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OVER THE EDGE™



With a Long Spoon

AN OVER THE EDGE ADVENTURE BY ALISON BROOKS

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Introduction

Overview

The “Prime Mover” of the web of events portrayed here is Behassa, a black racist organization. Behassans believe that blacks are naturally superior to other races and have innate psychic potential by virtue of their melanin. They are arranging for black children to be abused in hopes that they will develop fringe powers. After the abuse, the children are “rescued” by Behassans and adopted out to unsuspecting families off-island via a front called International Adoptions.

The actual abuse is committed by the Circle of Light, a group of pederasts who use pseudo-Satanic ideology and ritual as part of the abuse. Unknown to the membership of the Circle of Light, their leader, Raoul Laporte, is a Behassan. The members of the Circle of Light believe that no one else knows about them and that they are performing the abuse for its own sake.

To find children who can be easily abducted, Laporte blackmails Norman Souster, a teacher at First Steps Creche and Day School, into selecting children and reporting on their habits and schedules. Since Laporte does not want to reveal the racist nature of the project to Souster, he has not specified that black children be selected. As a result, the Circle of Light regularly abuses lighter skinned children, who are then ignored by Behassa. Only the black children are rescued and adopted out.

Another Behassa member, one who knows nothing of the Circle of Light, is Shaddim Al-Khaddir, who has come to Al Amarja to lecture and spread his racist vision.

Watching these events are agents of MI6, a British intelligence agency. They are under

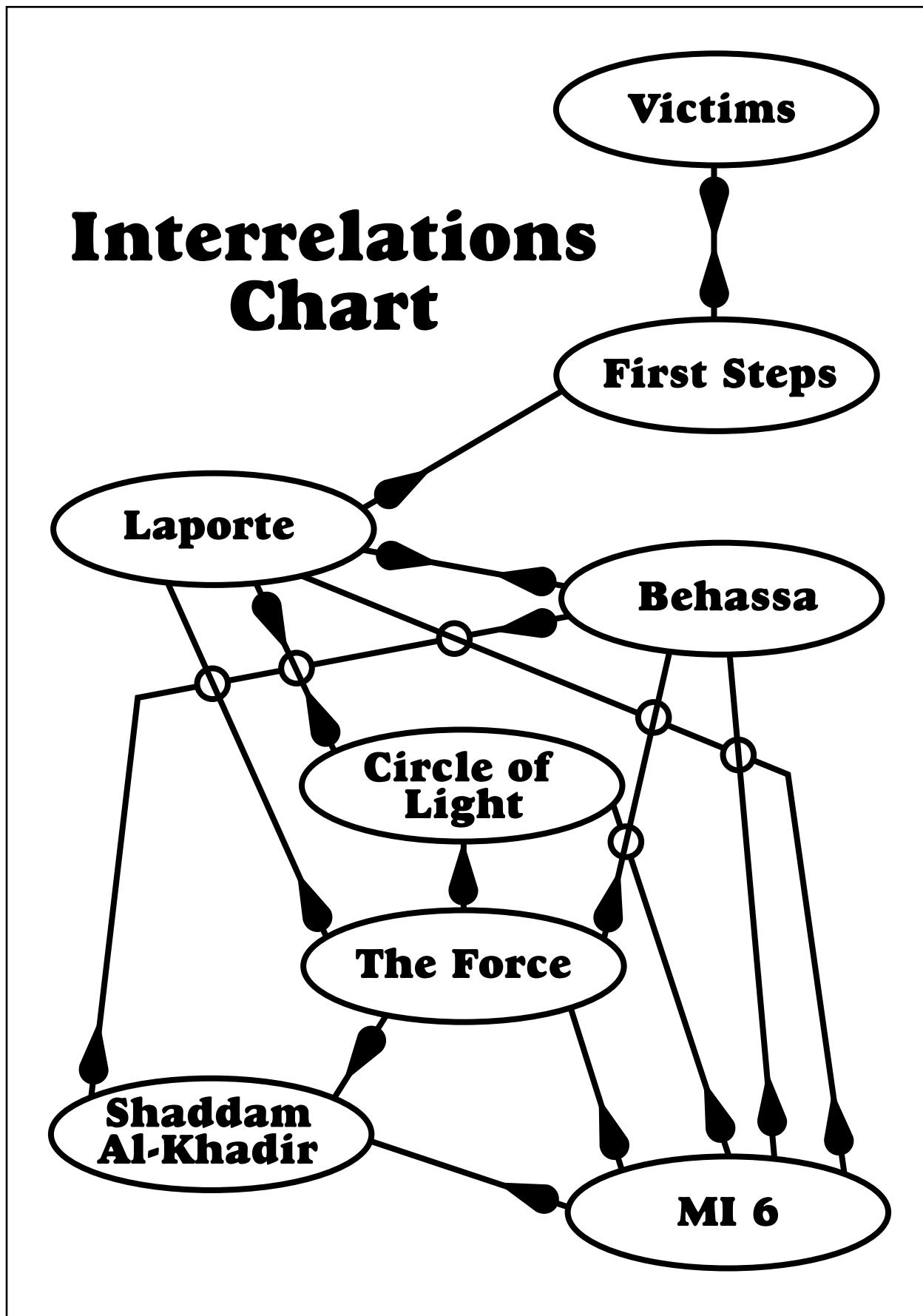
orders to observe but not to interfere. Their superiors are more concerned with determining whether the Behassans’ system for eliciting fringe powers actually works than with stopping the abuse.

The actions of Behassa have been going on for many months, and they have already placed several children in adoptive homes outside of Al Amarja. These events could continue indefinitely, if it weren’t for the Force.

The Force, a white racist alliance, has come to Al Amarja to expose Behassa’s child abuse plot. They have learned what Behassa is up to, and they are ready to strike, though they will work primarily through intermediaries. They plan to hire investigators and thugs to break up and expose Behassa, and then feed stories of the abuse to international media to exacerbate anti-black racism.

Into this mix come the PCs, in any of several roles, possibly including: concerned investigators trying to find out who has been abusing children at First Steps, dupes of either Behassa or of the Force, agents for outside conspiracies or groups that want to know more, and so on. If the PCs do not get involved, the Force will break up Behassa, which is a good thing, but they will then use reports of the plot to further their own racist agenda worldwide.

The Interrelations Chart summarizes the links between the different groups in this scenario. Lines indicate a knowledge link between the groups; the arrows indicate the direction of the link. A double arrow indicates that at least one person in each group is aware of the other; details will be found in the individual chapters. Where there is a single arrow, it points towards the group known about. Thus, MI6 is aware of the Circle of Light, but not vice versa.



Adapting the Scenario to Your Series

Nothing in this scenario is holy writ. You should adapt it as required to fit into your particular series. This may require toughening-up or weakening the GMCs to make the conflict an interesting one if your particular PCs are tougher or weaker than the average that I have assumed. If any existing GMCs would fit into the campaign instead of the ones given here, feel free to use them; ongoing GMCs are part of what makes a campaign come to life. I'd like to think that some of the GMCs here will be interesting enough to have a life of their own after you have finished with this scenario.

One of the hardest things to anticipate is which particular power groupings you are using in your *Over the Edge*™ series. Below is a section on possible responses of the different groups from *Over the Edge*. Unless the PCs go out of their way to attract attention, not all of these groups will find out about what is going on. It is up to you to decide which, if any, will get involved, and how.

In general, most conspiracies would be interested in monitoring what is going on, perhaps going to the lengths of infiltrating; perhaps sending agents — such as the PCs — to find out what is going on. Many conspiracies, such as the Kergillians, would be interested in promoting misunderstandings and division among people in order to make it easier for them to carry out their own plans.

Sir Arthur Compton would be interested in finding out more. He might have a purely esthetic interest, a view to experimenting along the same lines, or be interested in the threat posed by large numbers of children with fringe powers.

The Cut-Ups would oppose either or both groups. Behassa and the Force both qualify as Control Addicts of the first degree!

The Earthlings, as individuals, would oppose both groups. The Earthlings may decide, however, to allow either side to succeed temporarily in order that they publicly discredit themselves in the long term.

The Glorious Lords are into sadism. On the other hand, they are not keen on the notion of victims becoming empowered. Their response would therefore depend on how much they know. A Glorious Lord infiltration of the Circle of Light might lead to their opposing Behassa.

Glugs are deeply cynical of "humans" and would put nothing past them. Unless Glug children are involved, they are unlikely to become involved.

The Kergillians would be split. Some might support Behassa, as humans with fringe powers and psychological problems would make good implant recipients; others might be worried about the possibility of being detected by fringe powers.

The Mr. Le Thuys would primarily be interested in the victims as potential recruits to his own plans.

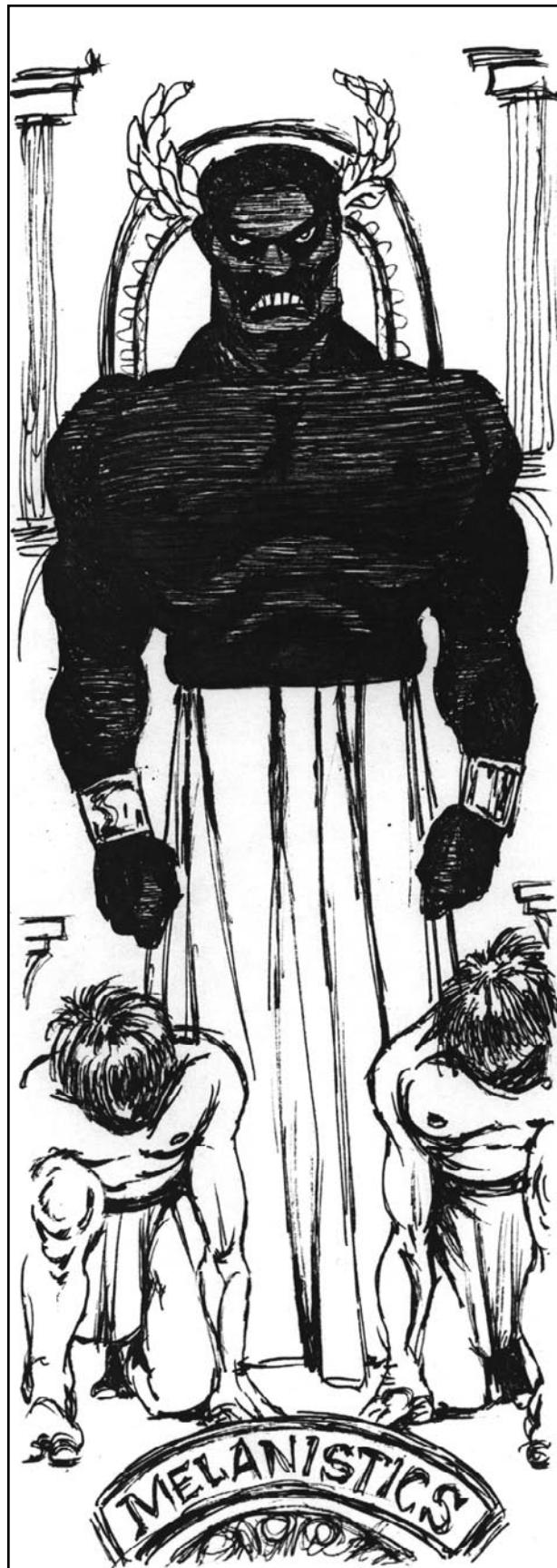
The Movers might have almost any (or should that be "all") responses.

The Neutralizers would oppose Behassa, but would also not want either side's racism given credence.

Otto's Men would obviously like to pound the Circle of Light, but are liable not to be interested in the deeper issues.

The Pharaohs might want to recruit members of any of the groups, or the child victims, as quislings. They might decide that the conflict between Behassa and the Force should be promoted because the more humans hate and distrust each other, the easier they will be to rule. On the other hand, the entire scenario may be finished before they come to a definite decision.

The Philosopher's Stone would like the abused children to be made wards of



court, where their emerging powers can be trained and studied.

Throckmorton Operatives might well try to kill Behassa, the Circle of Light, and also their victims. (After all, if the victims have fringe powers, they're no longer normal.)

Author's Notes

The Subject Matter

There are a lot of moral gray areas in *Over the Edge*. This scenario is not one of them. Child abuse and racism hurt people and are evil. Period.

Melanistics

In this scenario, the term Melanistics is used for a pseudo-scientific doctrine which defines blacks as superior to whites because they possess more of the pigment melanin. This fictional pseudoscience is modelled closely on "melanin scholarship", a real-world pseudoscience found in the United States. For those interested in such things, I recommend perusal of the Winter 1992 edition (Volume 16, no. 2) of *The Skeptical Enquirer* (ISSN 0194-6730).

About The Title

There's an old saying that if you sup with the devil, you should use a long spoon. All PCs in *Over the Edge* would do well to remember this. Faced with allying with the Force against Behassa, or with Behassa against the Force, the PCs in this scenario will definitely need one!

GMC Format

Traits whose die ratings are marked with an asterisk (e.g., "2* dice") are technical or fringe traits. The average character would have no dice with this trait.

Chapter 1

Getting The PCs Involved

This chapter gives suggestions for introducing the PCs to the scenario. The straightforward way is to have the PCs recruited by the Force. A more subtle way would be to have the PCs already investigating when the Force appears on the scene.

