacular in places, especially when you get up into the rainforest areas near the hill. I always used to stop up there for a rest. I don't know what it is about that corner; it always seems to recharge my batteries and give me enough composure to face life again on the Monday."

"Isadora and I had our wedding photos taken in the rose gardens here. I don't think we could have picked a better day for it. The sun was shining and the flowers were beautiful that year; I don't think that I have ever seen them look as good since. We met another couple there who was getting their photos taken there at the same time, David and Michelle. We've been friends with them ever since. It's amazing how you can become friends with some of the people you meet here in the park."

"Since I became a father, I tend to spend more time down at the ovals. Hayden is playing soccer this year, so he has at least one game every week down there. It's amazing what they have done with the land down there. These great trees surround even the smallest fields, with the access roads passing underneath leafy canopies to get to them. I might not get to spend as much time in the other parts of the park anymore, but even coming here is usually enough."

"Every now and again, I still get the chance to get out on my old bike and pedal around the place. Normally, that's only in the summer months when the days are longer and I don't have to rush home quite as early. Being able to stretch all the muscles out is a really great thing. I think that if this city didn't have something like Smith Park, a lot of people would be a lot more stressed than they already are."

"The strange thing about this place is that you never seem to see gardeners or anyone else working on it, but it always seems to look pristine. It's almost as though there are whole pile of little fairies that come out after dark and fix everything. At least that's the story I tell my kids anyway. Every year, I make a donation to the Consortium who keeps this place running smoothly. I love what they are doing here. They might not need the money; I hear they have some of the best luck with investments in the city. But I still like to give something back to the place that gives me a chance to feel like a person instead of just a machine."

THE VISITOR AS AN NPC

The visitor is typical of the thousands of people who come to Smith Park every weekend as a way to escape the dullness of the rest of the week. Most of them are wageslaves for the Corporations. It's rare to find ballotmen down in the park.

Level: Novice

Initiative: 1

Skills: As per Novice NPCs

PERSONALITY: THE GANGER

Sure, you might come to the Park during the day man, and you'll think it's the nicest place in the city. Green trees and pretty flowers and all that sort of crap. The park ain't a nice place, man. You come down here after dark. I'll show you what this place is really like.

Soon as dark as fallen, that's when the brothers and me come out, man. Our turf's the L. Wiseman grandstand. You come near there after dark, you're goin' to have to answer to the brothers. We fought hard to get the grandstand. People died over that one.

There's some nasty dudes here after dark. I heard that the Park after dark has a higher mugging and murder rate than the Strip. I've been to the Strip; I can believe that sort of shit. People come wandering through here at night, lookin' for some sort of religious experience. Hell man, you come through our turf when we're there, and you'll have a religious experience. We'll introduce you to your maker.

We're not the worst though. Somewhere up on the other side of the duck pond, there's s'posed to be a gang that hunts people down and eats them. I don't know whether it's true or not, but I've seen the remains of a couple of people who looked like somethin' 'ate em.

There's some strange chickens who come in here after dark though. Like up in the Grove? There's supposed to be some tree huggers who dance around in white robes or some crap. Least that's what I heard. I've never seen them. Too far from here to bother.

You want something nasty to mess with your head? It's all down here. Sometimes the Strip gets a bit hot for the pushers. They come down here to get away from the heat. The cops don't come in here during the evening. Even they ain't stupid enough to try that. Most crims know that; you have the cops chasing you, you head straight into the park, man. You may have to take your chances with the locals, but it beats getting your ass caught.

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THE GANGER AS AN NPC

Level: Experienced

Initiative: 2

Skills: As per Experienced NPC, plus Melee Combat (Armed) 3, Melee Combat (Unarmed) 2, Streetwise 4.

