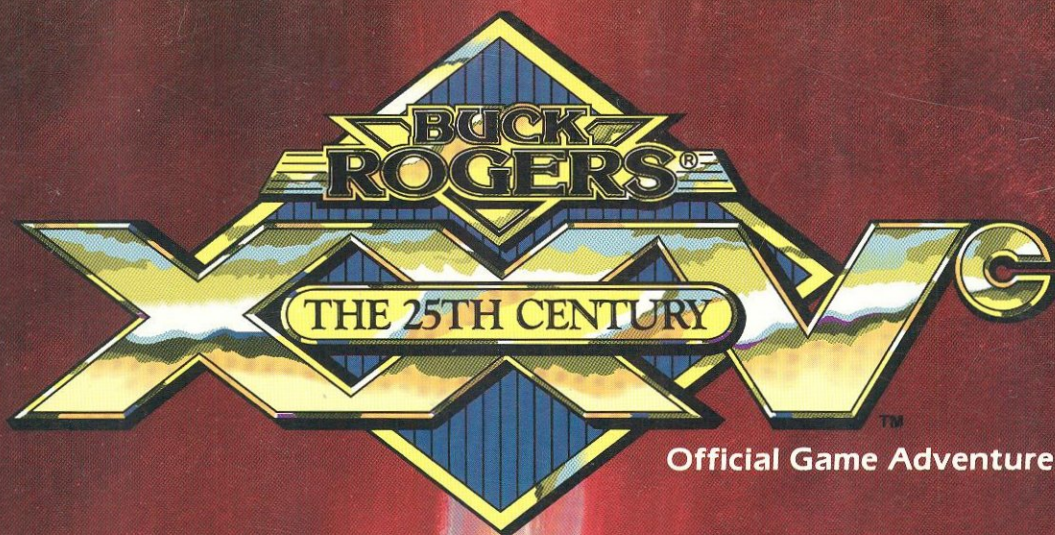
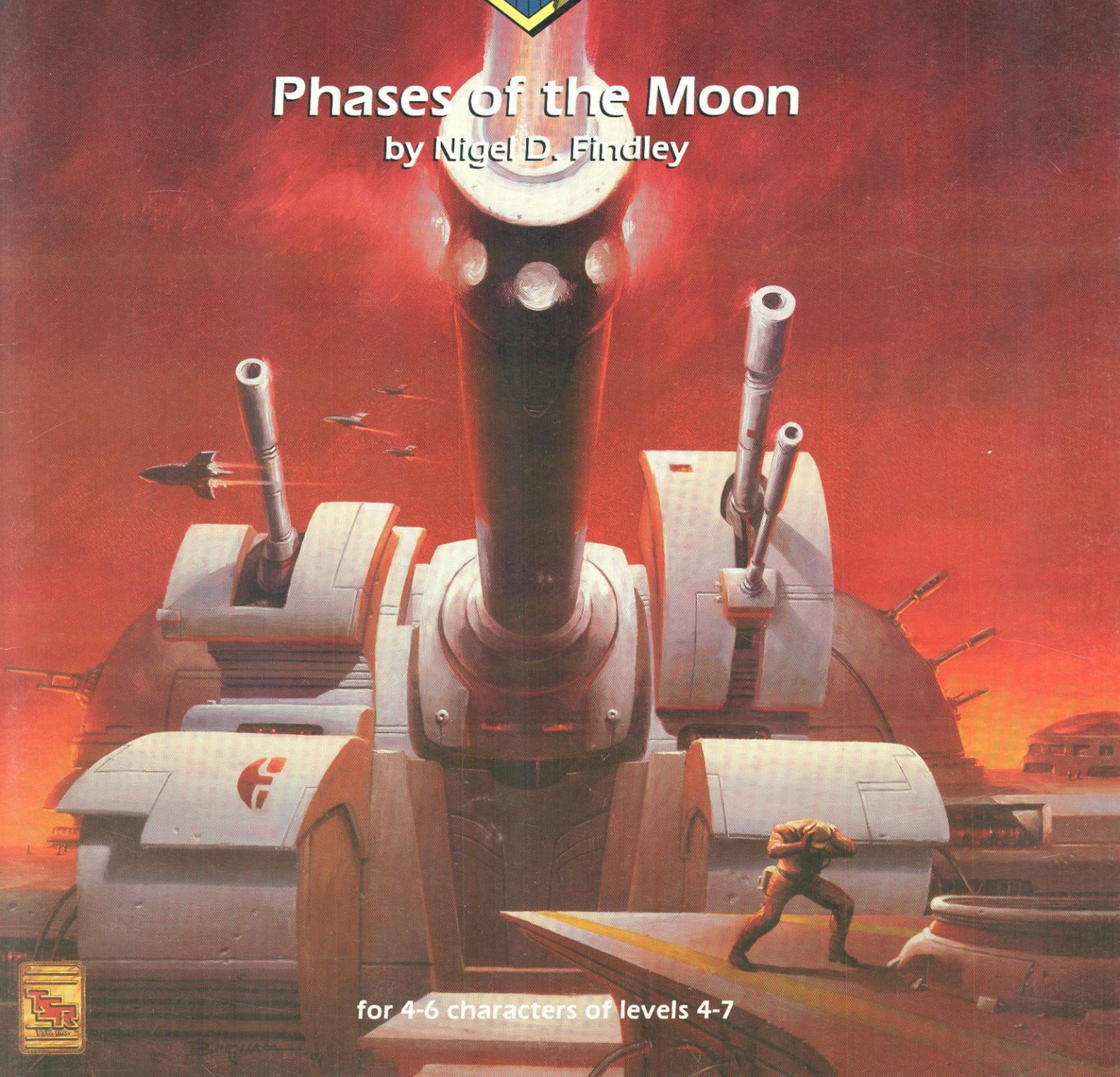




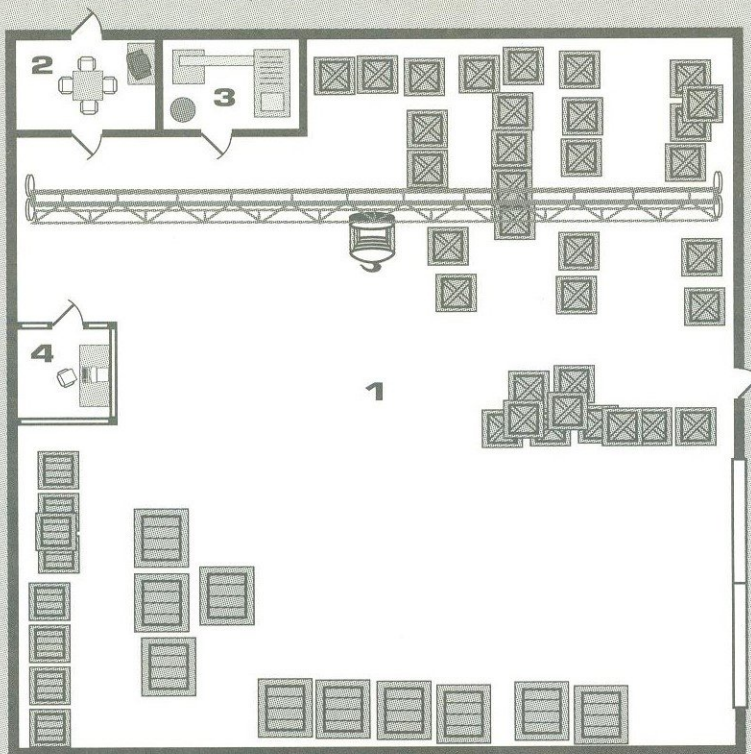
Phases of the Moon

by Nigel D. Findley



for 4-6 characters of levels 4-7





Map 1
Warehouse



Map 2

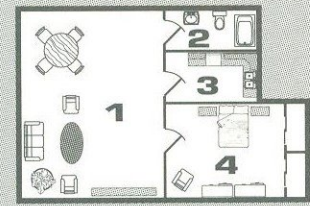
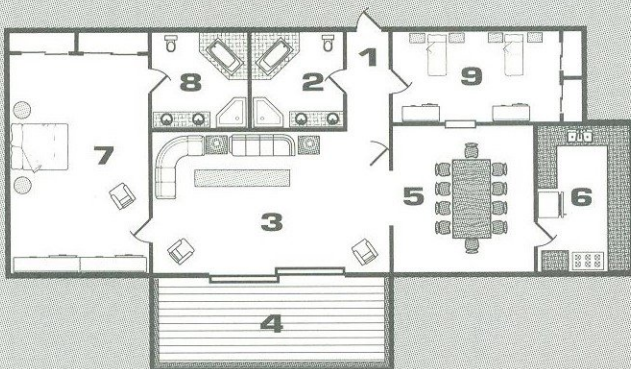
Aberthaugh's
Apartment