Some players have a deep-seated reluctance to tackle anything that their characters are not being paid for. This usually comes from having played too many games which encourage players to attempt to “win” by amassing gold and killing “monsters”. If you don’t wish to challenge this attitude, it would be simple to have the PCs recruited by one of the parties.

Various possibilities for involving the PCs include the following:

- 1) White PCs are recruited by the Force. The Force wants to stop Behassa, and get anti-black publicity out of the scandal. The Force encourages the PCs to investigate the Circle of Light and find out what’s behind it. The Force may even hire (but not recruit) non-white PCs for the investigation.
- 2) Black PCs might be recruited by Behassa, which presents itself as a force for justice. Later the PCs learn the truth.
- 3) The PCs are hired, or ordered, by other power groups to investigate any of the groups involved in this scenario. If the PCs are being investigated by the Earthlings for possible membership, a mix-up such as this would make an ideal test of their morality, as well as their ability to handle tricky problems.
- 4) The PCs have friends or acquaintances (such as Pablo and Aya Ruiz, or Jonny Damien, in Chapter 2) who ask them to investigate a child who is behaving oddly. The reason the child is behaving oddly is that the child is a victim of the Circle of Light...
- 5) If you do wish to give the players food for thought, the PCs might come across an abused child who needs help. If they refuse, the child will probably be recruited by Behassa, something which will return to haunt them later, once they have become involved in the scenario by an offer of money, and come to confront Behassa. Should this happen, I hope that you will not be generous to the PCs; anyone who could refuse to help a hurt child deserves what they get.
- 6) The PCs are investigating First Steps Creche (see Chapter 2) on behalf of a charitable donor, such as Lydia Goodman, when they come across children going missing and behaving oddly...
- 7) They encounter (either in person or via psychic means such as sensing a “psychic scream”) a child with fringe powers. The child may be exercising the powers under the control of Behassa, frightened and damaged and looking for safety and help. Alternatively the child may be free, but reacting to the experience of being hurt by hurting others.
- 8) Any PCs who are (or seem to be) children may be targeted as victims of the Circle of Light.
- 9) The PCs are asked to investigate odd goings-on at the garage which is used by the Circle of Light for their ceremonies.
- 10) The PCs attend a talk by Al-Khadir, perhaps as mildly interested, or opposed university students, perhaps as journalists sent to do an exposé on him.

Chapter 2

First Steps Creche And Day School

First Steps is a charitable school in Four Points. A number of children have been abducted for the Circle of Light from here with the connivance of one of the teachers.

First Steps

Education in Al Amarja is entirely privatized, so it varies tremendously in quality, with a great many children missing out almost entirely. First Steps, in the Four Points barrio, is a charitable institution providing a subsidized (not free) basic education. The main donor to the school is First Steps, a children's clothing chain, but the school squeezes other charitable bodies (such as Lydia Goodman). The school has a lot of local support, and many of the shops around Four Points have collecting boxes on their counters, although this brings in pitifully little cash.

First Steps takes children from birth to the age of about 12, with a preponderance of the lower age groups. Older children tend to drift into truancy and delinquency despite the school's best efforts. In addition, some of the 10- and 11-year-olds declare themselves adults, and leave. Many parents use it for its child-minding more than its educational aspect, and in this it is more useful for younger children; it is cheaper to allow older children to go play in traffic.

The school takes three to four hundred children at a time. Most of these are in the day shift, though the school operates 24 hours for

the convenience of parents who work at night; about 50 children sleep over any night, looked after by a skeleton staff of two. Many of the children's parents migrated into Al Amarja from poverty in sub-Saharan Africa — especially Nigeria, Kenya, and Liberia, three countries where English is common as a first or second language.

The School

The school is sited in a nondescript tenement, completely occupying the top four stories. There are ten classrooms, the largest of which occupies the entire top story. This room serves as a school hall, a playing-field, and (by night) a dormitory. The other classrooms are smaller, but all have ratty furniture and peeling walls covered with home-made alphabets, posters out of magazines, and so forth.

The curriculum consists of reading and basic math, plus anything else the overworked and harassed teachers have been able to improvise. One classroom has an entire wall devoted to a mural map of the world, with postcards stuck on at the appropriate point (the Eiffel Tower over Paris, Disney World in Florida, etc.). Another has flower pots along a window ledge growing flowers for botanical study — the flowers bring an incongruously lush air to their room.

There is also an office, which doubles as staff room, sick bay, and the school head's bedroom.

Teachers

The teachers are a mixture. Some are qualified teachers that have been forced to resign from more expensive establishments for various wrongdoings. Some are average folk with a basic education and a willingness to look after children for minimal wages. Their morale and dedication are better than might be expected, thanks to leadership of Lotte Ashwari, the school head.

The teachers are the usual racial mix for Al Amarja, both sexes, and all ages, but mostly middle-aged or older. There are usually ten or so present during the day, and a couple at night.

Some sample teachers are listed below in the GMCs section.

Lotte Ashwari

School Head and Administrator

Ashwari is in her 40s, and looks older. She was born in Saudi Arabia and retains enough of her Muslim upbringing to wear a head-scarf in public (including at the school). Her parents gave her a German first name, thinking it was exotic. She came to Al Amarja to escape religious and political oppression in her homeland, but here she found the oppression of poverty just as destructive.

Ashwari is a burned-out idealist, having originally been fired by a dream of rescuing children from a life of poverty and ignorance through education. Now, she fears that she has made little or no difference, but she still cannot bring herself to resign from the school. She gets to sleep at night with sleeping pills, and faces each day with the help of stimulants.

Arabic woman, age 43, 168 cm, 52 kg, thin and drawn and looks older.

Languages: Arabic, English, Al Amarjan patois

Traits

Teaching, 4 dice (with a penalty die) — (Authoritative manner)

Raising charitable donations, 3 dice (with a penalty die) — (Calculating about money)

Administration, 3 dice (with a penalty die) — (Carries a pen behind her ear)

Burned-out, 1 die — A penalty die to all rolls connected with her occupation. (Drug addiction)

What Ashwari Knows

There has not been a noticeable increase in rates of absenteeism or of pupils leaving the school prematurely. Ashwari's records show random variations in the rates of absenteeism which remain relatively constant over time. If questioned closely, Ashwari thinks of three children who had been making good progress, when they suddenly became withdrawn, incommunicative, and disruptive. She had put this down to a failure on the part of the school. Ashwari is particularly disappointed in Stephan Maballa, who she believed had been responding to the discipline of the school.

The children are: Victoria Moss, Stephan Maballa, and Juanita Ruiz. Unknown to Ashwari, these are children who were abused by the Circle of Light but who were too light-skinned to be taken by Behassa. Darker skinned children have also been abused, but Behassa has taken them, so Ashwari assumes they've just dropped out of school.

Samuel Gold

Retired University Teacher

A German Jew whose parents escaped with him to Al Amarja as a child during World War II, he's retired on a good pension from a teaching post at D'Aubainne U and works as a volunteer at First Steps. He usually takes the class of the oldest and rowdiest children. He uses his sharp wit to keep discipline, something

few of the pupils relish being on the receiving end of. After years of controlling rowdy, bored, and over-privileged university students, he claims that the children at the school are no trouble at all.

German man, age 67, 170 cm, 51 kg, grey-haired.

Languages: German, Hebrew, English.

Traits

Teaching, 4 dice — (Authoritative manner)

Controlling delinquents, 3 dice — Uses his quick wits and extensive knowledge of troublesome children to keep control. (Sarcastic turn of phrase)

Theoretical Physics, 1* die — Gold was never a first-rate physicist, but keeps up with developments. (Uses physics jargon in everyday conversation)

Frail — Penalty die on all physically strenuous actions. (Gray-haired)

What Gold Knows

Samuel Gold deals with the older children and has no knowledge of the problems of the younger ones.

Elinor Smith

Storyteller and Mother-Figure

An Al Amarjan, her features tending to black African, she looks after the smaller children. She wears a brace on one leg due to childhood polio. She knows traditional stories, which she tells to the children to keep them quiet. Some of these are local versions of international stories, such as Cinderella; others are of Al Amarjan origin, and may contain hints of groups such as the Glugs, Agaras, and Tulpas (see below).

Al Amarjan woman, age 35, 157 cm, 54 kg, African features, brace on one leg.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.



Traits

Child care, 3 dice (milk-stained clothing)

Fairy-tales, 3 dice (superstitious)

Crippled Leg — Minus one die on all movement-based skills. (Brace)

What Smith Knows

Elinor Smith is a mother-figure to many of the children, and Victoria Moss has told her stories about the abusers. She believes that the abusers may be Antar al-Kutebar, a local bogie-man, combining Christian elements, from the times when Al Amarja was under Muslim rule, and vice versa. Antar al-Kutebar is dressed in black, huge and hideous, and cuts up naughty children; generations of mothers have used the threat of Antar al-Kutebar to scare children into going to bed on time and staying away from dangerous places.

You can nudge the PCs towards Elinor Smith by having them come across her telling a story to a circle of fascinated children. You will have to decide which conspiracies or obscure facts to reveal through her, and how accurate her stories are. For instance, if you intend to introduce the Agaras in a future scenario, you might have her tell a story about a young lad seeking his fortune who found a tunnel into the earth, explored, and met a race of furry people, and returned to the surface with treasure which turned to ashes on exposure to daylight. A more obscure tale involving the Glugs might tell of a human man who loved the fairy queen. She took him to fairy-land for seven years, but when he returned to the human world, he died of pining for her. A completely misleading tale about the Tulpas might speak of demons which kill unwary travellers, and adopt their shape in order to wreak havoc in the world.

Note that Elinor Smith's stories are proper stories, with a beginning, middle and end (the Tulpas story in the previous paragraph would tell how a canny human outwitted the demon

and drove it back to hell with the religious imagery of your choice). Elinor Smith has no idea which stories might be accurate and which pure fiction. Most of the stories are actually fiction or irrelevant, so that if the PCs decide to make a comprehensive collection of her stories, they will have to wade through a great many red herrings.

Jonny Damien

Witty Drug-Dealer

An Al Amarjan with typical Mediterranean features, Damien started off by doing odd jobs around the school, and now works part-time as a volunteer teacher, filling in whenever a teacher is absent. Damien has scarred wrists from occasional knife-fights.

Damien is popular with the children, smooth, and witty. He earns his living by selling drugs, a form of self-employment that allows him to work flexible hours.

Damien doesn't use illegal drugs himself and considers his clients to be fools. As a believer in individual freedom, though, he's not going to refuse to sell. On the other hand, Damien does not try to entice anyone into drugs if they're not already users. He keeps his night-time work and his daytime voluntary work strictly separated and suspects — rightly — that Ashwari would dispense with his services if she found out.

Al Amarjan man, age 22, 173 cm, 65 kg, Mediterranean features. Dresses flashily in the latest styles, and sports several gold rings.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Self-defense, 3 dice — A mixture of fighting styles picked up on the streets over the years. (Scarred wrists)

Drug-dealing, 4 dice — spotting buyers and assessing their likely requirements, bargaining. (Shifty in the presence of authority)

Witty, 3 dice — Quick with words and word-play. (Smooth and witty manner)

Academically Ignorant — (Makes obvious mistakes)

What Damien Knows

Damien has been worried about Victoria Moss, who has recently become withdrawn and disruptive by turns. Damien has had very little success in finding out why.

Damien may be used as an introduction to the scenario. The PCs may already know him from his drug-dealing activity (or they may meet him in the course of this) and learn of his concern over Victoria Moss. Alternatively, if the PCs know Damien, but come to First Steps at the instigation of someone else, Damien is anxious that they do not reveal the source of his income.

Norman Souster

Computer Fraudster

Souster dresses in quietly elegant business suits with a tie, not a noose. Originally a computer programmer in the United Kingdom, he fled to Al Amarja ahead of a fraud prosecution. His intention was to set up a new identity here, and then move to elsewhere in Europe, where he could continue his life of crime. Working in First Steps seemed like a clever move, establishing his new persona as having ideals and concern for others. Unfortunately for him, he was spotted and blackmailed by Raoul Laporte using Simon Cahan as an intermediary. Souster became the spotter for the Circle of Light, investigating suitable children to find their addresses and habits. In his younger days, Souster flirted with racist organizations in the United Kingdom. Although he conceals his racism in normal circumstances, the majority of children

he decides are suitable for the Circle of Light "happen" to be black.

Souster also blocks investigation attempts. Parents of children that Behassa has captured have called First Steps to find out what they can about their missing children. Souster tries to handle these calls himself, and he then explains to other teachers that the parents think relatives or ex-spouses may have made off with the children. Since "out-of-court" disputes of children are common, this cover has so far been successful at keeping other teachers from seeing a pattern in the missing kids.

English man, age 48, 183 cm, 76 kg, nervous-looking, bespectacled blond man.

Languages: English.