NEW DARKTEK AND WEAPONS

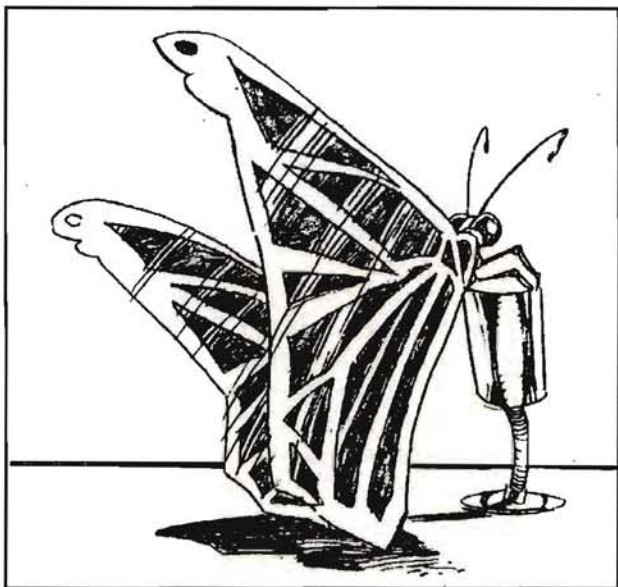
DIMENSIONAL BEACON

Dimension walking has always been a problematic exercise at the best of times. It is important to be familiar with the dimension that you are moving to. However, where a dimension walker arrives in a particular dimension is not all that easy to define.

For most proto-dimensions, this is not really a problem. They are small enough that you could walk to the desired location from wherever you happened to arrive. Coming back to Earth is far more of a difficult proposition though. Merely ripping a hole in the dimensional fabric and stepping through does not necessarily guarantee that you will come out where you wanted to. It is possible you could end up possibly hundreds or thousands of miles from where you need to be.

To get around this problem, the Dark(er) Elves developed the Dimensional Beacon. When activated, it broadcasts an incredibly powerful empathic signal. This signal is strong enough to be detected by a skill dimension walker who is waiting in a nearby proto-dimension for the signal. Once they lock in on the signal, they can open a portal to the precise location of the beacon.

The beacon itself resembles a butterfly chrysalis, although it seems to be made of



some sort of dark metal. It is warm to the touch, and empaths can sense that it is actually alive. It is about five centimeters (2 inches) long and about 2cm (1") across.

Activating the device requires an Average: Darkling Empathy or a Difficult: Human Empathy test. Once the connection has been made, the empath merely has to give it the instruction to activate. Once the device begins operation, an extremely powerful empathic signal is sent out. Most empaths will experience this as a rhythmic throbbing in their minds.

Once the beacon has been activated, it has enough energy to broadcast for several minutes. At the end of that time, the strength of the signal will fade away to nothing and the device will become inactive. If an empath accesses the device after it has been activated, they will find it cold to the touch and the life force that was there before has gone.

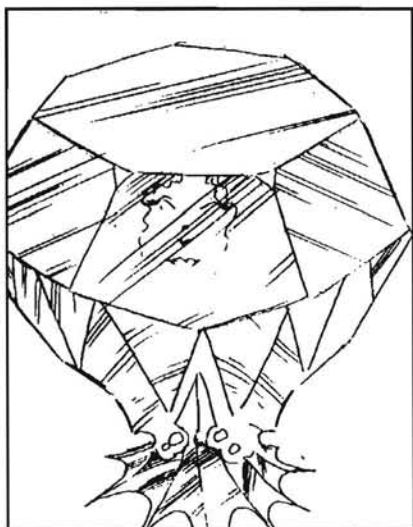
User Cost: Detection: 10 (at all times)/100,000 (when activated)
Wt: 0.05kg
Cost: N/A (-/-)

EMPATHIC CRYSTALS

Empathic Crystals are recording devices used by Dark Minions to store empathic information about an individual. The data stored in the crystal often contains an image of the subject in a full three-dimensional aspect. This image is the equivalent to a rotational hologram if used to supply source information for a facedancer.

Dark Minions often use the crystals as a means of target identification. One Minion will track a subject, periodically establishing an empathic link with them. This most often happens when the subject is asleep, as it is far easier for the Minion to establish an empathic link without resistance. Once the link is established, the Minion will transfer the feelings into the crystal.

Any amount of data can be transferred, although there is an upper limit on the usefulness of the information stored in the crystal. It is not possible to fully capture a person's empathic presence in a crystal, any more than it is possible to fully capture a person's look using photographs. The information in the crystal is more than enough to make locating and tracking the subject one to two difficulty levels easier.