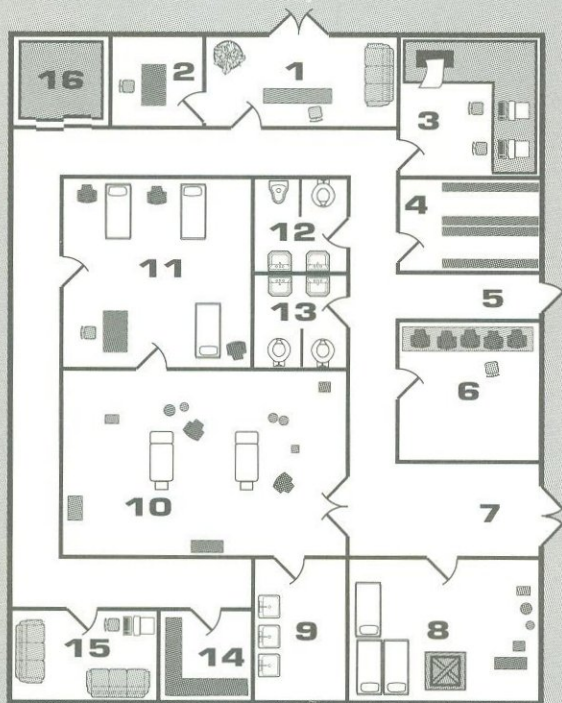
5'



January's Safe House

5'



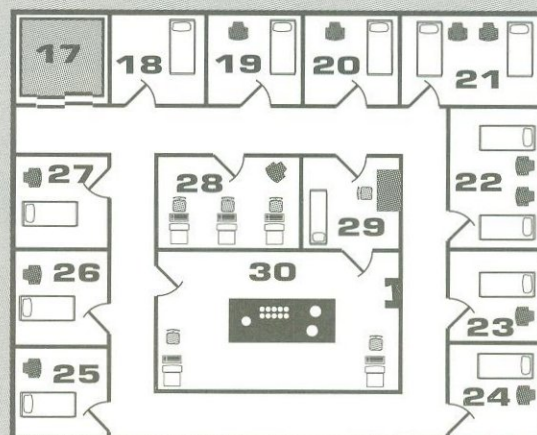


First Floor

Map 3

Trauma Clinic

10'



Second Floor



Phases of the Moon

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INTRODUCTION



welcome back once more to the XXVc™ role-playing game—the universe of Buck Rogers and the 25th Century!

And welcome to *Phases of the Moon*, a XXVc role-playing game adventure for 4 to 6 characters of levels 4-7. This adventure is the latest in a series of modules set in the exciting XXVc role-playing game universe. To use this module you need to have a copy of the XXVc role-playing game boxed set. This package contains enough information for the referee to run the adventure without access to supplementary sourcebooks.

Referee's Note: This adventure assumes that some of the PCs are already members of NEO. If this isn't the case, the referee should run some preliminary adventures designed to "induct" the characters into NEO. Although not all of the PCs have to be NEO agents, the majority—and, most particularly, the leader—must be. After all, this adventure is an extremely sensitive NEO mission and the organization isn't going to assign it to anyone but their most trusted operatives.

It is also assumed that the PCs have their own ship and are several hours away from Luna—perhaps in-transit after their last mission.

Adventure Organization

Phases of the Moon is divided into a number of events or encounters, called "phases." The adventure is designed with multiple paths along which the PCs can progress. There are several ways in which the PCs can get involved in the various phases and, depending on their actions, there are several directions they can go in the adventure. Depending on how the PCs handle encounters, they may miss certain phases altogether. In the case of important or pivotal phases, some suggestions are provided for getting the PCs back on track if they stray off-course. The multiple track ad-

venture is the most interesting—and, probably, the most enjoyable—way of running *Phases of the Moon*.

If the referee finds multi-track adventures confusing, the adventure may be played in a linear manner, the PCs proceeding from one phase to another phase in order.

Adventure Background

One of the most important members of NEO over the last year or so has been a Terran named Col. Willis January. A military and diplomatic genius, January rose from the slums of Los Angelorg and is a dedicated enemy of RAM. But that's in the past.

NEO recently heard the following: While on a diplomatic mission to the government of Luna, Col. January's private vessel suffered drive failure and crashed several kilometers short of Tycho port. January sustained what were described as "terrible injuries." Rescued from the undignified fate of drowning in vacuum by lunar miners, January—reputedly barely clinging to life—was taken to a clinic for treatment.

When he recovered consciousness several days later, January shocked everyone by announcing that he sought political asylum with the Lunar government until such time as he could arrange for transport to Mars. The Lunar government—rigidly neutral in the RAM/NEO conflict—agreed to shelter him, and passed on to Mars January's message that he wished to defect to RAM. This meant bringing to RAM all the sensitive information about NEO that January has picked up over the years.

RAM officials have reacted to the colonel's message in the expected manner: by granting him asylum on Mars and dispatched a luxury space yacht to Luna to pick him up. It's understood that this yacht will be manned by an "official honor guard" intended to protect him from retribution by his erstwhile colleagues.

Obviously, this defection represents a major threat to NEO. As a colonel, January knows much about how NEO operates. He knows the names—or at least the code-names—of many NEO operatives. He is familiar with communica-

tion protocols and contact procedures, and he is an expert on all of the highly complex codes used to scramble NEO communications.

When this information falls into RAM's hands, many NEO operatives will be compromised—perhaps fatally. Luckily, the vast majority of NEO agents are protected by a cell system—where one agent knows at most three or four others—and by numerous “cut-outs.” NEO can send an emergency message to many of these agents, telling them to drop out of sight until a new communication network can be set up.

This isn't possible in the case of some agents, however. They are too deeply placed to be protected in this manner. The lives of these operatives—NEO's most valuable assets—will be forfeit as soon as RAM receives January's information.

In addition to this severe covert damage, there's another factor to consider. January's defection is the propaganda coup of the century, if not the millennium. How many unaligned, or marginally sympathetic, civilians will continue to believe NEO's position that RAM is a cruel oppressor if one of the Earth group's own leaders has defected? The blow to NEO's future operations could be severe.

For these reasons, NEO can't just sit back and let January follow through with his plans. They have got only one choice: to prevent January from going to Mars. The most obvious solution would be “beyond-salvage, sanction with extreme prejudice”—in other words, assassination, but this brings its own risks. For one thing, Luna is neutral and any obvious NEO operation on that world—particularly assassinating someone under diplomatic protection—would damage or even destroy diplomatic relations between NEO and the Lunar government. The other issue is the damage to NEO's image if it became known that they killed one of their own.