Traits

Computer programming, 2* dice — Familiar with commercial accounting programs; able to write programs in the most appropriate language. (Wire-rimmed glasses)

Computer fraud, 1* die — Able to write programs which work at their ostensible purpose, but which also allow him to siphon off funds without attracting attention. (Expensive clothing)

Racist — (Puts down black people, when he can get away with it)

Easily panicked — (Jumpy)

What Souster Knows

Souster finds out about suitable children for the Circle of Light. This means spotting children whose parents are not articulate or well-educated, preferably from families which are poor and otherwise unstable. The idea is to spot a child from a family which will not immediately realize when the child goes missing, or connect the child's symptoms with the incident. Children of under 7 years are less articulate than over-sevens, and hence less able to explain what has happened to them. Souster then finds out about the child's movements, so that the Circle of Light are able to waylay the child

without being noticed. Souster knows Simon Cahan, and that he is required to provide information about one child a month, just before the dark of the moon. He is aware that the children disappear for a couple of days, and that many do not return at all.

Souster is squeamish. He prefers not to think about what he is spotting the children for, and he avoids any which re-appear at the school after their experience. He keeps working with Cahan because he doesn't want to risk his own position — Cahan not only has information about his past, but could also finger him as an accessory to whatever is going on.

If asked, Souster pooh-poohs the idea that children are being hurt with a vehemence out of proportion to the suggestion. He adds that the children are probably being abused by their own male relatives. "That happens all the time," he claims, "especially among these Third World types."

If Souster is given any reason to think that the PCs are seriously investigating his activities, he panics. Straight after school, he goes to Cahan to say that people are on to him, and he (Souster) is splitting. He attempts to leave Al Amarja by the next plane (ironically [?] enough, headed for South Africa).

If the PCs threaten Souster, he quickly caves in and tells them all he knows.

The Children

The children are understandably reluctant to talk to PCs — especially men. If the PCs convince Elinor Smith that they need to know, she can help persuade them to talk. Alternatively, a sympathetic female PC who is prepared to take time over it may be able to get the children to trust her.

Victoria Moss

Victoria is a small, slight, 6 year old girl of mixed West Indian and European origin. Her mother, a nurse, came to Al Amarja from Barbados via Britain, but died a couple of years ago. Victoria is cared for by her older brother, Winston. Winston works shifts at a warehouse in Skylla, so he doesn't see very much of Victoria. He's too busy working, sleeping, ensuring that there is food in the apartment, and, in the little time left over, having the sort of outside interests that most 18-year-olds take for granted. It's not that he doesn't care about her, but he's not noticed anything the matter with her, and Victoria has not confided in him.

Victoria was previously lively, cheerful and helpful (in fact, a bit too helpful towards adults to make her a truly popular child amongst her peers). Recently, she has become withdrawn, and mistrustful of strange adults. She has also hit out at other children who tried to get her to play with them. Elinor Smith has been a mother-figure to her since her mother's death, and she has told her some of what is bothering her.

West Indian/European girl, age 6, 101 cm, 15 kg.

What Victoria Knows

Victoria was on her way home from school on a Friday night when a man asked her to help him take a sick dog to the vet's; when she went with him, she was bundled into a car, taken away and hurt by a lot of men (if the PCs press for further details, consult Chapter 4). She doesn't have any idea who any of them were, where it was, or anything. She was put back in the car and dropped off near her home the next morning. She cleaned herself up at home and was in bed before her brother got home.

Stephan Maballa

Stephan is a large, intelligent 7 year old boy. His family fled the Romanian revolution in 1989. Stephan had a reputation for being something of a bully, "persuading" other children to give him money and toys. This meant that the teachers tended to notice him — and they noticed when he recently began to play truant. He still comes to the school occasionally, when he is quiet, and even bullied by some of his former victims.

Stephan's parents are devout Romanian Orthodox Christians who are concerned that Stephan might become involved in drugs and other decadences. Stephan's father, Vassily, was a miner. He is big and brawny, and he keeps a fierce temper under very tight control. Stephan's mother, Januska, is an office cleaner; she is dominated by her husband, quiet, and looks washed out at 44.

Vassily had brought Stephan up to believe that it's a man's role to be boss; his recent abuse has led him to conclude that there's something wrong with him and maybe he's secretly a woman.

Romanian boy, age 7, 130 cm, 27 kg, blond.

What Stephan Knows

Stephan's story is similar to Victoria's. He is aware that he was taken to some sort of workshop with a generator making a loud noise the whole time.

Juanita Ruiz

Juanita is a 6 year old girl of Spanish and Arabic descent. Her parents regard themselves as aristocrats fallen on hard times and keep up a pretense of wealth. They live in Sunken barrio but send Juanita to school in Four Points so that their neighbors will not realize that Juanita does not go to the expensive private establishment that they claim. Their apartment has a beautifully-decorated door

and front hall, which is as far as most visitors get, while lacking many of the apparent essentials of life — like hot water — inside.

Juanita herself is very pretty, and previously was quiet, imitating her parents' manners at home, but fitting in with the more rough-and-tumble world of school. Since her experience, she has become violent, trying to get other children to take part in horror games of various sorts — with herself in the role of axe-murderer or vampire or ghost, and the other children in the roles of victims. After several children got quite badly bruised in the course of these games, they refused to play any more, but Juanita still tries to introduce horror elements into every game or conversation. Juanita is also showing signs of incipient fringe powers, with occasional flashes of precognition of car smashes, fights, and other disasters. At present, she does not realize that this is what they are, as she finds them indistinguishable from the dark fantasies in her head. See Chapter 7 for some suggestions for using this in an on-going series.

Juanita's parents missed her when she did not return from school one day and are aware that she was taken away one day. Now one of them always escorts her to school and back — the time this takes is another strain on their tight budget. It is possible that the PCs will be recruited by Pablo and Aya Ruiz to investigate what has happened (see Chapter 1), though their promises of generous pay are certain to be broken.

Spanish/Arabic girl, age 6, 113 cm, 18 kg, straight black hair.

What Juanita Knows

Juanita's evidence is much the same as the other children's. She remembers that there were cars in the place where it happened, with cloths over them.

Investigations

If the PCs are already investigating abductions of children, they should have little difficulty. If you are introducing the PCs to the scenario by sending them to First Steps for a different reason, their attention may be drawn by one of the children playing out the experience with other children as the victims and themselves as the abusers. A child might confide in one of the PCs — perhaps because the PC is particularly sympathetic with children, or perhaps for no obvious reason (this is Al Amarja, after all). Alternatively, a child might “recognize” one of the PCs as one of the abusers — and how well do the PCs know and trust each other not to be abusers, anyway?!

If the PCs make serious attempts to find (and help?) all the abused children at the school, they should be able to get significantly more information by correlating their stories than from a single testimony. They will have, after all, three different points that the children were picked up from, and three different lengths of journey, which may enable them to get an idea as to which part of town the bad guys were using.

One way or another, the PCs should be able to use the children’s information to lead them to the next step, the Circle of Light. If not, they may come to the attention of the MI6 agents, who drop helpful clues to aid the PCs.



Chapter 3

The Circle Of Light

The Circle of Light gets together to abuse children for kicks. They have a whole set of rituals and philosophy to go with it, partly because the ritual setting makes some people less likely to believe children's stories of abuse, and partly because they enjoy the paraphernalia and ritual in itself.

The Group

Members of the Circle were recruited through personal contacts. Child pornography circulates through discreet channels such as cryptically-worded small ads in ordinary porn magazines, and "pedophiles" often exchange photographs with others with the same interests. The members of this group are mostly prosperous men of middle age; membership in the group is expensive.

Their philosophy is vaguely Satanic. They claim that Good and Evil are forces striving for mastery of the World in general, especially the Spiritual World, and the Soul of Humanity in particular. Their definition of Good is subservience and blind obedience, while any individual who refuses to be a slave, but acts according to the free will he was given by God, is termed Evil. They, of course, refuse to be subservient, and demonstrate their free will in their monthly rituals. Their rituals are held at the new moon, symbolizing the blind ignorance of most of humanity.

The Rituals

The Circle's meetings are held at a rundown garage. The given reason for this is that technology is the tool of humanity, and they

are attempting to improve humanity in the same way that a garage repairs a broken car. The practical reason is that a group of men meeting at a garage doesn't arouse suspicion, sounds are easily covered by the noise of machinery, and the place is expendable if discovered.

The garage, located in Great Men Barrio, is hired out for one evening a week. The owner charges a good premium, because he believes that it is being used for repairing and disguising stolen cars. For the three weeks of the month, several members actually do work on various vehicles. They're not especially talented mechanics, but it maintains their cover.

On the fourth week, the group gathers, wearing overalls and welding masks, and their usual car mechanic gear. They work on their vehicles for a time, supposedly purifying their minds and meditating on how much humanity has achieved through exercising free will, and how some would have humans be no more than machines of God. After an hour, they begin their preparations by "excluding the world" — checking that there are no intruders inside or outside the garage, locking the entrances, blacking out the windows, and placing three slightly flawed crystal traps strategically around the room. Then they clear a central space, on which they unroll a black cloth with mystic symbols. A table is placed in the middle of this, and covered with another black cloth. Further cloths are thrown over the machinery and vehicles around the place.

Meanwhile, Simon Cahan has brought the child into the garage, and left. The child is gagged, and hooded. The group gathers in a circle in near-darkness, lit only by welding torches held aloft by two of the group. Raoul

Laporte brings the child, while the head of the circle intones the ritual words:

“We are gathered here for the sake of Humanity. We are involved in a sacred task of Life, of Liberty, and of the Pursuit of Happiness. Of Life, for we are dedicated to understanding the secrets of Life. Of Liberty, for we are have thrown off the shackles of the tyrant God. Of the Pursuit of Happiness, for we are dedicated to pleasing ourselves. We are gathered here to display our belief in Free Will by striking a blow for freedom. Satan was cast from Heaven for questioning; Adam and Eve were punished for failing in blind obedience; Jonah was swallowed for attempting to choose his own fate; Thomas was castigated for refusing to accept hearsay. We follow in their illustrious footsteps.”

Laporte then walks around the group, holding out a bag containing a number of balls; all are black except one, which is luminescent. Each member draws a ball. The one who gets the luminescent ball is led into the centre of the circle.

“This brother has been chosen to strike the first blow for true freedom. Let him do exactly as he wishes without fear of retribution.”

A large and noisy generator is turned on at this point to cover the child’s screams, and the child is un gagged. By this point, any PC group observing the events, at least one with any semblance of compassion, will have taken steps to interrupt the torture. If the PCs want to watch, you are on your own for details.

GMCS

Raoul Laporte

Evil Genius of the Circle of Light

Laporte is well-dressed without any obvious indicators of his profession. His accent is neutral. He has dark hair slicked back and tanned skin. He usually wears dark glasses. In fact, Laporte grew up as a light-skinned black child in the American South, where his experiences of everyday racism converted him to Black Power ideology. He really believes that any measure is justified in the cause of destroying the dominance of the white race.

Laporte is passing as white, with the aid of skin-lighteners, to distance himself from Behassa in the event of anything going wrong. He is funded by money from Behassa, laundered through a Liechtenstein bank.

Laporte is provided with children by Norman Souster (p. 13). After the Circle’s ceremonies, he dumps children near to where they were picked up; black children are then “rescued” by Behassa (see Chapter 4). Laporte has no direct contact with Behassa; he can contact them and they him by placing a coded message on a bulletin board of the Al Amarja university computer.

Laporte carries a portable computer with plug-in modem.

Apparently French man, age 46, 180 cm, 86 kg, burly professional man.

Languages: American English; Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Psychic Pool: 2 shots

Traits

Fanatic, 4 dice — Will not reveal information that he knows will incriminate Behassa

even under torture. (Lack of concern for individuals)

Psychology, 3 dice — Able to assess people and their motivations. (Overconfidence in most social situations)

Strong, 3 dice — (burly)

Mental misdirection, 3* dice — When a psychic tries to use Mind Scan (or similar fringe power) on Laporte, a successful roll by Laporte allows him to control what the psychic perceives. His preferred use of this is to allow the psychic to think that the mind scan worked and that Laporte's thoughts show him to be an innocent bystander, pawn or small-fry in the Circle of Light, depending on what he thinks he can get away with. (Enigmatic eyes)

Simon Cahan

Pimp

Cahan normally earns his living by acting as a pimp, but also does odd jobs for Laporte. He handles Norman Souster, and picks up the children. He doesn't remain for the Circle's ceremonies — he's not personally interested in children, and Laporte handles the disposal afterwards. Cahan normally hangs out around the Plaza of Flowers, which is where Norman Souster contacts him.

Al Amarjan man, age 34, 185 cm, 73 kg, several gold teeth.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, Arabic, German.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Pimp, 4 dice — Making deals, bullying, psychology of forcing "girls" to do what he wants. (Gold teeth)

Bruiser, 3 dice — Adept at fist attacks. (Habit of rubbing his knuckles)

Contacts, 3 dice — He can get hold of almost anything. (Catch-phrase "I can get you...")

Typical Circle Of Light Member

Pederasts

The members of the Circle of Light are basically prosperous, middle-aged men. Some are of the Al Amarjan racial mixture; others are immigrants from elsewhere in the world. They get their kicks from sexual torture of small children. They are not nice people. PCs with relevant fringe powers will find their mental impressions appalling. They may, however, appear charming, friendly and reliable. Some may be child care professionals who have decided that the Circle of Light is safer for them than abusing children in their own care. Many of them were themselves abused as children — some may use this as an excuse for their own activities if they think there is any chance of eliciting sympathy from the PCs.