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The crystals are normally about 7.5cm (3") long, and appear to be large, clear quartz crystals. A non-empath looking at the crystal would see a vague image of the subject deep inside the crystal; an empath can see the image clearly without a test. To read the empathic signal stored on the crystal, an Average: Human Empathy test must be made.

Wt: 0.1kg
Cost: N/A (-/-)

H'THBİK DAGGER

The Dark(er) Elves value the amount of pain and suffering their kind causes on the human race. Whenever a new elf joins the group working on Earth, they are required to prove their dedication and willingness to further the clan's goals here. Those that fail are unceremoniously sent home, never to be allowed to return.

Those that succeed are awarded an h'thbik dagger. It is a long curved blade that extends from a T-piece that is clutched in the palm of the hand. The blade extends out about 20cm from between the third and fourth fingers. To a casual observer, it appears as though the dagger is a single claw extending from the end of the elf's arm.

The point and inside edge of the dagger is kept exceptionally sharp. It is used with a raking action, much like a velociraptor's claw. It is especially useful for slitting throats and disemboweling victims.

Wt: 0.3kg
Cost: N/A (-/-)

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Hit Mod</u>	<u>Damage</u>
h'thbik dagger	S	+2	1D6+ STR/2

MM-1

The MM-1 is a large multi-round grenade launcher. Originally designed for the US Armed Services, it was never adopted and ended up in the hands of various mercenary groups around the world.

The MM-1 resembles a large revolver, with 12 rounds loaded individually into chambers on the cylinder. The cylinder is spring loaded and is required to be wound by hand, although it can be rotated manually if desired, reducing the ROF to 1. Winding the spring takes one five-second combat phase, as does loading four rounds into their chambers. It is not possible to load the chambers and wind the spring at the same time.

Ammo: 40mm Grenades

Weapon Wt: 9kg

Mag: 12

Price: \$1,275 (-/R)

HE

Round Wt: 0.3kg, 25kg per case of 72

Price: \$5 each, \$300 per case (-/V)

HEDP

Round Wt: 0.3kg, 25kg per case of 72

Price: \$6 each, \$375 per case (-/C)

CHEM

Round Wt: 0.3kg, 25kg per case of 44

Price: \$5 each, \$200 per case (-/S)

ILLUM

Round Wt: 0.2kg, 20kg per case of 44

Price: \$3 each, \$120 per case (-/V)

<u>Type</u>	<u>ROF</u>	<u>Mag</u>	<u>Rng</u>	<u>IFR</u>	<u>Rnd</u>	<u>Damage</u>	<u>Pen</u>
MM-1	5	12	100	400	HE	C:3, B:12	Nil
					HEDP	C:3, B:12	4C
					CHEM	C:1, B:4	Nil
					ILLUM	B:100	Nil

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COLT SCAMP

An experimental SMG design that was not accepted by the military because of its small caliber and specially designed cartridge, the Scamp has found favor with organized crime syndicates. Its small size allows it to be easily concealed under clothing, while still retaining a reasonable punch. The Scamp has no stock, and is limited to firing three-round bursts, which means that the magazine cannot be emptied in a single burst.

Ammo:. 22 SC
Wt: 1.5kg
Mag: 27 box
Price: \$1800 (-/R)

<u>Weapon</u>	<u>ROF</u>	<u>Dam</u>	<u>Pen</u>	<u>Blk</u>	<u>Mag</u>	<u>- Recoil -</u>		
						<u>SS</u>	<u>Brst</u>	<u>Rng</u>
Colt Scamp	3	2	1-Nil	1	27	4	7	12

DEMONGROUND

The Electronic Fanzine of Dark Conspiracy



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MASKS OF DARKNESS™

by
Geoff Skellams

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Something is happening behind the scenes in New Centennial City. A gang war has erupted in the Projects and an influenza epidemic sweeps the city. Meanwhile, a man has gone missing and no one seems willing to help find him. The players get asked to help and inadvertently get pulled into a web of lies, deceit and confusion.

Masks of Darkness introduces several new underground empathic cells that are active in New Centennial City. They, together with the players, will work together to uncover the truth that lurks behind the façade of everyday city life. If the players aren't careful, they could get more than they bargained for.

And no matter what happens in Sin City, just remember...

A MIND IS A TERRIBLE THING TO WASTE!

This high-drama adventure is the second installment of the "Sin City" series.



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