NEO can't allow January's defection, but the means by which they stop it must be carefully thought out. Obviously, a covert operation is needed, one to either “extract” (read “kidnap”) January, or one to silence him forever. This operation must be untraceable. NEO must maintain “plausible deniability” for the whole affair. It's a

tricky situation, and the operatives taking on the mission will be “walking on eggs,” to use an archaic 20th Century phrase. The operatives must be selected carefully and must be relied upon for their initiative and their discretion. They will be operating alone, knowing if they are compromised or captured, NEO will disavow any knowledge of their actions and won't lift a finger to help them.

And that's where the PCs come in.

Referee's Background

Not everything is as it appears on Luna. For one thing, January's “accident” was far from accidental. A RAM agent “modified” the colonel's autopilot so it would force the ship down at a particular spot on the lunar surface—a controlled descent, not a crash at all—and disabled the communications system to prevent him from calling for help. More RAM operatives were waiting to spirit January away to a clinic secretly funded by RAM.

Once at this clinic, January was subjected to a new and highly effective brainwashing technique developed by Dr. Malcolm Aberthaugh. As a result of this treatment, January asked for political asylum. Reports of January's injuries were released to account for the time required for the brainwashing treatment.

For various reasons, the RAM operatives on Luna have been ordered not to use Aberthaugh's technique to extract sensitive data from January's mind . . . yet. The full-scale interrogation of January begins once he's aboard the executive yacht—the *Coprates Star*—sent to pick him up.

Why didn't RAM just kidnap the colonel and interrogate him? Why all this intrigue?

The leaders of RAM see this operation as having two distinct facets, both highly beneficial. One is, of course, the acquisition of the sensitive military information in January's mind. The second—equally important to RAM in the grand scheme of things—is the potential for a major propaganda coup against NEO, possibly even causing a major schism between NEO and Luna. While kidnapping January would provide one of these facets, the current plan provides both.

THE ADVENTURE



Phase 1— Man in the Moon

Player's Introduction

It's been a rough couple of days—and it's felt like a rough couple of years. Your last mission for NEO was a difficult one, but you pulled it off in admirable fashion. You're only hours out from Luna and already you're imagining the pleasures of your upcoming spell of R&R at Copernicus.

But your pleasant fantasies are interrupted by the shrill *beep* of the commo. You check the display, and feel surprise . . . and a sense of foreboding. The message is coming in on a secure channel, beamed directly at your vessel from Salvation station in Earth orbit. And it is a "squeal" transmission, too—recorded, encrypted, and sped up electronically by a factor of several thousands, then sent in a microsecond-long "burst," almost impossible to intercept. You frown. Squeal transmissions are reserved for only the most sensitive messages because of the inconvenience of their one-way nature. You can't ask questions or make comments when you receive a squeal transmission. You accept it and you act on it. Period.

You key in the code to decipher the message. The viewscreen lights up with the familiar face of Commander Turabian, head of the Salvation orbital base. His expression is as grim as you've ever seen it.

"Mission order x-ray three-five-zero-niner," he begins. "Operation New Year. Security code Omega. Ultra top secret." Even though you expected something like this, the Omega designation—the highest security classification—chills you.

This is going to be something world-shaking.

"You know the name of Colonel Willis January," Turabian continues quietly, "and you are aware of his importance to NEO. We have received incontrovertible information that Col. January is defecting to RAM. That is correct," he repeats solemnly. "*Defecting*. It is important that you recognize the significance of this. Please pause this message now and view the accompanying data file, file code NY-001."

You hit the pause key and the image of Turabian's face freezes. The screen splits as you bring up the contents of file NY-001. Reading it, you feel the cold fist of fear clutch at your heart.

The file contains the material provided in the **Adventure Background**. Read or summarize it to the players. When they are ready to proceed, read the following:

You hit another key and Turabian continues.

"Your mission," he says gravely, "is to prevent Col. January's defection. You will use whatever means necessary. *Whatever* means," he stresses. "Extraction is preferable, but no alternative is beyond the mandate of your orders. I hope you recognize the gravity of what I'm telling you."

Turabian sighs. For the first time, you realize the dynamic commander is an old man. "As described in the file," he continues, "you must not, under *any* circumstances, allow your mission to be compromised, or your identities and affiliation to be discovered. The consequences would be almost as dire as January completing his defection.

"I'm sure you understand the danger



January poses to NEO," the commander continues, "but you must also be aware of the personal danger as well. Whether you know it or not, January was the ranking officer in charge of your last NEO mission. He knows your identities—and so will RAM if you fail." Another chill washes over you. You know what Turabian is saying: If January defects, your own lives won't be worth a plugged credit.

"That's your mission," Turabian says. "We've learned that January is at present in Tycho City, but we don't know exactly where. For obvious reasons, we're limiting the involvement of other assets in this mission. Your only contact will be with a single cell of our Tycho network. Contact will be made at a spaceport bar called the Free Fall Bar & Grill. You will not initiate contact; the local assets will do that using standard recognition techniques."

The old man smiles grimly. "There's a lot riding on this one," he growls, "but I know you'll give it your all. Good luck."

As his image vanishes from the screen, your mind fills in the final phrase he left unsaid: "You'll need it."

The PCs must make their way to Tycho spaceport on Luna. Refer to the information in the boxed set for details about Luna and for a map of the spaceport. Feel free to hassle the PCs with bureaucratic red tape when they try to get permission to land.

The PCs should make their own provisions for docking facilities, resupplying, etc. When they're ready to visit the Free Fall Bar & Grill, go to **Phase 2**. If they want to look for more information, go to **Phase 5—Reserach**.

Phase 2—Watering Hole

The Free Fall Bar & Grill is a small tavern in the midst of Spacertown. As you saunter in, you experience a strong sense of *deja vu*. You've been in places just like this during your career. The dirty floor, the flickering fluorescent lights, the scarred and pitted duraplast tabletops, the whispered conversations, and the hard, piercing stares you receive from the clientele.

The Free Fall Bar & Grill has been described as a "working spaceman's" hangout, but today the crowd seems different. There are still a few people with the flamboyant dress and mannerisms of your typical, arrogant rocketjock, but the majority seem to be tough "rockrats," the miners who work the lunar surface to extract minerals and vital deposits of fossil water. While the rocketjocks look you over to determine whether you represent possible employment—or maybe a source of credit for a few drinks—the rockrats seem to have other things on their minds.

Refer to the Free Fall Bar & Grill's floor plan (p. 58 of the *World Book* from the XXVc™ role-playing game boxed set).

Like most such establishments, the Free Fall Bar & Grill has a policy forbidding patrons from bringing heavy weapons—that is, anything other than personal defence weapons—inside. The bouncer at the door reminds the PCs in no uncertain terms of this policy, and insists they leave any proscribed ordnance aboard their ship or check it with him. The PCs should realize that messing with this individual isn't a good way to start off their stay on Luna.

Bouncer

3rd-level Lunarian warrior

AC 4, hp 27, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol) or special (sonic stunner), THACO 18 (17 with sonic stunner)

Meet Della Barret

You look around the bar trying to get a feel for the place. Then you see *her*. She's there at the bar: a beautiful young Terran woman in her late twenties, wearing what serves for high fashion on Luna.

You settle into a corner table and continue to survey the room. She catches your eye. Flipping back her copper-red hair, and keeping her flashing green eyes locked on yours, she crosses to your table.

When she reaches you, she favors you with a warm smile. "My name's Della Barret. You look like you're new to this burg," she murmurs, "or maybe I just haven't been paying attention."

You feel a jolt of surprise as you hear one of the many NEO recognition phrases. The correct response flashes into your mind.

The PCs are free to give the correct response, which would identify them as fellow members of NEO, or to withhold it. If they withhold it, Della looks disappointed, then wanders back to her seat at the bar.