It is conceivable that some will be known to the PCs from their day jobs; this is up to your discretion. On the one hand, it would provide the PCs with a handle on the group if they fail to make progress; on the other hand, it might be interpreted by some players as showing approval of the group by making a sympathetic character a member. Obviously, this is not intended to be the case.

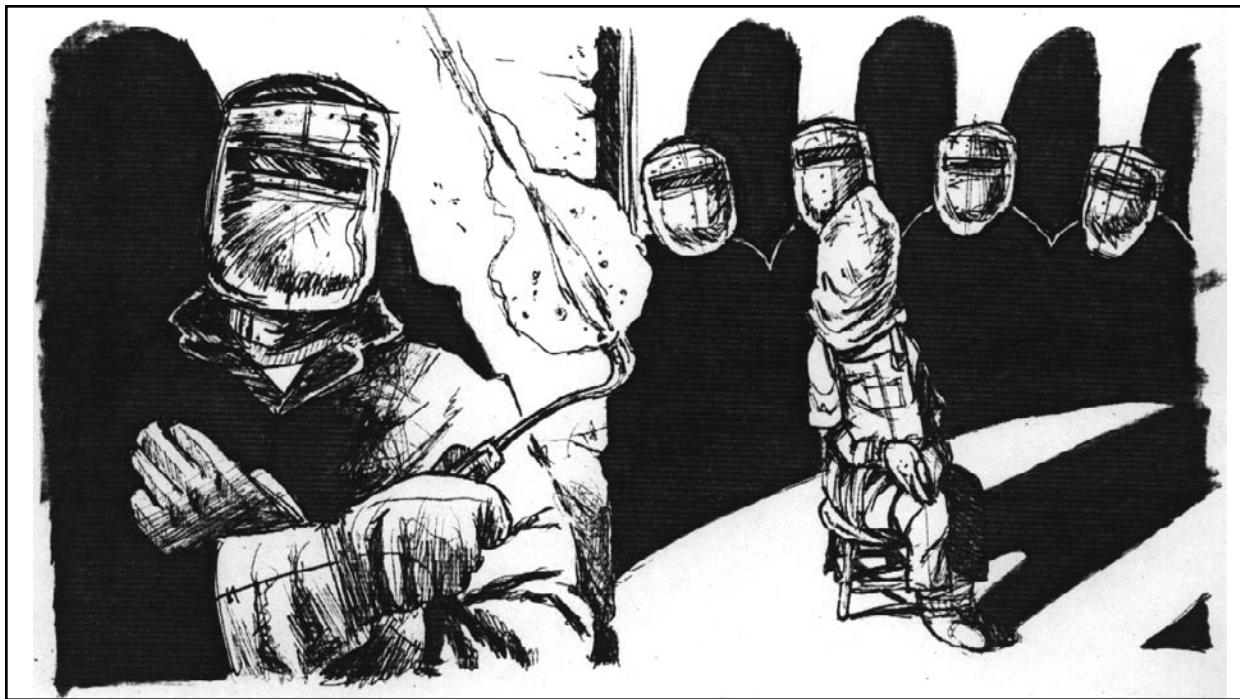
Circle of Light members are all extremely protective of their personal reputations, and some might already be subject to blackmail over their proclivities.

There are eight members besides Laporte and Cahan.

Middle-aged men in mechanics' outfits.

Attack: 2 dice plus penalty die (two are 3 dice plus penalty, and armed)

Defense: 2 dice plus penalty die (two are 3 dice plus penalty)



Hit Points: 13

Traits

Pedophilia, 3 dice — Skilled at inventing alibis, hiding incriminating photos, using “code” words, and so on. (Secretive)

Job Trait, 3 dice — Varies.

Unhealthy, penalty die — Like most people, they are not in good shape, eat too much of the wrong foods, worry too much, and so on. (Look nondescript)

Investigations

The PCs have a number of options for dealing with the Circle of Light.

Peace Force

They might try getting the Peace Force to act. In this case, the Peace Force gives the PCs the usual hassle reserved for suspicious people attempting to waste their time. They can be persuaded to act, eventually, in which case they will break up the Circle's gathering,

but will not get all the members — some escape to restart elsewhere. The PCs will not get the chance to question any of the Circle, and the Peace Force are not looking for anything deeper than simple crime.

Buck-Passing

If the PCs pass the buck by passing the information on up to their bosses (whoever those are), the response is “you deal with it,” or words to that effect. If they are being hired, then the new information may call for a re-negotiation of the pay.

Failure To Act

If the PCs do not act, or appear not to act (for instance, if they are going back to their bosses to find out what they should do), MI6 (see Chapter 5) and any other observers are not going to be impressed with them and will not be co-operative later. They may also have to face a child's accusation later (see Chapter 4).

If they stand by and allow a child to be hurt, this will be bad for their karma. Any of

them with psychic sensitivity or fringe powers will start to get gloomy, foreboding but unspecific dreams caused by the echoing of the child's pain on the astral plane.

Simply telling the players that their characters have bad dreams may not worry them. One way to simulate the effect the dreams ought to have is to play out the dream without informing the players that it is a dream. Add lots of perception rolls and shake your head sympathetically, whatever they roll. (There's nothing to worry players like thinking that there is something important that their characters have not noticed.)

The dream might involve simply wandering around Al Amarja unable to find any of their friends and companions or even anyone that recognizes them. Alternatively, it might reflect some formative experience elsewhere. A character with fringe powers that emerged at a time of stress might be back at that moment, but without the powers. A character with fighting skills might face endless hordes of foes, or one foe too tough to beat. You should change the rules as necessary to ensure the desired result — converting maximum rolls into fumbles, for instance. Because it's a dream, there is no need to explain why the rules have changed — give a simple "You don't know why" to any players' queries. Humiliation by an old enemy would be appropriate given the humiliation the children have gone through.

Whatever, there should be no sign that something odd is happening at first. If the dream's location is off Al Amarja, there should be some naturalistic explanation — they are kidnapped by terrorists or aliens, for instance. Things get odder and weirder as the dream progresses (a bit like Al Amarja itself in fact).

In general, it would be best if the PCs do not share the dream, simply because PCs together tend to give each other moral support. However, the psychic nature of the dream would allow PCs to share elements (or even have the whole dream in common, if you pre-

fer). Perhaps each PC individually dreams of winning an ocean cruise on a ship that gradually appears more and more old-fashioned, and which eventually turns out to be called the *Titanic*...

Dreams may of course contain clues about the current case, the campaign background, or an upcoming plot-line, if desired. This is up to you. For instance, PCs who dream of going to a talk given by "Shaddim Al-Khadir" on board the *Titanic* are liable to be interested when they discover that someone of the same name is currently giving talks on Al Amarja...

Breaking Up The Group

The PCs (with whatever allies they can obtain) may try to break up the Circle of Light. This is not too difficult, in fact. The Circle of Light is not a combat-oriented group. Some of them may carry typical Al Amarjan self-defense weapons, but will be at no more than 3 dice plus penalty die in combat skills. In the event of the PCs intervening, the members' first option is to flee, only fighting if this is necessary to allow them to escape. They do not fight in any sort of co-ordinated fashion.

Clues

Because the group was recruited through personal contact, each member of the Circle knows personally at least one other member, probably two or three. If the PCs can force one member to reveal the names of the ones he knows, then it will simply be a matter of forcing each one in turn to do likewise in order to get the whole group.

Most of the members know Laporte's name, and that he is the "master" of the group. Laporte has, however, kept his address and preferred hang-outs secret from the rest of the group. Efficient espionage may allow the PCs to capture Laporte or at least link him to International Adoption and Behassa.

Chapter 4

Behassa

The members of this group are US blacks who believe in black supremacy and will go to any lengths to achieve it. Through their agent Laporte, they are controlling the Circle of Light and its abuse of children in order to elicit fringe powers in black children, who are then “rescued” and recruited by Behassa.

There are three blocs of Behassa on Al Amarja at the present time; contact between them

is deliberately kept to a minimum, so that the fall or exposure of one won’t lead immediately to the same fate for the others. These blocs are Laporte, the group that is recruiting black children, and Shaddim Al-Khadir. Al-Khadir is the popularizer, recruiter, and fund-raiser — the public face — of Behassa.

Transcript of Recorded Interview with Shaddim Al-Khadir

Interviewer: “Mr. Al-Khadir, what do you intend to do in Al Amarja?”

Al-Khadir: “Bring peace, tolerance, and tranquility to all humanity. That is my goal in life.”

Interviewer: “A busy schedule, then?”

Al-Khadir: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

Interviewer: “Just how do you intend to achieve this utopia?”

Al-Khadir: “I alone cannot. No one person can impose utopia. My goal is to encourage others to aspire to utopia. When my people all dream the same dream, then we will accomplish it.”

Interviewer: “You have been linked to some fairly extremist organizations, black power, that sort of thing.”

Al-Khadir: “‘Extremist’ is a word better used for the oppression that black people endure. What you call black power organizations are only a product of oppression by

white men — a vile and ugly oppression that black men have endured throughout history.”

Interviewer: “That sounds like an apology for black racism.”

Al-Khadir (continuing): “White men fear the power that black men would have if they ever admitted that we were their equals, because if they admitted that we were their equals, they would find that we were their superiors.”

Interviewer: “Your melanistic theories claim that blacks are superior to whites?”

Al-Khadir: “I make no claims. Melanistics deals in demonstrable facts.”

Interviewer: “That only blacks are fully human? To be blunt, you claim that I am sub-human?”

Al-Khadir: “This is typical of the trivializing and condescending attitude of the white press. The interview is at an end.”

Melanistics

This is a pseudoscientific doctrine which asserts that melanin — the pigment which colors human hair and skin — has a number of remarkable properties. It acts as a superconductor for fringe powers and intellectual activities. Because black people have more melanin than whites — believers in the theory disparagingly refer to white people as “subhuman albinos” — black people have greater intellectual and fringe abilities than whites. Whites can only mimic human fringe powers by means of technology (or, perhaps, by atavistic abilities gained from distant black ancestors).

The whole of human history has, proponents claim, been fuelled by whites’ envy of the superiority of blacks and their desire to exterminate blacks. Black people will only be free to develop their full potential in a world where white values have been swept away.

The doctrine has adherents among some blacks in the United States. Behassa was formed as a secret society to take the theory to its logical conclusion.

Khadir’s Lecture

Al-Khadir is giving a lecture at Al Amarja university. He was invited by sympathetic African Studies lecturers, but the talk is to be before a mixed audience. Al-Khadir’s other purpose for coming to Al Amarja was to talk to potential sponsors. He is not intending to have direct contact with the other members of Behassa on the island.

Al-Khadir’s talk at the university is given to a crowded audience, mostly of undergraduates. The audience is divided between those sympathetic to Al-Khadir, who

are mostly at the front of the lecture theatre, and those antagonistic to him, who are at the back, heckling occasionally (though this is mostly kept under control by university staff.) In the audience are several of the Behassa members, come to hear their leader speak, and Raoul Laporte is also sitting quietly somewhere in the middle of the auditorium.

The talk itself concentrates on the white conspiracy to ignore black people’s achievements, covering medicines which white “explorers” “discovered” by asking the native peoples, black literature, arts and sciences (“The least of the Benin bronzes is the equal of any painting produced in Europe, and yet is valued at a fraction of a so-called ‘old Master’...”). It ends with Al-Khadir suggesting that white culture is so afraid of the black race that it peddles skin bleaches containing poisons such as lead and steroids which can dangerously weaken the skin, and ends on a thundering denunciation of such ploys and a rhetorical refusal to be silenced and bleached into oblivion.

A brief time for questions is dominated by questions from Donna Carstairs (see Chapter 6) about Al-Khadir’s detailed political platform, which Carstairs claims is equivalent to that of Hitler.

Using The Lecture

PCs attending the lecture might be spotted as potential allies by either Shaddim Al-Khadir or Donna Carstairs. The lecture might simply be part of the scene-setting to introduce the themes of racism. Alternatively, it might provide PCs already investigating the plot with valuable leads in the form of a significant exchange of glances between Raoul Laporte or Al-Khadir and the other Behassa members.



GMCs

Shaddim Al-Khadir

Racist Poet and Orator

Al-Khadir believes in the power of the word to inspire the tides of history. He was a main mover in spreading melanistic ideas in the United States. Al-Khadir has studied the great orators of history — Martin Luther King Jr., Adolf Hitler, Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill, and more. Their success was not due to those things conventionally thought of as charisma, such as good looks or an impressive speaking voice, but to the sheer power of their words. Al-Khadir has modelled himself on them. He is an undistinguished-looking African-American man. He does not seek publicity through the conventional media, and does not show up well when asked to produce a sound bite. (The interview above shows some of his problems with the media.) Instead, he reaches people personally, in lectures at churches and clubs. This also has the advantage of a selected audience, and a lack of critical attention.

US black man, age 54, 175 cm, 70 kg, undistinguished-looking, slightly graying.

Languages: US English, Arabic.

Traits

Oratory, 4 dice — Constructs a plausible argument adjusted for the audience. (Pauses before speaking)

Poetry, 3 dice — Extensive knowledge of poems, and able to choose a suitable quote. (Speaks with cultured voice in metaphors.)

Knowledge of Orators and Oration, 1* dice — Knowledge both of famous speeches, and why they worked. (Quotes from famous speeches).

Physically unfit, penalty die — Suffers a penalty on activities requiring physical exertion. (Wheezes after moderate exercise)

Garfield Richardson

Swashbuckler with a gimmick

Richardson is the physical powerhouse of the black group. He habitually wears a broad grin, bright-colored "ethnic" clothes, and gives the impression of enjoying life. He carries a large knife, and he has a scar across the bridge of his nose.

Richardson has the fringe ability to make himself immune to physical attacks. It makes his skin locally as hard as diamond — liable to break any weapon (or the bones of a fist!) striking it. He has not mastered the control required to use this power in attack, perhaps for psychological reasons relating to his development of the power to protect himself from hurt.

Richardson gives the impression of being a latter-day swashbuckler, cheerful and honorable, who prefers a straight duel with an honorable foe. The simple fact is that this kind of fight benefits his abilities more than a backstabbing free-for-all.

Richardson was brought up in an orphanage where he was abused by staff and older children, and this experience elicited his own fringe power. It was he who suggested that Behassa attempt the deliberate creation of abused children with fringe powers.

Another consequence of his childhood abuse is that he enjoys the pain of others — in fights he inflicts more pain than necessary to defeat an opponent.

US black man, age 37, 175 cm, 76 kg, scar across the bridge of his nose.

Languages: US English.

Attack: 4 dice, X2 damage.

Defense: 4 dice, but see *Immunity to Attack* fringe power

Hit Points: 28

Psychic Pool: 10 shots

Traits

Knife fighting, 4 dice — (Carries a knife)

Impressive, 3 dice — A magnificent physical specimen. (Impressive)

Healthy, 3 dice — (Fit-looking)

Immunity to attack, 3* dice — For any one attack in a round, Richardson can make his body hard as diamond, preventing the attack hurting him, and possibly damaging the weapon. The attack can still knock him back, but it will not damage him directly. To use the power, Richardson must be aware of the attack, and able to anticipate where it will land — the power can be "fooled" by feints. He must be capable of concentrating; the power does not work when he is unconscious, and he can be distracted. He is practiced at ignoring the usual distractions during fights; for attempted distractions by PCs roll the PCs' ability at distraction (default 2 dice) against his 3 dice fringe power. (Confidence in one-to-one fights)

Peter Kegabba

Psychic fighter

Kegabba regards psychic combat as the equivalent of big-game hunting. He enjoys any sport which involves thrills, excitement, and danger; and psychics are the best game of all. He is not much interested in the goals of Behassa, but the more people there are with fringe powers, the more for him to test himself against. He believes that there will soon be a New World Order with psychics ruling humanity.

As a psychic fighter, he is well-prepared to deal with psychics; he can sense the use of fringe powers, and create a lure that tends to draw psychics into his own psychic world, where he sets the rules.

Kegabba appears as an elderly man in the real world; in his psychic form, he is a powerful and athletic young black man appearing perhaps as a cowboy, or a soldier, or a skier,

Psychic Duels

A psychic duel is a contest of will and imagination that takes place on the “psychic plane.” The psychic plane is not an actual realm of existence or dimension, like the Astral Plane is. Instead, it refers to the state one finds oneself in when psychic impressions override physical ones. The brain translates conscious and unconscious psychic impressions into physical sensations. When a psychic can lure another person into a psychic duel, both of them “appear” on the psychic plane, where they can then do battle. The landscape depends on the subconscious imaginations of the duellists. It can be anything, a desert, a forest, urban blight, or a surreal and alien land.

One wagers psychic combat by manipulating the psychic plane. Thus if a combatant is on a hillside in the psychic plane, an opponent can cause a chasm to open up beneath his feet. The target can plunge into the chasm, or can summon up a stone bridge to land on, a giant bird to fly away on, or anything else he can think of. Such psychic battles are fast and furious and limited only by the imagination and mental strength of the participants. These duels are much like traditional magical duels in which combatants fight by changing rapidly from shape to monstrous shape, except that the psychics manipulate the environment, not themselves.

Getting to the Psychic Plane

Getting to the psychic plane (i.e., attuning one's senses so that psychic impressions rather than physical ones create sensations) requires a fringe power or device. Some psychics can “go there” at will, and some of them can also draw others there. While in the psychic plane, one's physical body falls into REM sleep.

Escaping the Psychic Plane

To leave the psychic plane (i.e., to re-attune the mind to physical input) one must either have a psychic talent relating to the psychic plane or be forced out. A psychic with the appropriate talents can force another person off the psychic plane, and damage to the physical body also “wakes the person up” so that he leaves the psychic plane. Powerful physical sensations also can “wake up” the person on the psychic plane, so that hunger or thirst will bring someone back. (It's therefore impractical to lure people to the psychic plane and imprison them there.) Finally, lack of psychic input also causes the psychic plane to “fade away,” and the person awakes. If a psychic lures someone to the psychic plane and then leaves him, he'll come back of his own accord within five to fifteen minutes.

Simulating Psychic Combat

To simulate a psychic duel, proceed through the following steps each round.

- 1) Each combatant determines whether to favor offense, defense, or neither. Each combatant secretly picks a strategy to favor (attack or defense) and a number (up to 5) by which that strategy is favored. One might pick “Attack 2” or “Defense 5.” One who does not want to favor either side picks “Zero” or “Even-On.” A combatant caught by surprise in the attack automatically favors defense by 3 points, as instincts favor self-preservation. (For simplicity, you may skip Step 1 and assume that both combatants choose even-on tactics).
- 2) Each contestant rolls dice to determine his effectiveness that round. Someone not trained in psychic dueling gets 2 dice. (This means Psychic Duelling is a “standard” trait, not an “unusual” one. Anyone can do it. It's getting to the psychic plane in the first place that's difficult.)

One can use traits such as Vivid Imagination or Strong Will in place of Psychic Dueling. A marginally related trait, such as Intelligent, gives a combatant a bonus die.

- 3) Each combatant modifies this roll by the strategy picked in Step 1. If the combatant favored attack, add the attack number to the roll to determine the Attack Total, and subtract that same number from the roll to determine the Defense Total. If the combatant favored defense, subtract the defense number from the roll to get the Attack Total and add the same number to the roll to get the Defense Total.
- 4) The GM secretly compares the Attack Total of each combatant to the Defense Total of the enemy. The number by which the Attack Total exceeds the Defense Total is the basic amount of damage done to the defender.
- 5) Play out a few exchanges, as the combatants change the psychic environment in order to attack the enemy. Good attacks or defense can increase the amount of damage done or decrease the amount of damage suffered.
- 6) Apply damage to both sides simultaneously. Anyone knocked unconscious on the psychic plane is helpless for a moment. At that moment, the enemy may choose to strike, rolling an even-on Attack Total (the character cannot choose the Attack option to increase damage. The total rolled is taken as additional damage to the unconscious target, who then returns to the physical plane, still unconscious — or dead.

Example of Psychic Combat

Kegabba chooses Attack 5, and the PC chooses Defense 1. Kegabba rolls 11, for an Attack Total of 16 and a Defense Total of 6. The PC rolls 8, for an Attack Total of 7 and a Defense of 9. Kegabba starts out the round creating a roaring fire around the PC, who calls up a wind that lifts the fire up and drops

it on Kegabba. The GM rules that this clever defense/offense combination nets the PC a +2 to his Attack Total, bringing it up to 9. Kegabba then turns the grass around the PC into vipers that strike at him, and the PC tries to float in the air to escape, but Kegabba makes the vipers grow longer and longer so they can still strike him. Calling it the end of the round, the GM calculates the damage. Kegabba does 7 hit points of damage to the PC ($16 - 9$), and the PC does 3 points of damage to Kegabba ($9 - 6$).

Multiple Combatants

A character's Defense Total applies equally to all attackers. Characters who outnumber a defender must commit to their tactics before knowing which of them will be attacked that round. (That way, one cannot pick Attack 5 once one knows that one is not going to be attacked anyway.) If a character's Defense Total is below 0, he takes 1 point of damage for every point below 0 even if he is not attacked. With defenses down so low, the ambient energy of the psychic plane itself damages the character.

Psychic Handles

The best way to improve your chances to win a psychic duel is to "get a handle" on the other duellist. A "handle" is an emotional weak point or imbalance. Phobias, fears, obsessions, taboos, and sexual fetishes make good handles. By using a handle well in a psychic battle, a character gets a bonus die. For instance, creating a giant spider to attack someone who is afraid of spiders merits a bonus die. If the other duelist is actually phobic, the attacker may get two bonus dice. The most effective handles are irrational. Healthy love for one's spouse doesn't work well as a handle, but an obsession over a movie star sure does. Healthy devotion and interest help integrate the psyche, while irrational reactions turn the psyche against itself.



depending on how he has shaped his psychic world.

US black man, age 74, 170 cm, 48 kg.

Languages: US English, unpracticed Swahili

Psychic Pool: 12 shots

Traits

Psi *senses*, 1* die — Kegabba can sense the use of psychic powers when he concentrates. (penetrating gaze)

Psychic Duelling, 3 dice — Fighting duels on the psychic plane. His version of the psychic plane is a colorful and surreal landscape, much like the poster in his room that he looks at as he enters the psychic plane. (Has comfortable chair in his room, where he sits when duelling)

Psychic lure, 2* dice — When Kegabba is on the psychic plane, he can “reach out” and lure others there, where he then attacks them using *Psychic Duelling*. (Secretive smile)

Hypnosis, 1* die — Requires several minutes of talking in a calm atmosphere to work. The victim does not have to be willing, but does need to listen to the words. An intention-

ally resisting person cannot be hypnotized. A cooperating subject gives him a bonus die, and the subject may add his own hypnosis skill (if any) to Kegabba’s roll. Hypnosis cannot force people to do something completely against their will, but it can twist their thinking and alter their perceptions. A hypnotized subject will not put a loaded gun to his own head and pull the trigger, but could be persuaded that the gun is loaded with harmless blanks — and dissuaded from checking before firing it. (penetrating gaze)

Likes taking risks — (will take unnecessary risks)

Istafir Nazaradin

Brawler on a slippery slope

Nazaradin is an all-round athlete, reasonably intelligent, and a believer in the benefits of a healthy mind in a healthy body. He joined Behassa out of concern for civil rights, and has gradually found himself involved with more and more dubious practices. At first, he went along because he believed that the pursuit of

civil rights justified a certain amount of bending the rules; once on the slippery slope he found it not so easy to decide when to stop. After all, if he simply left Behassa, he could not influence its actions, and things might get worse.

Some time ago, he discovered Zorro. He is now a regular user. It helps him view Behassa's actions as justified in the long run.

US black man, age 28, 188 cm, 92 kg, healthy.

Languages: American, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28

Armor: leather clothes, 1 point

Traits

Athlete, 4 dice — Nazaradin has trained his body to peak perfection. (Trains daily)

Boxing, 3 dice — (broken nose)

Khedge Sulemain

Child Minder

Sulemain is very good with children, being able to get them to trust him. He likes them, and wants to get them a better place in the world.

Unfortunately, Sulemain is weak-willed, and easily controlled by Khadir. He justifies his connection to child abuse by saying to himself that there's nothing he can do to alter what is going on; all he can do is help the children. Sulemain comforts the children, and uses his fringe powers to weaken their memories and longing for their parents. Sulemain is willingly hypnotized by Peter Kegabba, strengthening his mental defenses against accidental leaking of his thoughts to newly-psychic children.

US black man age 39, 173 cm, 70 kg, slim, with a distracted air.

Languages: American English, Al Amarjan patois

Psychic Pool: 3 shots

Traits

Good with children, 4 dice — Understands the needs of children, and can meet them, keeps children under control and comforts them. (usually has a child in tow)

Partial mental defense, 1* die — Protects him against leaking of thoughts during casual contact with psychics, also usable against mind scan and similar fringe powers. (Distracted air)

Psychic memory fade, 1* die — Applied over a period of days, it mimics the natural healing effect of time in fading painful memories and bereavement or loss of parents. (Soothing manner)

Elicit psi powers, 1* die — Sulemain can help the emergence of latent psi powers — the equivalent of a specific teacher — even though he does not know what psychic powers are involved (see OTE, p. 173). (Soothing manner)

The Children

After being abused by the Circle of Light, the children are dumped by Raoul Laporte at a pre-arranged place; Sulemain picks them up as though by chance, comforts them, and arranges for medical treatment if necessary. They are then assessed for emergent fringe powers, mainly by Kegabba, and when confident enough to leave Sulemain they are shipped out of Al Amarja, using false papers, to adoptive parents who are sympathetic to Behassa in the United States where they are monitored, and any fringe powers trained. The adopters are told that the children are victims of abuse at the hands of their parents.

Children typically stay with Sulemain for two or three months; there are usually one to three children in his care at one time. During

their stay with him, they are taught to distrust whites.

Around half of the children develop fringe powers. This high ratio may be due to the belief of those around them, or to Sulemain's fringe power, or actually to the trauma they have suffered.