If the PCs decide to admit their NEO affiliation by using the correct code response, read the following:

"I always thought paying attention was the only way to stay alive," you answer, giving one of the correct code responses.

Della smiles. "Good comeback, I'll have to remember that one," she says, completing the formula. "Follow me outside, but don't make it too obvious. I'll be waiting by the Spacer's Rest. Meet me there and I'll take you to meet your other contacts." Without another word, she leaves the bar.

If the PCs decide to follow her outside, go to **Phase 3**. If, for whatever reason, they don't trust her and remain in the bar, they'll

eventually be approached by more NEO contacts, as described in **Phase Four—The Real McCoy**.

Della Barret

Della isn't at all what she appears. She is, in fact, a member of RAM's covert action force on Luna. Several months ago, RAM penetrated NEO's Tycho spaceport "cell." Instead of destroying the cell, RAM agents decided to keep a close watch on NEO's assets. Although Della didn't know when the PCs would arrive, she *did* expect NEO to send in some kind of "trouble team" to deal with the January matter.

Della is frighteningly intelligent, and knows virtually all there is to know about how the Tycho cell of NEO operates—at the very least, she knows more than the PCs. They won't be able to trip her up.

Della knows nothing more about Col. January than what the PCs learned from the NEO transmission. She has no reason to doubt the story that January is a willing defector.

Della Barret

5th-level Terran rogue

STR 12	INT 14
DEX 17	WIS 9
CON 9	CHA 14

TECH 9

AC 7, hp 19, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol), THACO 18

Hide in Shadows 40%, Move Silently 36%, Fast Talk 70%, Pick Pocket 21%, Open Lock 18%, Bypass Security 20%, Climb 35%, Notice 40%

Barroom Brawl

What happens if the PCs get themselves into a nice, diverting barroom brawl? At first, everyone will be trying to beat on the PCs. But after a couple of rounds, the drunken rockrats will forget who their real opponents are and will start beating up on each

other. The rocketjocks have no particular antipathy toward the PCs, and the bartender will be happy to stun anyone who presents a clear shot.

As soon as the melee is in full swing, Della will slip into its midst and try to lead the PCs out saying, "Come on, they're too busy to notice you leaving, and the police are probably on their way. Getting arrested isn't going to help your mission, is it?" Presumably, the PCs will see the sense in this suggestion and will follow her out of the bar. Once outside, Della will introduce herself as a NEO member and will lead the PCs toward the Spacer's Rest. From here, go to **Phase Three**.

If the PCs aren't smart enough to get out while the getting's good, the police will arrive. Ten rounds after the outbreak of violence, 8 Lunarian police will appear on the scene, break up the fight, and cart everyone off to jail. The PCs should get one chance to escape from their captors. If they don't take it, they get locked in a nice, escape-proof cell (Lunarians come down hard on brawlers). The PCs will get to experience the tender mercies of Lunarian justice from the wrong side. They have blown their mission, and, unless they are lucky, they'll spend the next few weeks making small rocks out of larger rocks in a "penal mine."

Lunarian Police (× 8)

2nd-level Lunarian warrior

AC 4, hp 5,5,6,6,7,8,8,9, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol) or special (sonic stunner), THACO 19 (18 with sonic stunner)

Phase 3— Spacer's Rest (In Peace)

You follow the shapely figure of Della Barret as she leads you between the small buildings of Spacertown. Above you, the sun appears as a diffuse patch of light, its normally blinding glare attenu-

ated to virtually nothing by the dark-tinted geodesic dome which covers the spaceport.

The main entrance of the Spacer's Rest is on the south side, which faces The Happy Landing hotel. Della is leading you toward the opposite side of the building, so the bulk of the hostel will shield you from any prying eyes in Spacertown. You turn the corner and are confronted by group of hard-faced men wearing smart clothes. The first thing you notice about them is the cold, brutal look in their eyes. The second thing is the fact that they're all pointing weapons at you.

You look toward Della. A laser pistol is in her hand, its barrel is rock-steady and pointing at your head. "Don't even *think* about it, NEO scum," she says with a nasty grin.

There are seven RAM operatives waiting in ambush behind the Spacer's Rest. Della Barret will demand that the PCs surrender. Once the PCs are disarmed, it's Della's plan to lead them to the nearest airlock and "space" them. If the PCs try to yell for help or escape, Della and her troops will shoot to kill.

Della and the others are part of RAM's covert action force on Luna. They're well-trained in small-unit tactics, and are maniacally loyal to RAM. They'll fight to the death to eliminate the PCs before the PCs can interfere with January's defection. All the operatives, except Della, have poison capsules hidden in a hollow tooth in their mouths and will commit suicide rather than allow themselves to be captured. Despite this precaution, a clever bunch of PCs might be able to keep one alive for interrogation. They won't learn much if they do; the thugs know no more about the January's defection than Della does.

If the confrontation deteriorates into gunplay, passers-by will hear the shots and call the police. Twelve rounds after the shots

starts, a squad of eight Lunarian police will arrive on the scene and try to arrest everyone involved. (Use the statistics in the previous section.) The RAM operatives will try to fight their way to freedom; if this is impossible, they'll commit suicide to avoid capture. (This might lead to a three-way firefight: PCs versus RAM versus the police.)

RAM Operatives (× 7)

4th-level Terran warrior

AC 4, hp 10,12,18,20,25,30,31, Dmg 2d6 (heat gun) or 1d10 (rocket pistol), THACO 17 (15 with specialized weapon)

Three of the RAM operatives are armed with heat guns; the other four carry rocket pistols. Each is specialized in the weapon he carries, giving each a +2 bonus. All wear civilian-style smart clothes, and have no ID on them to link them with RAM.

Interrogating Della

Della Barret is the only RAM operative who doesn't have a poison pill, so she's the one most likely to be captured and interrogated by the PCs. If they ask the right questions, the PCs can learn that the *real* NEO group—led by a man named McCoy—was scheduled to meet them at the Free Fall Bar & Grill. Unfortunately for the PCs, some other RAM operatives orchestrated a diversion to keep the real NEO group away from the bar long enough for Della to make her move.

Della can describe McCoy to the PCs: he's in his early thirties, medium height, with short black hair and a close-cropped black beard. Above his right eye is a short, crescent-shaped scar.

Getting Back on Track

If the PCs manage to interrogate Della, they should learn enough to send them back to the Free Fall Bar & Grill to meet with the real NEO team. Even if they kill all the RAM operatives, or otherwise make their escape, they might return to the bar anyway. In ei-

ther case, go to **Phase Four—The Real McCoy**.

If the PCs don't return to the bar, there are two ways to go from here. One is to let them conduct investigations on their own. If this happens, go to **Phase Five—Research**. The other option is to orchestrate a meeting between the PCs and McCoy in another location. Perhaps McCoy visits the PCs at their ship or hotel room, or maybe he approaches them on the street and offers a code phrase to identify himself as a NEO member. In any case, he can provide the PCs with the information described in **The Real McCoy**. (This option—a meeting with McCoy—is also a good way for you to get the PCs back on course if they're not doing well digging up information in **Research**, p. 12.)

Phase 4— The Real McCoy

When you return to the Free Fall Bar & Grill, the rockrat miners and the rocket-jocks have left. In their place are three men wearing worn and nondescript jumpsuits, drinking quietly at the bar. As you enter, one of them—a rather handsome man with short black hair and a close-cropped black beard—looks you over speculatively. After a moment, he swings off his barstool and strides over toward you.

His lips curve in a smile, but his gaze remains cool and appraising, as he says, "Hot jets. Any of you 'jocks seen my buddy, Sly? He's late." Again you recognize a NEO identification phrase.

The fellow with the black hair and beard is Jerry McCoy, leader of the NEO cell in Tycho Spaceport. His companions, Sol Bamba and Tino Ferrantiare, also NEO agents.