Jomo Cahandra

Faltering Telekinetic Child

Jomo has been with Sulemain for three months. His parents emigrated to Al Amarja about a year ago from Nigeria; Jomo's grasp of English and Al Amarjan patois is poor. Jomo's experiences have left him fearful and dependent on Sulemain — he gets anxious when left alone for even short periods.

Jomo is working hard to develop his telekinetic powers.

Nigerian boy, age 7, 113 cm, 18 kg.

Christian Mebele

Former Waif

Christian is a small child of about five; as he was previously living as a street child, no one is sure of his exact age — or ethnic background, although this is clearly predominantly black African. He has shown no signs of developing fringe powers, but on the other hand, he appears to be making a good recovery from his experiences — the simple remedies of food, love and a stable family-type setting have worked wonders. Christian is happy and inquisitive.

Black boy, age 5(?), 96 cm, 15 kg.

Nawal Al-Haz

Psychic Blaster

The most recent victim, Nawal is six. She has developed a psychic blast which is rather alarming to the members of Behassa as she has little control over it. It occurs when she is seri-

ously upset and frightened. On the other hand it only occurs then, so Behassa do not consider it too risky to them. Nawal is quiet, and it is difficult to gauge how her experiences have affected her.

Privately, she daydreams of hurting those who hurt her.

The exact effect of the psychic blast depends on the circumstances. If Nawal faced one of the men who hurt her, she would probably shred him (incidentally causing extreme discomfort to any psychics nearby, and headaches throughout Al Amarja's psychic community). A blast of this sort would leave her collapsed and needing weeks of bed-rest. If faced with someone who had not helped her when she was hurt, her response would be hardly less extreme. Severe teasing could eventually provoke a blast strong enough to knock the tormenter down.

Black girl, age 6, 109 cm, 18 kg.

Psychic Pool: 1 shot

Traits

Psychic blast (see text)

Behassa's Base

Behassa operates from an office occupying one floor of a block in the Flowers Barrio, surrounded and adjoined on two sides by other office buildings. Officially, the office is occupied by International Adoptions. This is a registered business dealing in providing children for rich couples in the United States and Western Europe in exchange for money for their birth parents (not an illegal service in Al Amarja, it being a simple capitalist service). Actually, the business is a front for Behassa, with entirely fictional records, and the only children dealt with are those "rescued" by Behassa.

The office cover means that no one is aware that the children are staying, and there is no one around at night to hear if the children have nightmares.



The windows are silvered, preventing inspection from outside. The office has secure locks on the doors to the outside. Since they actually do no business, they need no receptionist, using the reception area for those rare time when they may need to meet with someone and maintain their facade.

International Adoptions is not listed in the phone book. Anyone who asks about this is told that they run a discreet service with private information channels.

Legend to Behassa Headquarters

A — Foyer

It looks neat and welcoming, for the benefit of anyone who may accidentally take the elevator to this floor, or who looks past a Behassa member as he steps onto or off the elevator.

B — Elevators

C — Doors

These doors are always locked. A plaque on each one says:

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTIONS

Private Offices

BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

D — Office

The receptionist's desk has an answering machine; they always screen calls. The files contain only the most recent developments: notes on the three children currently under Sulemain's care, the one child sent off Al Amarja in the last month, and that child's (innocent) adoptive parents. Records are regularly sent by courier to a more secure base in the US. Less important records include correspondence with and addresses of a dozen black parents

worldwide who are trying to get a child through "International Adoptions."

E — Washroom

F — Bathroom

It has bath and shower facilities, including rubber duckies, bubble bath, and the like.

G — Richardson's Room

On the walls are photos, posters, and paintings of African landscapes and people.

H — Nazaradin's Room

The walls sport posters of athletes and pin-ups. Hidden in his nightstand is his cache of Zorro, some twenty to thirty capsules.

I — Kegabba's Room

Paintings of fantastic and phantasmagoric scenes dominate the room. A comfortable chair upholstered in black leather faces the wall where a poster of a fantastic landscape hangs. Kegabba sits here when he conducts his psychic duels.

J — Currently Free

K — Dining Area

With table.

L — Children's Play Area

Among more innocuous toys (such as art supplies) are black dolls and white dolls. The black dolls are babies, children, families, and adventure figures. The white dolls are evil witches, androids, and villains.

M — Kitchen

N — Nawal's Room

O — Currently Free

P — Jomo's Room

Q — Christian's Room

R — Sulemain's Room

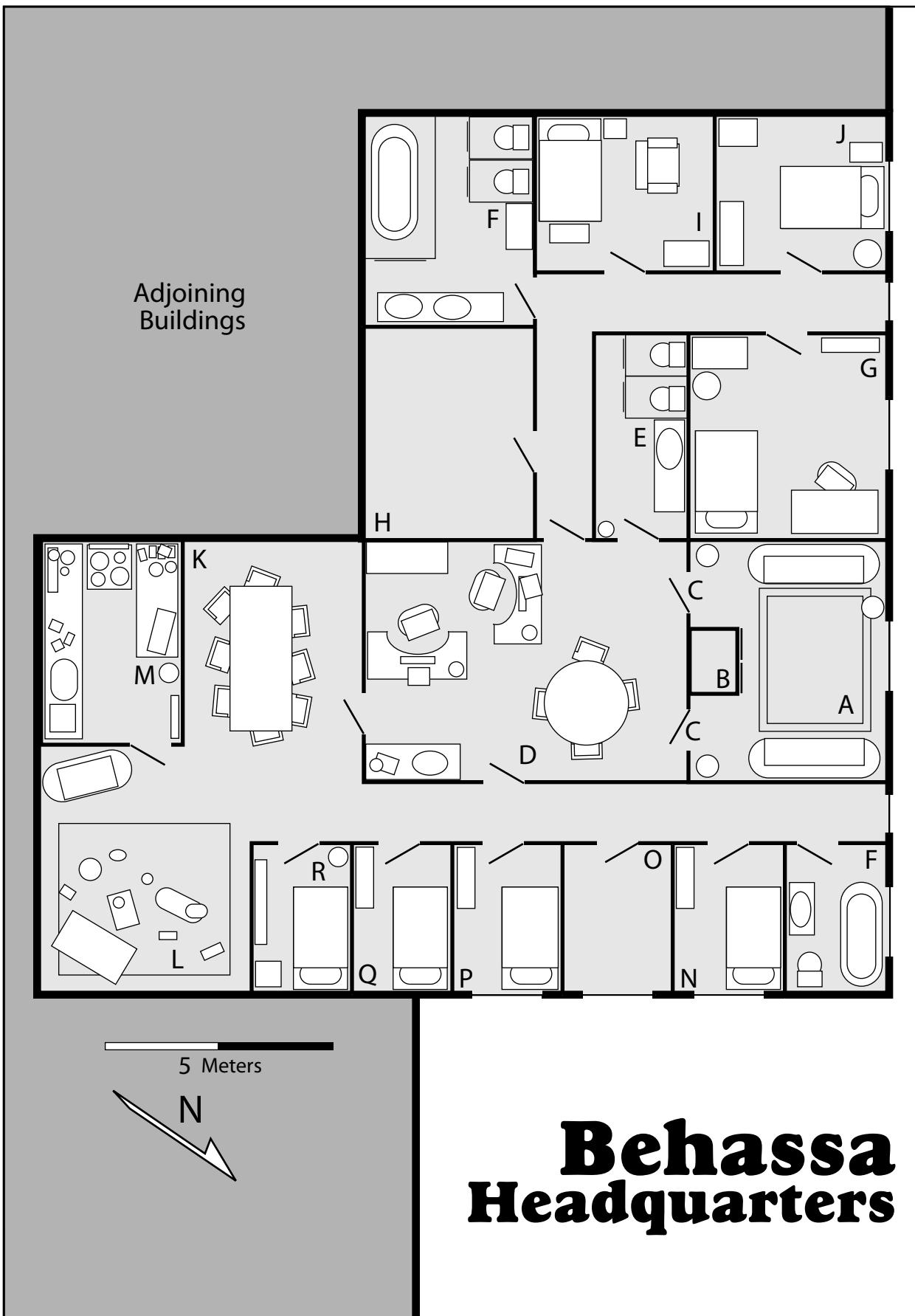
Decorated in pastel colors. Fingerpainting, crude drawings, and letters from children are tacked all over the walls.

Investigations

If the PCs investigate International Adoptions posing as prospective clients, the Behassans stonewall them, giving them batches of paperwork to fill out at home. The Behassans also ask about who referred the PCs to International Adoptions, since there are no local clients of the front. Chances are, the PCs and the Behassans will both realize something is strange about the others.

If the PCs break in by brute force, they'll have a fight on their hands. In addition, the landlord of the building has paid to be on the Peace Force's "quick response" list, so Peace Force officers will arrive with due haste if the Force is alerted. (They don't arrive any faster than one would expect in an industrialized country. It's just that they don't dawdle, as they usually do.)

If the PCs are not being hired by the Force, their investigation may be complicated by the arrival of the Aries Gang. Alerted, lied to, and bribed by the Force, they've showed up to destroy International Adoptions. At least one gangbanger will have a camera, not S.O.P. for the Aries Gang. (The Force has directed them to gather photographic evidence to feed to the media.) This anomaly may lead the PCs to suspect someone is behind the Aries involvement, which would lead to the Force.



Chapter 5

The Secret Agent Connection

British MI6 agents are under orders to maintain a watching brief on the activities of the Circle of Light. Their superiors in London have been looking for a way of predicting fringe abilities and want to know if Behassa have made any genuine discoveries. The MI6 agents will probably become aware of the PCs, and may even be of assistance to them.

A Brief History Of MI6

The British secret service became notorious in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s for the number of its actual or potential security leaks. Many of the agents involved were homosexuals — for instance, Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt, two of the Philby-Burgess-MacLean-Blunt ring who passed intelligence to the Soviet Union.

It is one of MI6's best-kept secrets that the number of homosexuals in its service was no coincidence. British Intelligence has long been attempting to develop agents with fringe powers; the biggest problem with such a project being to predict who would be most likely to have potential in this area. There were — and are — no reliable screening methods for fringe potential. In the 1930s, it was believed that fringe powers were associated with artistic ability, and so the Secret Services recruited arts graduates from Oxford and Cambridge, especially homosexual ones, since it was a truism at the time that homosexuals were particularly artistic. A similar reasoning led to mentally unstable recruits, and those with extreme politi-

cal views, being accepted.

After several decades, it became apparent that this was producing no more fringe powers than would be expected from a random sample, and MI6 decided to recruit agents without prejudice on their type of university degree or sexual orientation.

Present Situation

When MI6 found out about Behassa's plans, the notion that abused children are likely to develop fringe powers was of particular interest to the Head of Fringe Development. He ordered two agents to Al Amarja to keep an eye on the situation. They are under strict instructions not to interfere, but to gather as much information as possible.

GMCs

Brian Partridge

Confused spy

Partridge is MI6's regular agent on Al Amarja, which may explain his deep confusion and his manic air. His official reports to London are filled with rambling descriptions of world-threatening conspiracies which his seniors have learned to ignore.

His cover on Al Amarja is as a stringer for a British paper. He specializes in sports reporting, but also conducts weird interviews

with various personalities. When interviewing Al-Khadir, for instance, his main apparent interest was whether he liked the scenery on Al Amarja. Suspicious enemies might suspect that Partridge uses such questions to rattle his subjects and make deep psychological insights; sadly, it's simply that he doesn't seem to think in a normal manner.

Partridge is a repressed homosexual who relentlessly pursues women but is unable to maintain a relationship.

English man, age 37, 178 cm, 70 kg, untidy sandy hair

Languages: UK English

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Secret Agent, 3 dice — He's capable, though not gifted, at the many tasks his job requires. (Seems harmless)

Magnet for the weird, 2* dice — He's a magnet for the right people, and has stumbled over any number of odd goings-on in his time (Deeply confused)

Lucky, 1* die — People just don't seem to get around to disemboweling him (He's still alive!)

British sports, 1* die — Knowledge of soccer, rugby, cricket at national and international level (Quotes sports trivia.)

Addled — His secret agent training keeps him from blowing his cover, but he's generally too far "off" to be much good at accomplishing much. (Manic)



Mona McLeod

Ambitious Cloak

McLeod is ambitious, determined to succeed in a male-dominated profession — something she believes requires her to be twice as good as a man. Her cover on Al Amarja is as a businesswoman setting up deals and maintaining contacts. Her customers believe she is involved in some unspecified criminal activity. She actually makes a slim profit on look-alike consumer products, as well as gathering information in gossiping with dealers and traders.

She is a member of MI6's fringe department, with an academic knowledge of fringe matters. She is capable of making the connection between abuse and development of fringe powers, and is enthusiastic for the potential of this; MI6 would be able to screen abuse victims back home and offer special training for them...

Scottish woman, age 26, 155 cm, 48 kg, white woman with dark hair in a pony tail

Languages: UK English, Scottish dialect.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Secret Agent, 3 dice — All-around competence at her job. (Confident in danger)

Conversation, 3 dice — Able to manipulate conversations to gather information without the subject being aware. (good conversationalist.)

Dirty fighting, 3 dice — Knows vulnerable spots on the human body, and isn't afraid to use them. (public school education — she played mixed hockey at school)

Fringe theory, 1* die — See above. (Interest in fringe theories.)

Lightweight — Easily affected by alcohol and stimulants such as coffee. (Short and slender)

Using The MI6 Agents

The MI6 agents are a source of hints for the PCs, and the link between the two halves of the scenario (the Circle of Light and Behassa) if the PCs are unable to obtain the necessary information elsewhere. They are keeping watch on the Circle of Light and Behassa, while they may be able to find out about the Force if requested. Brian Partridge can provide hints to the involvement of Shaddim Al-Khadir; Mona McLeod can provide theoretical information. In short, they are able to provide hints on just about anything that the plot requires.

Why should they do this? That's simple. They're human beings, and they don't like what the Circle of Light is up to. Although they're under orders not to interfere, they will be prepared to "accidentally" drop hints to the PCs if they realize that the PCs are out to stop the Circle of Light. A preferred method would be to allow the PCs to question them, answering "no" to negatives, and "I can't answer that" to positives. If the PCs aren't bright enough to spot that, however, they could be a bit less subtle, asking rhetorical but pointed questions that guide the PCs towards an answer.

A particularly good point for them to intervene would be after the PCs have broken up the Circle of Light, either giving clues as to where to find Laporte, or wondering aloud whether there is some deeper reason behind all this.

Chapter 6

The Force

The Force is not a group so much as an ad-hoc alliance of representatives of a number of white racist organizations, most of which do not trust each other. Their only unity of purpose comes from their opposition to Behassa. Once Behassa is neutralized, they will disband.

Secret Hideout

The Force doesn't have a single base, but they meet at the house of Isaac Goldberg, a wealthy, retired lawyer. Only Goldberg and his bodyguard, Rock Jackson, reside there. Goldberg's house is outside the Edge, where the 'Burbs meet the countryside. Situated on a road lined with a thick undergrowth and trees, it is a substantial villa with substantial villas to either side, and backing onto farmland.

The neighbors are rich, middle-aged, elderly, and unable to provide useful information about Goldberg even if the PCs should persuade them to talk. (The neighbors are more likely to phone for the Peace Force if the PCs look at all typical for "inner city" dwellers.) Goldberg keeps himself to himself.

Cooking and cleaning is performed by Martha Freeman, a respectable Al Amarjan Jewish widow in her 50s, who comes in daily. She knows nothing about The Force.

Legend to Goldberg's House

A — Hall

Expensively decorated, with a broad staircase dominating the center. Like the rest of the

house, it looks like a model more than a residence. Goldberg has obviously paid good money to have the place decorated.

B — Goldberg's Office

With a broad desk, a computer with modem, locked file cabinets, and tasteful reproductions of Old Masters.

C — Library

Filled with law books, plus history and art history.

D — Drawing Room

Comfortable, with a generous supply of general interest and legal magazines.

E — Dining Room

Not ostentatious, but elegant, with two impressive sets of china.

F — Cloakroom/lavatory

Bedecked with brass fittings.

G — Passage

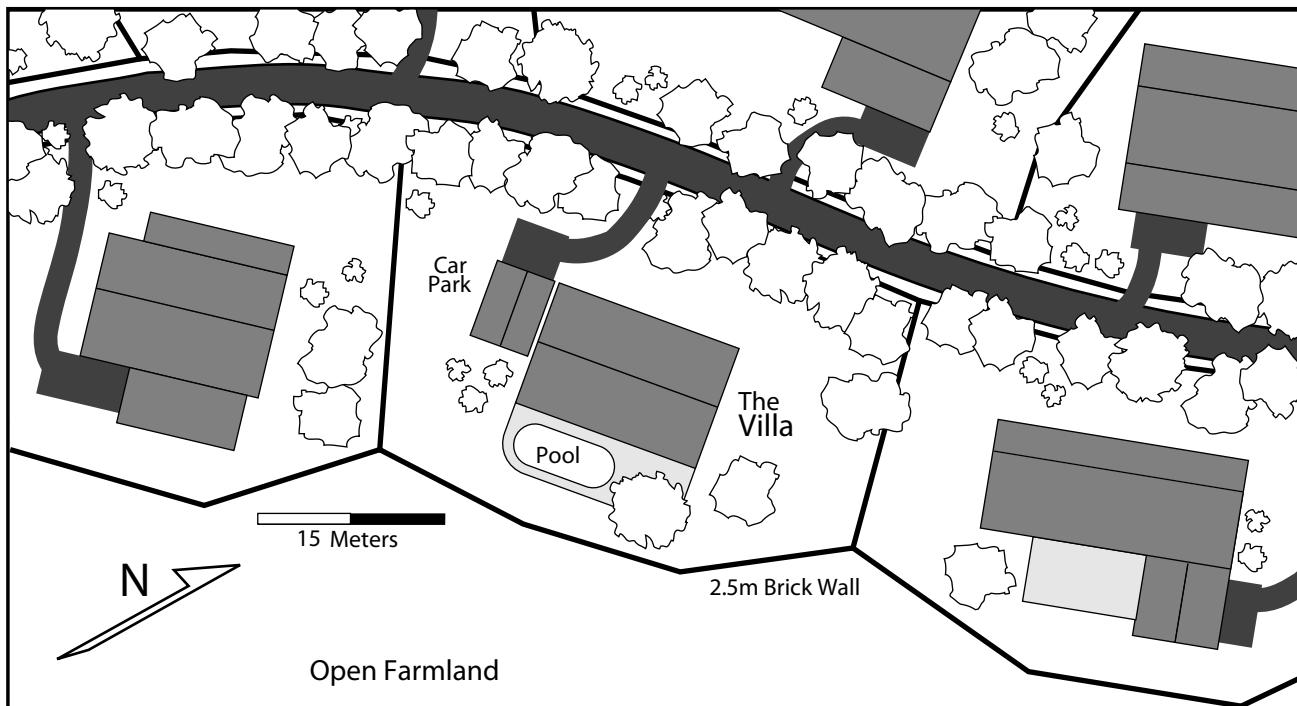
Lushly carpeted.

H — Larder

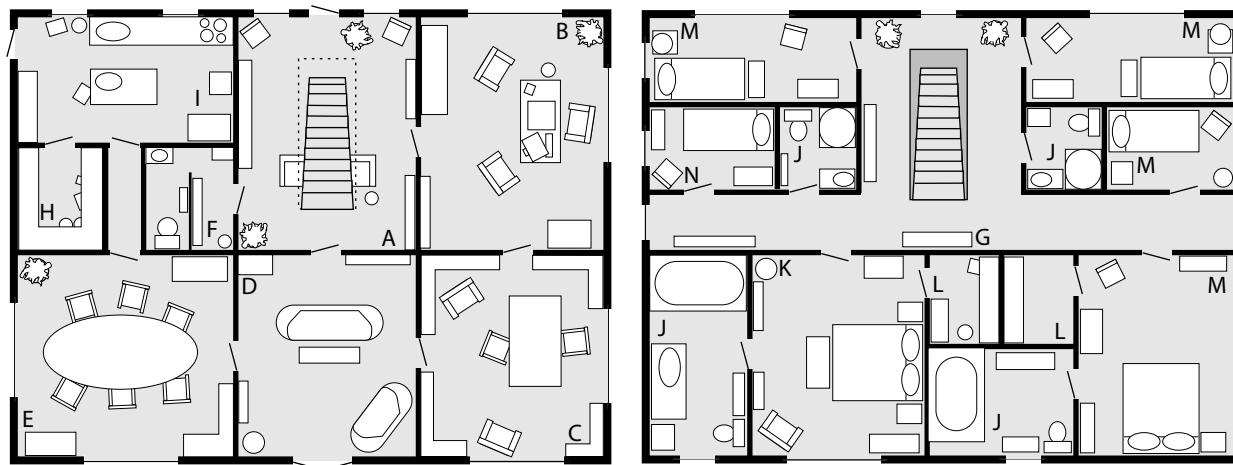
Well-stocked.

I — Kitchen

Orderly, with a specialized tool for everything.



Goldberg's Villa



J — Bathroom

Each is done according to a different color scheme.

K — Goldberg's Bedroom

This room is very neat and organized, but it at least looks lived in (unlike so many other rooms in the house).

L — Walk-In Closet

M — Guest Bedroom

N — Jackson's Bedroom

Messy and very lived in. A large stereo system dominates one wall. Posters of martial artists cover the others. Stashed under the mattress are six doses of Slo-Mo.

GMCs

Isaac Goldberg

Retired lawyer

Goldberg takes the Old Testament promises of the Jews being God's Chosen People literally, leading him to regard all *goyim* (non-Jews) as less than human. Goldberg favors Old Testament methods of dealing with the foes of God's Chosen, with emphasis on smiting them and destroying them utterly. Of course, as a lawyer, Goldberg is a pragmatist. As an individual, he could easily be crushed by the law if he put a foot wrong, so he takes care not to get his own hands dirty. He prefers to use non-Jews to further his ends, as they are expendable. Two groups Goldberg cannot bring himself to be civil to, even if he's intent on using them, are the "usurpers", the Arabs who stole the land of Israel thirteen hundred years ago, and the Germans, for the Holocaust (against the Jews, that is; the slaughter of political enemies, homosexuals, Gypsies, and other groups doesn't bother him). Goldberg expects a personal apology for the Holocaust from anyone of German descent.

There is a certain tension (to put it mildly) between him and Hans Schneider (see below).

Every day, Goldberg prays to thank God that he was not created a woman. This gives an idea of his views of the role of women.

American man age 63, 175 cm, 62 kg, slight and well-dressed

Languages: US English, Hebrew, lawyers' Latin.

Traits

Law, 2* dice — Goldberg was trained chiefly in US laws many years ago. In the course of his practice, and in coming to Al Amarja, he has mastered the finer points of international legal dealings and the peculiarities

of Al Amarja's own laws and juridical traditions. (pedantic language)

Organizer, 3 dice — believes that a neat desk and efficient filing system reflect a sharp mind, like his. (Methodical)

Wealthy, 1* die — Manipulating the authorities to get wealthy clients off the hook has helped Goldberg into his clients' financial class. (Reads financial section of newspaper, to track investments.)

Rock Jackson

Goldberg's Bodyguard

Jackson is a redneck American from the Mid-West, who is physically fit, but not especially bright. He was, however, bright enough to have realized that while legitimate laboring jobs are increasingly being lost to automation there is always a place for the two-bit thug, the physical intimidator and strong-arm man. He decided that he would become a four-bit thug.

He was always good at sports, and he took training in martial arts and combat sports. At one stage, he was close to being a potential white heavy-weight boxing champion, but he was always looking for ways to boost his performance, ways that were not always acceptable to the boxing authorities.

Jackson's grasp of morality is fairly light, and he doesn't really pay any attention to rights and wrongs. "Morality is for weaklings," he says. Jackson is a user of Slo-Mo, getting a bonus die in combat. Jackson is always working out, and is secretly worried that he is starting to age, and will have to retire soon. He intends to retire rich.

Jackson could be induced to betray Isaac Goldberg, for whom he is currently acting as a minder, but only by something solid, like sufficient cash to enable him to retire. The only aspects of fringe science that would interest him would be the possibility of immortality.

When at Goldberg's home, Jackson spends most of his time outside, especially at the pool.

US white man age 39, 188 cm, 89 kg, battered good looks

Languages: American English

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 28

Traits

Boxing, 4 dice — (cauliflower ears)

Bodyguard, 3 dice — watches for potential sources of danger, judges whether to avoid, confront or make a pre-emptive strike on trouble. (observant)

“Blue” Manson

Wealthy Business Representative

Manson plays the role of the rough diamond, although he is also wealthy. If asked about the source of his funds, he gives an extravagant story that might range from discovering a gold mine in the bush to finding hidden art treasures in exotic parts of the world. He fought (he says) in the Vietnam War as part of the Australian forces.

Manson openly admired the South African stance on Apartheid, believing that different races have different talents — to him, the Anglo-Saxon peoples are essentially phlegmatic businessmen and rulers, the “Chinamen” are excitable small businessmen, while the Jews are bankers, “Negroes” are servants and laborers, and so on. In short, he stereotypes nationalities, and feels that they shouldn’t mix. He feels uncomfortable in the mixed environment of Al Amarja. Manson carries an unregistered crossbow — the nearest thing he can get to a handgun. He doesn’t really feel happy without a proper handgun, and he doesn’t see why some government should interfere with his right to defend himself how he likes.



Manson is on Al Amarja as a representative of Australian mining conglomerates, which have lost out in a number of mineral claims that happened to be on Aboriginal holy sites. They are worried by a possible link between Aboriginal rights organizations and Behassa.

Australian man, age 45, 193 cm, 83 kg, powerfully-built, red haired, tanned

Languages: Australian English, Spanish, Russian.

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage from crossbow

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28

Traits

Endurance, 4 dice — (tanned from long hours trekking under tropical suns)

General Knowledge, 3 dice — (familiar with almost any trouble-spot in the world)

Amusing Storyteller, 3 dice — (tells stories)

Hans Schneider

Neo-Nazi

Schneider is from old East Germany, a member of a neo-Nazi group which denies that the Holocaust took place, and which has been orchestrating racial attacks on immigrants and refugee hostels in Germany. He used to be a member of the *Stasi*, the East German secret service, a fact Isaac Goldberg would like to use against him. On the other hand, he is investigating Isaac Goldberg's background for dirt.