The PCs—probably somewhat paranoid after their meeting with Della Barret—may refuse to answer with the correct code response. If this happens, McCoy apologizes

for the intrusion and returns to his seat at the bar. After 10 minutes, he and his two companions leave and head for their base—an office in a parts warehouse. The PCs are free to attempt to follow them if they want. If they do, remember that McCoy and friends won't take too kindly at all to a tail, suspecting—understandably—that their shadows are RAM agents. The PCs can disarm McCoy's suspicions simply by offering any of the standard NEO recognition codes (which the PCs are assumed to know). Once they've identified themselves sufficiently, McCoy will take them into the warehouse office. Go to the next section **Phase 5—Research**.

If the PCs answer McCoy's approach in the bar with the correct response: "Sorry, guess Sly's lost his watch again. Some things never change, huh?" McCoy and friends will lead the PCs to the NEO cell's base.

Jerry McCoy

4th-level Terran rogue

STR 13	INT 15
DEX 16	WIS 9
CON 10	CHA 16

TECH 9

AC 10, hp 18, Dmg 1d3 (needle gun) or 1d6 (mono knife), THACO 19

Bypass Security 10%, Climb 10%, Fast Talk 76%, Hide in Shadows 19%, Move Silently 26%, Notice 54%, Open Locks 24%, Pick Pockets 21%.

Jerry McCoy is a smart man who disguises his intelligence with an outgoing, "good ol' boy" manner. He's completely dedicated to the goals of NEO and will give his life for the cause.

Sol Bamba

4th-level Human warrior

STR 17	INT 10
DEX 11	WIS 8
CON 17	CHA 8

TECH 10

AC 10, hp 34, Dmg 1d3 (needle gun or knife), THACO 17 (15 with needle gun)

Sol is a big man: 6'5" and over 250 pounds without an ounce of fat on his frame. He's not stupid, but believes that actions speak louder than words. Many people have labelled him a congenital idiot, only to be shocked when the first thing he ever says to them is an incisive analysis of a situation. His loyalty is more to McCoy than to NEO, although he won't consciously do anything that would harm the organization.

Tino Ferranti

5th-level Human scout

STR 6	INT 13
DEX 15	WIS 11
CON 12	CHA 13

TECH 12

AC 10, hp 30, Dmg 1d4 (Desert Runner crossbow) or 1d3 (knife), THACO 16

Tino is virtually the opposite of Sol Bamba: He's small, wiry-thin, and depends on quick wits and speed to keep him out of trouble. He's also very garrulous—to a fault, some would say—and seems to believe "Why use one word when five will do?" He and McCoy are inseparable friends.

Meeting with Friends

McCoy's base is a small office in a warehouse. This warehouse appears on the Tycho Spaceport map (from the XXVc™ role-playing game boxed set) as the small square beside the monorail track directly to the right of buildings 19 and 20. Refer to the accompanying map for the layout.

Read the following to the players:

Like much of Tycho Spaceport, the warehouse McCoy leads you to has seen better days. The office itself is even more

run-down than the rest of the building. McCoy and his colleagues usher you in and indicate for you to take seats around a scarred duraplast table.

"I'm glad you're here," McCoy says grimly. "Things are happening faster than we anticipated. You'll know from your briefing that RAM has sent an executive yacht to pick up January. If the yacht left Coprates Chasm the moment January made his announcement, that would give us about four days of grace. We learned today that's not the case. The yacht is due the day after tomorrow, almost exactly," he checks his watch, "forty-eight hours from now. Which means they must have diverted a yacht already in transit."

"As soon as we heard the news," McCoy continues, "we sent somebody to get covert videos of the man who claimed he was January. After all, the whole thing could have been a RAM scam, using an actor pretending to be January just to force us to act and compromise our assets on Luna." He snorts. "No such luck. As you'll see from the video, it's definitely January."

On cue, one of McCoy's colleagues starts up a portable video unit. Your heart sinks as you watch the screen. The quality of the video is bad—the cameraman must have been using a long lens from extreme range—but the verdict is inescapable. The man on the screen is Colonel Willis January. He's on the private balcony of what has to be a VIP suite built into the wall of Tycho crater. As you watch, he strides back and forth—somewhat nervously, it appears. His smooth, almost sinuous, gait reminds you of the motion of a great jungle cat.

If the PCs were paying attention to the "briefing file" sent with their orders—in other words, if they were listening closely when you read or summarized the **Adventure Background**—they should notice

something peculiar in the preceding boxed section. According to the PCs' briefing, Col. January sustained "terrible injuries" from his crash and was described as "just barely clinging to life" when he was brought to the clinic that treated him, but the man on the video seems to be in perfect health—*definitely* not somebody who suffered terrible, life-threatening injuries from a spaceship crash only a couple of days ago. (Medicine is good in the 25th Century, but it's not *that* good.)

If the PCs notice this discrepancy, they might wonder if all is as it appears with January, and they may decide to investigate the circumstances of his crash a little deeper. If they don't notice on their own, and you're feeling generous, you might drop a hint. Such referee guidance isn't necessary, however. The PCs will have a chance to pick up further evidence about this discrepancy later.

Whether or not the PCs pick up on this clue, go on and read the following:

The image on the video screen changes. January is still on-screen, but the image is dimmer and more fuzzy.

"He's inside, now," McCoy explains. "My video man had to use filters to cut the reflection from the windows."

As you watch, January sits down and a new figure—a tall, skeletally thin man in a white coat—approaches and applies a number of electrodes to the unresisting colonel's head. "That doctor visits January at least once a day," McCoy elaborates. "The procedure is always the same: He attaches the electrodes, takes some readings, then leaves. We don't have an ID on the doctor, but then, it hardly matters, does it? If you guys do your job right, January won't have to worry much longer about what's going on in his head."

McCoy can tell the PCs where January is located—he is in a VIP apartment in the ex-

ecutive region of Tycho City, built right into the crater wall. Like many such apartments, it's intended for visiting dignitaries. As such, it caters more to off-worlder tastes—for instance, its balcony provides a spectacular view over much of Tycho City. Of course, the "glass" doors that give access to the balcony are actually composed of the high-density quartz crystal used for spaceship viewports. The doors will automatically seal off the rest of the apartment if the main dome over Tycho City is breached. In addition, the balcony's construction includes a high-powered fieldfence of 90% effectiveness. The fieldfence takes its power from the uninterruptible emergency source which runs the fail-safes in the apartment—i.e., it can't be "unplugged"—and always has a full load of chaff suspended in its field.

Medic PCs might be interested in the device the nameless doctor was attaching to January's head. It's an easy job to replay that section of the video and zoom in on the device. The medic is then entitled to an Average skill check against his or her Treat Critical Wounds or Life Suspension Tech skill (whichever is greater). A successful roll means the medic recognizes that this device is quite different from any normal diagnostic equipment and must be performing some kind of function that isn't obvious. (This device is part of Dr. Aberthaugh's brainwashing technology, although the PCs won't know this the first time they see it, of course.)

If the PCs haven't picked up on the clue that something strange is going on—either January's condition or the unknown doctor's strange equipment—they'll probably want to run a kidnapping or assassination attempt against the colonel right away. If so, go to **Phase 8—Penetration** for details of the VIP apartment and its security arrangements. McCoy will supply the PCs with light weapons, nothing heavier than a grenade launcher, but can't spare any men to support the PCs' attempt. Before the PCs head off, McCoy will stress to them the im-

portance of keeping "collateral damage" down to a bare minimum—zero, preferably. Thus, firing a plasma thrower or rocket launcher at the apartment balcony from the street isn't a good move. The extraction or elimination must be "surgical" in its precision.

Smart players and/or PCs will probably have picked up enough clues to realize that the situation is different from what their orders described. If they want to dig into the matter further, there are several leads they can follow up. Go to **Phase 5—Research**.

Map 1: Warehouse Key

1. Warehouse Floor. A large open area turned into a maze by piles of boxes and crates containing spare parts. The large sliding door is controlled by a key pad on the wall. Overhead is a huge gantry crane, controlled by the computer in room 4.

2. Office. There is a central table, surrounded by chairs. An empty cabinet is against the wall, topped by a video unit.

3. Environment Systems Room. Contains the heating and atmospheric systems for the warehouse.

4. Control Booth. A glass-walled control booth containing the computer console that controls the overhead crane.

Getting Back on Track

If the PCs have missed the clues about the discrepancies in the crash story and are intent on assassinating or snatching January, you have two options: One is simply to let them go ahead and kidnap or kill January. If they succeed in either plan, they'll have discharged their duty, but they'll have missed some of the more interesting twists of the plot. The second option is to drop a broad hint that might encourage the players to re-think their attack.

If the PCs never end up meeting with McCoy, they won't learn about the change in their deadline. The RAM executive yacht will land exactly 48 hours after the PCs first set foot in the Free Fall Bar & Grill.

Phase 5—Research

At one time or another, the PCs will probably spend some time tracking down leads concerning January. It's recommended that you make your players role-play all attempts to dig up information, since this is an ideal opportunity for in-depth character interaction.

Sources for information are legion: bartenders, shop owners, maintenance techs, passers-by, even the news media. As referee, you can regulate the speed of the PCs' progress through this adventure by increasing or decreasing the difficulty of ferreting out vital information. You can also throw in some red herrings in the forms of fallacious rumors. (Be careful when doing so, however, since it would be very easy to lead the players so far astray that they'll never get back on track.)

The major leads that the PCs can pursue are discussed in the following sections. It's up to you, as referee, how much information can be gained from any one source.

You must keep track of the time the PCs spend doing legwork. Remember, the RAM executive yacht will arrive at Tycho Spaceport to pick up January exactly 48 hours after the PCs' meeting with McCoy. Remind the players of this deadline if they forget it.

January's Crash

According to official records, January's 50-ton light cruiser crashed in a tiny crater called Montgomery, located about 75 miles north of Tycho. If the PCs decide to take the time to investigate the crash site, they might find a major anomaly: there's no sign whatsoever of a crash. Spaceship crashes—even the survivable kind—are violent, energetic affairs, and leave unmistakable traces such as chunks of heat-twisted metal, scorchmarks, craters, and even residual radiation from a damaged fusion power convertor. None of these traces are visible in Crater Montgomery. Instead, the lunar rock has been scoured clean of dust, as if by the rock-

et plume of a ship making a controlled—if rather erratic—landing. Determining all this takes an Average Notice skill check.

There's more to be learned from the site, however. There are indications that a fire-fight of some kind took place (laser burns and shell-holes in the rock). Determining this takes a Difficult Notice skill check.

Referee's Note: The story behind the evidence is this: Sabotage to January's autopilot brought his ship down in Crater Montgomery where a team of RAM operatives were ready to take the colonel captive. January tried to hold off the attackers with his ship's weaponry, but his efforts were in vain. The RAM assets breached the hull and dragged January off the ship.

January's Rescuers

According to the official version of events, the wreckage of January's ship was found in Crater Montgomery by a group of "rock-rat" miners who were conducting mining operations under a portable pressure dome a mile or so away. The PCs might decide to try and track down the colonel's saviors.

The PCs will have no luck finding the miners. Certainly, their names and Mining License Numbers (MLNs) are a matter of record. But any attempt to follow up on this will show the names and MLNs to be false. There is no way to track down January's rescuers. (Of course, this should tell the PCs something.)

If the PCs are in the area of Crater Montgomery—perhaps examining the crash site—they might decide to investigate the pressure dome where the rockrats were conducting their mining operations. It's easy enough to find the dome and to enter it.

The dome is empty: no one and nothing remains. There's an important anomaly here and it takes an Easy Notice skill check to detect it. On a successful roll, the PC notices that there are no signs that any mining was ever done under this dome. This raises

an interesting question: If the rockrats weren't doing any mining, what were they doing here?

January's Ship

As per normal procedure, soon after the "crash," a salvage crew headed out to retrieve the ship. On Luna, salvage crews aren't paid by the government or the port authorities, but by the owner of the ship being salvaged. If the owner doesn't want to pay—or is unable to—the crew can refurbish the ship and sell it for what the market will bear. In the case of January's vessel, the colonel expressed no interest in retaining his right to it, so a local salvage company—Jackdaw's Salvage and Repair—now owns the ship. It's currently on an outlying field waiting for repair. The people at Jackdaws will be happy to show the ship to "potential buyers."

When the PCs approach the ship, read the following:

January's light cruiser sure looks the worse for wear. The hull is torn and blackened along the underside just aft of the nose cone, and one of its fins is almost ripped away. The once-shiny metal hull shows other pockmarks and holes.

There are several things to notice about the ship, as described in the following subsections.

The Hull

Any PC with one or more of the following skills is allowed a Difficult skill check: Demolitions, Repair Rocket Hull, or Ship Lore. A successful role means the PC has noticed the following facts:

The damage to the cruiser's hull *wasn't* caused by a crash, although it was meant to look that way. In fact, the hull metal was buckled and scorched by blasting charges applied and detonated by someone skilled in demolitions.

The largest hole—the one just aft of the

nose—is big enough to admit a large man and was caused while the ship still had internal pressure, but was in a vacuum. The other holes were caused *after* the ship had been depressurized.

Several of the marks on the hull were caused by heavy personal weapons, such as laser and rocket rifles. Obviously, the ship was engaged in a firefight with ground forces after it had landed.

The Bridge

If the PCs board the vessel and investigate the bridge, there are various things to notice. Each character who examines the commo system should make a Difficult Notice skill check. (If the character has any one of the following skills—Commo Operation, Repair Computer, Repair Electrical, or Programming—he or she should use that skill level, and the check becomes Average rather than Difficult.) A successful roll means the character has noticed that the commo system has been disabled. A second

Difficult skill check using one of the above skills is required to determine exactly how the system was sabotaged: a time-delay “virus” was implanted in the control software and was set to disable the system at a particular moment.

Each character who examines the autopilot should make a Difficult Notice skill check. (If the character has any one of the following skills—Pilot Rocket, Repair Computer, Repair Electrical, or Programming—he or she should use that skill level, and the check becomes Average rather than Difficult.) A successful roll means that the character has noticed that the autopilot has been subtly reprogrammed. A second Difficult skill check using one of the above skills is required to determine exactly how the autopilot’s operation was modified: the autopilot was set so that, at a certain time, it would take over control of the ship, disabling the manual controls, and would make a controlled landing at a map reference that corresponds to Crater Montgomery. The



"modification" to both the commo gear and the autopilot were timed so that they would activate simultaneously. At that moment, Col. January would have lost control of his ship and the ability to report the emergency to anyone.

The Clinic

The PCs might also decide to investigate the clinic January was taken to after his "crash." This possibility is described in more detail in **Phase 6—The Doctor is In**.

Murderer At Large

During their investigations, the PCs should hear some gossip about a murder recently committed in Tycho City. At some time when the PCs are talking with an NPC who has no reason to distrust them, read the following:

"Oh, yeah," your contact adds thoughtfully, "did you hear about the murder? Yeah, some visitor got herself cut down by a rocket rifle. Nobody knows who she was, or who did it—officially." Your contact leans forward conspiratorially. "The way I hear it, she was some kind of Martian agent, maybe a RAM officer or some such. Makes you wonder if NEO was behind the killing, don't it?"