Schneider is not a committed racist; he simply believes that some group in society is going to be the bottom of the heap, and he doesn't intend it to be him or those he cares for. He does believe that Germany was better off under Hitler than at present, and if the price of prosperity was a few concentration camps containing people not like himself, then so be it. If denying the Holocaust helps Germans feel better about their past, then the truth be damned.

There is a certain tension between Goldberg and Schneider.

German man, age 27, 180 cm, 70 kg, dark haired, slim, sharp features

Languages: German, Russian, English

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Secret service training, 4 dice — clandestine information gathering (quiet)

Unarmed Self-Defense, 3 dice — (light on his feet)

Stealth, 3 dice — (moves quietly)

Donna Carstairs

Feminist Journalist

Carstairs is a member of a predominantly white, middle- and upper-class feminist grouping in the United States. Her feminist rhetoric disguises hatred of men in general, and non-white men in particular, as well as cultural imperialism towards non-white women. The group opposes Behassa mainly because it is "male dominated" (which is true).

Carstairs is a freelance television journalist specializing in foreign wars; her superior attitude towards the participants is very popular with the US public, which is comfortable with the stereotype of stupid and evil foreign men fighting each other, with pathetic foreign women standing to one side as victims. She has a high reputation for compassion and concern.

Carstairs is a political lesbian, but mainly in theory. She's not good at genuinely empathizing with people.

Carstairs is very aware that she is only in the group on sufferance, for her ability to get international media attention for the exposé of Behassa; but then, the feeling is mutual, and

Carstairs would be even happier if she could do down both Behassa and the Force.

On screen, Carstairs comes over as competent and caring; in person, she's loud and energetic, and given to profanity.

Carstairs is covering Al-Khadir's lecture tour, while keeping in touch with the Force for other developments.

US white woman age 39, 175 cm, 57 kg, shoulder-length blonde hair, sturdy build

Languages: American English, Spanish, Arabic

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Journalist, 4 dice — finding and investigating stories, and presenting them to TV. (Tendency to interrogate people)

Healthy, 3 dice — (robust)

Other Members Of The Force

If you like, there are other members of the Force, perhaps infiltrators from your favorite Over the Edge conspiracy. Details of these, and their likely effect on the scenario are up to you.

Using The Force

One way of starting the scenario would be to have the PCs recruited by the Force to investigate the activities of the Circle of Light. Jackson or Schneider posing as a wealthy, concerned parent asks the PCs to investigate and stop whatever is going on. The Force can offer sufficient funding to persuade even hard-bitten PCs to be interested. Carstairs makes contact with the group later, perhaps stumbling across them casually while they are not active on the case, and becoming an ally; perhaps contacting them with the explanation

that she's been working on the case separately, and that she and the PCs could cooperate to stop the Circle and whoever's behind them. PCs with journalistic backgrounds are likely to know of Carstairs, and maybe even she of them.

If the PCs' first contact with the scenario is through Al-Khadir's lectures, Carstairs is active among the audience, questioning Al-Khadir's racism and sexism using extravagant (?) comparisons with Hitler. Her attitude is liable to polarize the PCs' opinion for or against Al-Khadir, making their recruitment by Behassa easier, or making them more obvious allies for the Force.

PCs with mercenary and similar backgrounds may have previous knowledge of Manson. If Manson believes them trustworthy, he persuades the others to recruit the PCs if the PCs are discovered to be working parallel with the Force. Otherwise, if the Force encounters the PCs, they will decide by what they know of the PCs' actions (and race) whether to recruit them or to ignore or attack them. In general, if it is clear that the PCs are operating against the Circle of Light or Behassa, the members of the Force will prefer to recruit or use them. If the PCs have been recruited by Behassa, they may have to face attacks from the Force, or from the Aries Gang, recruited by the Force.

Attack By The Aries Gang

(See Chapter 7.)

Confronting The Force

If the PCs realize that the Force are using them, they may want revenge. The trouble is that despite their own sinister agenda, the Force are guilty of very few crimes on Al Amarja. The worst they could be charged with would be failing to inform the Peace Force of the actions of the Circle of Light. (Manson could also be charged with carrying an unregistered crossbow.) If the PCs act illegally against the Force, Isaac Goldberg is quite capable of using the law



against the PCs, tying them in legal knots and harassing them with injunctions.

A Party

If the PCs do not realize that the Force are using them (and if they offend the MI6 agents, and do not get any hints from them), they are invited to a party at Isaac Goldberg's some time after they have exposed Behassa. When they get to the party, they discover that it is to celebrate Carstairs's articles in international news media which have sparked off racial attacks against immigrants in Germany and Great Britain, and unrest in the United States. This allows the members of the Force to gloat at the PCs, while giving the PCs a chance to attempt some kind of action against the Force.

Lines of Tension Within the Group

As mentioned above, the Force has a number of lines of weakness. In particular, Donna Carstairs could be persuaded to act against any of the other members, while Hans Schneider and Isaac Goldberg are barely on snarling terms. This could be used by the PCs to work against at least some of the Force members. Spreading distrust among the members of the Force would at least interfere with future cooperation between racist groups.

Any member of the Force who is an infiltrator from another conspiracy might have an interest in insuring that the PCs succeed in breaking up the group.

Chapter 7

Outcomes and Et Ceteras

There are likely to be a number of loose ends left at the end of the scenario. It will largely be up to the you (and your players) to determine if you are to continue with these, and if so, how.

Treating The Victims

Any child victims the PCs come across may need immediate medical help, as well as long-term psychological counselling to get over their trauma if they are not to end up as twisted as some of the adults in this scenario. Will they get it? If not, how will children with emotional problems and emerging fringe powers affect those around them?

Some PCs are comfortably rich and can afford to book the child a place in a top hospital, no expenses spared. Others can't — so what can they do? As ever, when in Al Amarja, they can do what ordinary Al Amarjans do.

The Al Amarjan Way of Sickness

Even Al Amarjans rich enough to be able to afford comprehensive medical insurance occasionally find that they are not covered; a prolonged terminal illness or a child with birth defects can soon exhaust the financial resources of an entire family. Being Al Amarjans, they have found a number of ingenious ways around such unpleasant facts of life.

There are a wide range of traditional and fringe medicine practitioners on the island. A few are as expensive as conventional medicine; most are much cheaper. Although the treatments have not been scientifically verified, they often work. This is mainly through the patient's belief, sometimes because traditional herbal remedies do contain active ingredients, but it is also not unknown for a "traditional" healer to make use of simple medicines such as analgesics and antibiotics alongside genuine or fake rituals. Very occasionally, a fringe treatment really works. Many out-and-out fakes make a good living from people's need for something cheaper than conventional medicine.

Another source of medical help is charity — both charitable work by private hospitals (which they can offset against tax) and full-time, often religiously-based, charities. Some of these latter are funded from outside Al Amarja — from oil-rich Gulf states, and from the Catholic Church in Rome. Both of these see Al Amarja's Mid-Eastern Compromise as a threat, and are attempting to win back the people of Al Amarja to Islam and the Roman church respectively. Religious charitable hospitals provide basic (but not ultra high-tech or fringe) medicine, along with plenty of opportunities for spiritual guidance from Imams or priests. The Catholic hospitals are run by nuns trained as nurses. Another charity, Guiding Hand, provides some assistance to the poor who comply with their standards of ethical (some would say "subservient") behavior. See *Friend or Foe?* for more information.

Other people who make good livings from medical needs are the talent scouts who monitor hospitals. Though no highly regarded, they carry on their business openly. With the connivance of hospital staff, or through their own researches, they spot people that their clients would like to recruit. Recruitment is so much easier when the recruit has been hit by an unexpected large medical fee. The need to find a way to pay for an operation for a sick child can convince people to do things that they would otherwise never consider.

Inevitably, talent scouts often work for criminal and business espionage groups, but some work for the government, and others are simply a hard-sell version of ordinary business head-hunters.

Hospital Adventures

Whichever way the PCs attempt to get help can be used for an added twist, or as the foundation for a subsequent adventure. If they contact an ordinary hospital, they are very likely to attract the talent scouts for whatever group you wish (or even of several talent scouts operating for different groups). PCs usually have a high-enough profile that someone is likely to want their services. Talent scouts can probably bribe the hospital administrators to refuse to treat the child as a charity case, if it should be necessary.

Will the PCs agree to illegal, immoral, or distasteful employment in return for treatment for the child? Will they go through with it, or will they try to renege on the deal later? In either case, this could lead to longer-term complications. Their new employer may be reluctant to dispense with their services and if the work is illegal may blackmail them into continuing. They may become identified with their new employer, and a target for their employer's enemies. This will be especially true if they have been persuaded into an action against this group. They could simply lose friends and information sources if it becomes



known that they are working for this particular employer.

On the other hand, they might try to back out of the deal, something employers notoriously take a dim view of. Would their would-be employer either harm the child as a warning, or (more intelligently) have the child kidnapped to enforce the PCs' cooperation?

Apart from genuine employment, it is possible that an old enemy will attempt to recruit the PCs. This might be to frame them, or to hand them over to the Peace Force for crimes they really have committed. Alternatively, the enemy may simply want to get his or her hands on the PCs for a long and painful revenge. Talent scouts could also be very interested if the child is showing incipient fringe powers; plenty of employers can use talents of that kind, and how would the PCs prevent the child falling into the hands of the unscrupulous?

Alternatively, a less-than-scrupulous hospital might offer "free" treatment in return for, say, one of those spare kidneys that one of the PCs isn't using. This could lead the PCs to discover organ-legging and other medical wrongdoings.

Non-orthodox medicine is not a very good bet for emergency treatment. If the PCs try this, the "realistic" result would be for the treatment to have no effect, or to worsen the child's injuries; you might prefer to have the practitioner admit that the treatment cannot help. Alternatively, of course, the practitioner might be genuinely able to work miracles through a fringe power (which could lead to a PC becoming a pupil of the mystic arts...) or some secret formula known only to the inventor, who promptly goes missing as your preferred Bad Guys attempt to obtain the secret. The PCs may then find themselves hunted as the only people who know the formula, or they may have to race against the Bad Guys, attempting to find the formula first...

Charitable hospitals can be used to introduce whatever GMCs and plot themes that you have in mind for future reference, whether it be the hard-pressed doctors and nurses, or a patient who will later reappear to haunt the PCs (perhaps literally, perhaps only metaphorically); the theme of religious intolerance, or self-sacrifice.

Attack by the Aries Gang

Once the Force has succeeded in obtaining evidence which will discredit Behassa, or if they decide they will not be able to obtain it, they incite the Aries Gang to attack Behassa. If the PCs are with Behassa at the time, they will be included indiscriminately in the attack. The children with Sulemain will also be targets.

The Aries warriors will be in accordance with the description in *Over the Edge*; use sufficient to make a good fight between the PCs and Behassa and the Aries warriors (probably at least 1:1).

One Aries gangbanger comes equipped with a camera; the representatives of the Force have promised "bonuses" for photographic evidence.

Juanita Ruiz

Juanita (see Chapter 2) is beginning to get precognitive flashes. This ability could be of use later in the series, especially if Juanita remains in touch with the PCs. Juanita's precognitive flashes are of disasters and people getting hurt — her announcing that one of the PCs is going to be killed in a fight could have some interesting effects on the PCs' behavior! (Such announcements need not constrain you — Juanita may have misinterpreted a view of the PC getting hurt, or the "vision" may be entirely false!)

Recruiting by the Force

At present, the Force is not attempting to recruit white children with fringe powers. Psychics are worrying to them on two levels, theoretical and practical. On the practical level, there is the problem of controlling someone whose powers you don't understand and can't emulate. On the theoretical level, there is the concern that psionics are some kind of new "master race," and one from which the Force are excluded.

Since the members of the Force are from different groups, it could be that one group starts to recruit psychics, while the others remain opposed, perhaps leading to conflict within the Force. The PCs could find themselves caught between the two sides.

Intersections

Below are suggestions for incorporating material from other *OTE* products into *With a Long Spoon*.

Airwaves: Telejournalists working for AXTC (PCs, or their friends) try to do an exposé on "baby-selling" and threaten to blow Behassa's cover.

House Call: Replace Christian, the ex-waif, with a much stranger child that Behassa pulled from the streets. This child does indeed have fringe powers, but it's because he is actually one of the Chosen. If the PCs rescue him and then try to find out what's wrong with him, they may discover "the House."

It Waits...: Scouts for HyperGen offer to pay for children's medical care if the PCs help them recover some "lost property."

Welcome to Sylvan Pines: Dr. Edwin Klemp has a "safe, effective, and gentle" treatment to help the abused children recover, his Isoneural device.

About the Author



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Alison Brooks, seen here in a photograph recently released by the Democratic Bureau of Investigation, is a native of Scotland, but details of her early life prior to arriving on Al Amarja are unclear. It is known that she is a long-time contributor to the Communist Fascist Libertarian Feminist subversive vanity press, *Alarums & Excursions*. Citizens should not approach the subject, although the reasons for this warning are classified.