If the PCs investigate the killing, either by checking the news media or just talking to people around the dome, they can find out the following:

The woman was Janae Polios. Her identification gave her home as Chicagorg on Earth, but she arrived on Luna earlier in the day from Deimos.

The murder weapon hasn't been found, but apparently it was a variety of rocket rifle used almost exclusively in space.

The killing was a well-orchestrated sniper attack. The victim wouldn't have known what hit her.

No suspects have been taken into custody and the investigation is continuing. The

police seem to feel that the murderer was a visitor to Luna rather than a native. Though they haven't said so officially, police believe the killing was politically motivated.

Referee's Note: Janae Polios was a RAM agent, but she had absolutely nothing to do with the January affair. In fact, she was an innocent victim, sent into a dangerous situation by her RAM masters to act as an unwitting "lightning rod." When she arrived on Luna, local RAM assets leaked the information that she'd come from Deimos, and spread the rumor that she was a RAM agent. RAM hoped that the arrival of a RAM operative, connected somehow with the January issue, would spur NEO's response team (the PCs) to action, thereby blowing their cover in the process. In fact, this move spurred another, totally independent, group to action. This is a "red-herring" you can throw at the players if they're solving the adventure too quickly.

Phase 6— The Doctor is in

After investigating the inconsistencies described in **Research**, the PCs will probably want to visit the clinic Col. January was taken to after his "accident."

The clinic is a private organization known as the Tycho Trauma Research Center. It is located in an upper-class neighborhood of Tycho City, sunk into the rock of the crater wall.

If the PCs decide to research the clinic through secondary sources—such as business records, etc.—prior to visiting it, they'll find a further inconsistency in the January story. The Tycho Trauma Research Center is just that—a research facility. It has an excellent reputation for dealing with trauma cases, but its patients are normally transferred from other clinics or hospitals. January was the first patient ever to be admitted "off the street."

There are several other facts that the PCs can pick up about the Tycho Trauma Research Center. Unless you have reasons for

ruling otherwise, each of these facts should require an Average Library Search roll to discover, except as specified below.

The clinic is owned and funded by an organization that should, on the face of it, have little interest in things medical. This organization, the Trans-Luna Shipping and Transport Line, is a mid-sized player in the shipping industry on and around Luna. (Particularly inquisitive players might want to know just who owns the Trans-Luna Shipping and Transport Line. A Difficult Library Search roll is required to learn it's a privately-held corporation with all its stock owned by one shadowy figure. Another Difficult Library Search roll will reveal that this shadowy figure is actually Dmitri Tokalov, a high-ranking officer in RAM's dreaded Internal Affairs Division. Thus, the clinic is indirectly owned by RAM.)

The principal doctor at the clinic is Dr. Malcolm Aberthaugh, a highly respected neurophysiologist. He, and the clinic in general, have an admirable reputation for treating, and even reversing, neurological damage caused by trauma. Virtually any record on Dr. Aberthaugh will include a picture. If the PCs have seen the video provided by McCoy in **The Real McCoy**, they'll recognize that the doctor visiting January in his safe house was Aberthaugh.

Dr. Aberthaugh owns the patent for a medicine marketed by the clinic. This is a drug that has shown great promise in treating the aberrant behavior of psychotic patients. (This should clue the players in that Aberthaugh might be working on other forms of mind and behavior control.)

Dr. Aberthaugh has an apartment in Tycho City—surprisingly small for someone with his reputation. Its address is Ring 3, Sector A, number 13.

Most of this information will probably lead the PCs to visit the Tycho Trauma Research Center. If the PCs prefer to visit Dr. Aberthaugh's home, however, go to **Phase 7—Lucky 13**.

The Tycho Trauma Research Center

The Tycho Trauma Research Center—usually referred to as the TTRC, or just the Trauma Center—is a two-story facility sunk into the wall of Tycho crater. It has three entrances. For the clinic's layout, refer to the accompanying map and the Map Key in the following subsection.

If the PCs decide to visit the clinic during the day, they'll find it a quiet, businesslike place. The front door, leading into the reception area, is always open, but it's virtually impossible to get further than that. Reception desk duties are handled by an attractive, but adamant-willed, young lady whose job is to turn away curious, and unauthorized, visitors.

The PCs will probably want to find out about Col. January's condition when he was brought into the clinic. The receptionist has no knowledge of this. Even if she did, that kind of information is treated as highly confidential, certainly not for release to a bunch of motley adventurers barging into the clinic. The receptionist won't answer any questions concerning January or anyone else at the clinic, whether patient or staff. If a PC makes a successful Fast Talk check, the receptionist unwittingly lets slip the fact that Dr. Aberthaugh was the only physician who worked on January. When she realizes that she's let something slip, she clams up and demands that the PCs leave immediately, calling the guards to reinforce her words.

If the PCs are feeling particularly dumb, they might get into a gunfight with the clinic's security personnel. *Not a good idea.*

In this upper-class region of Tycho City, the Lunarian police are quick to respond to a disturbance. Five rounds after the first shot is fired, or the first blows are exchanged, a squad of 10 Lunarian police arrive (use the stats from **Watering Hole**). The police will be ready to do whatever it takes to quell the disturbance. Predictably, they won't have any argument with the clinic se-

curity guards—they were just doing their job, after all—but will come down hard on the PCs. Unless the PCs can escape quickly, they'll be too busy working in a penal mine to take any further part in the saga of Col. January.

Map 3: Trauma Clinic Key

1. Receptionist Area. During the day, the big double doors are open; at night they are locked. Trying to force them triggers an alarm in the security center. Directly opposite the door is the receptionist's desk. The receptionist is on-duty whenever the clinic is open. There is a computer terminal on the desk.

2. Security Room. Day and night, three lightly-armed guards are on duty here, ready to respond to the receptionist's call or to any attempt to break into the complex. They wear light body armor and carry bolt guns and sonic stunners.

Reception Guard (× 3)

2nd-level Lunarian warrior

AC 4, hp 6,9,12, Dmg 1d4 (bolt gun) or special (sonic stunner), THACO 19 (18 with sonic stunner)

3. Computer Room. The central processor and the storage subsystems for the clinic's computer network are located here. There are two computer terminals and a high-speed printer.

4. Medical Library. During the day, there is always one doctor here.

5. Staff Entrance. The door is secured around the clock by an electronic lock. All staff have ID cards which unlock the door. Attempting to open the door without ID triggers an alarm in the security center.

6. Security Center. Five heavily-armed security guards are on-duty here around the clock. These guards wear the uniform of a private security service, but are actually RAM Internal Affairs operatives (and carry hidden ID to that effect). They wear smart clothes and carry rocket pistols, sonic stun-

ners, and mono knives. The room has one computer terminal.

Security Guard (× 5)

3rd-level Martian warrior

AC 4, hp 14,19,25,25,27, Dmg 1d10 (rocket pistol) or special (sonic stunner), THACO 18 (17 with rocket pistol)

7. Patient and Equipment Entrance.

8. Heavy Equipment Storage Room. The door is always locked.

9. Scrub Room. This room contains sterilization equipment to disinfect clothing, dressings, equipment, etc. Racks on the walls hold different types of gowns, gear, etc.

10. Operating Room. During the day, there's 25% chance at any given time that two doctors and four nurses are working on a trauma victim. At night, this drops to 10%.

11. Recovery Room. Two nurses and one doctor are in the room at all times, monitoring the telemetry, ready to intervene if the patient takes a turn for the worse. There are two computer terminals and one high-speed printer here.

12. Mens Room

13. Ladies Room

14. Storage Room. Contains spare sheets, bedpans, hospital gowns, etc.

15. Staff Lounge. There are always 1d4-1 doctors/nurses present. There is a computer terminal here.

16. Elevator.

17. Elevator.

18-27. Patient Rooms and Examining Rooms. Each room has one or more beds, each with cutting-edge medical monitoring equipment. During the day, nurses and doctors frequent these rooms. At night, they're generally deserted.

28. Monitoring Room. All of the data from the patient rooms feeds into the monitors in this room. Day and night the computers are monitored by three nurses and one doctor. There are three computer terminals here.

29. Dr. Aberthaugh's Office. This room looks like a tornado hit it. There are papers everywhere and books strewn across every flat surface. The PCs might conclude the place has been searched, but this is just representative of the good doctor's "filing system." Against one wall is a cot where Aberthaugh spends most of his nights. There is one computer terminal here. During the day, there's a 25% chance that Aberthaugh is here reading; if he's not here, he's in his research lab next door. At night, there's a 50% chance that he's asleep in his cot.

30. Research Lab. This is where Aberthaugh conducts his "Project Brainwave" research. In the center of the room is a table complete with patient restraints. The walls are lined with electronic equipment, including the Project Brainwave hardware itself. This comprises a relatively small computer system—a cube about 3' on a side, massing about 200 pounds (meaning it weighs only about 33 pounds on Luna, of course)—and a headset with electrodes like those of an electroencephalograph. There are two computer terminals and a high-speed printer here. Day or night, if Aberthaugh isn't in his office, he's here. The electronic equipment lining the walls creates magnetic fields sufficiently strong to interfere with needle gun or bolt gun fire. All such weapons suffer a -2 penalty when used in this room.

The Computer System

As described in the Map Key, the TTRC has a fairly extensive computer system with terminals located conveniently throughout the entire complex. This system represents a possible way for the PCs to discover more of what's going on with Col. January.

It's assumed that characters in the XXVc™ role-playing game universe are familiar enough with computers to turn on a terminal and perform simple functions. "Simple functions" *doesn't* describe entering an unfamiliar system and dredging up confidential files, however. Everything of interest in the TTRC computer system is protected by

various levels of security and "intrusion countermeasures." Only a character with the Programming or the Cryptography skill has any chance of penetrating the system's security. (This security represents a special case of skill use, slightly different from the general case described in the rules. In this case alone, characters without an appropriate skill *can't* "wing it.")

Logging On

Before a character can do anything else, he or she must log onto the system defeating the password security system designed to exclude unauthorized users. This is an Easy task (Average for a character using Cryptography). Failure means that the character hasn't logged onto the system. There's no limit to the number of attempts a character can make. Each attempt takes 1d3 rounds. Successfully logging on is a prerequisite for any other action on the system.

Examining January's File

Once a character has logged onto the system, he or she will have no difficulty in finding January's patient file. Reading that file is another story since it's protected by sophisticated security. Penetrating this security is a Difficult task (Impossible for someone using Cryptography). If the character succeeds in the test, he or she can view the contents of the file which are reproduced in the accompanying box (see p. 32). The character cannot automatically print out the information or download it to a portable computer in the character's possession.

If the character fails the Skill Test, the computer system tries to trigger an alarm. The character has one chance to cancel this alarm before it takes effect; canceling the alarm is a Difficult task. As long as the character can cancel the alarm each time, there's no limit to the number of attempts that can be made to examine January's file. Each attempt takes 1d4 rounds. If the character fails to cancel the alarm, the security guards in room 6 are alerted, and will arrive—fully armed and ready to fight—in 2d3 rounds.

Aberthaugh's Notes

It's equally easy to locate a file containing research notes belonging to Dr. Aberthaugh. Again, to read the file, the character must penetrate the security: a Difficult task (Impossible for someone using Cryptography). If the character succeeds the test, he or she can view the contents of the file which are reproduced at the end of this adventure. The character cannot automatically print out the information or download it to a portable computer in the character's possession. Each attempt to penetrate the security takes 1d6 rounds.

Downloading or Printing

Printing the data out or downloading it to a portable computer—and thus gaining tangible proof of what's going on—is more difficult. The security surrounding the printing and downloading modules is high. Once a character has opened and viewed the contents of either file, it takes another Difficult Skill Check to "persuade" the system to print or download the file's contents. A separate check is required to print or download the contents of each file. Each attempt to get the system to print or download data takes 1d2 rounds. The time taken by the actual printing or downloading process, once the security is defeated, is 1 round per file.

What Does It All Mean?

The contents of the two computer files—January's patient file and Dr. Aberthaugh's personal notes—may seem confusing. This is intentional. The PCs—and the players—should have to stretch their brains to understand what's going on. There are several conclusions that the PCs should be able to draw, however. These are described below. If your players are having a tough time of it, you might consider helping lead them to the correct conclusions, perhaps by asking leading questions (the Socratic method).

From Aberthaugh's Notes

The doctor has developed a technique to record the personality of a subject, manipulate it, then feed it back into the subject's brain. Aberthaugh sees this as a way of curing the delusions and personality problems suffered by psychotics.

It is possible, although very difficult, to create a personality record from scratch.

It is theoretically possible to feed a false personality pattern into a healthy brain. Presumably, the subject would "integrate"—in other words, take on—all the characteristics of this false personality. This would be—and is—the most extensive form of brainwashing known to man. The subject would, in effect, become a totally different person.

This brainwashing technique has its risks. Aberthaugh suspects that the brain would eventually "reject" the new personality. This rejection would cause bouts of irrationality and violence, eventually leading to death. Presumably, RAM knows this but doesn't care. The time span Aberthaugh predicts before the rejection takes place would give RAM enough time to fully interrogate January and make their propaganda points, before he dies of an "unfortunate cerebral accident."

Aberthaugh's continued concerns about ethics should indicate that the doctor is actually a good man—and probably a fairly naive one—suckered by RAM into doing their dastardly deeds for them.

From January's File

Aberthaugh's "principals"—presumably the RAM officers who indirectly own the clinic—have told the doctor that January is actually a citizen of Mars and a RAM employee. According to RAM's cover story, the unfortunate January has suffered a mental breakdown, leading him to believe that he's an "officer in some shadowy paramilitary organization," and has run away from his previous life. They have told the doctor that

restoring his true personality—that of a loyal RAM employee—is the “cure” that he needs.

Although Aberthaugh initially had some doubts, since January seemed rational, the first set of personality tapes convinced him that the RAM operatives were telling the truth. In his naivete, Aberthaugh couldn't imagine why anyone would leave the lifestyle described in those tapes. Anyone who did so must be mentally unbalanced. Using techniques to overcome January's “psychotic” resistance to being “cured,” he ran the other tapes, which he hadn't scanned.

Again, Aberthaugh's concerns about the ethics of the process mark him as a good man who has been duped into performing evil acts.

Dr. Malcolm Aberthaugh

Dr. Aberthaugh is a tall, skeletally-thin man with a high-domed forehead and protruding front teeth. His sandy hair is thinning on top and he never seems to find the time to get it cut. It tends to form a long fringe around the sides and back of his head. His eyesight isn't the best and he prefers old-fashioned wire-frame glasses to the permanent-wear contact lenses that others choose. He's in his early fifties and he's brilliant. He always wears a lab coat and never carries a weapon.

Aberthaugh is a good man, and is very concerned about the ethics of his work. He will experiment only on willing, informed subjects and suffers crises of faith when the mentally-ill people he treats try to resist his treatment. Like many of his ilk, he's very detached from the real world and is extremely naive. Thus he's a perfect “stooge” for RAM.

If the PCs manage to convince him that he's been duped, his remorse will be total and he'll do whatever he can to reverse the brainwashing process—hopefully before January rejects his new personality. (If the PCs haven't picked up on the possibility of “personality rejection,” but do convince

Aberthaugh of what's actually happened, he will explain to them the “secondary deadline” they're working under.)

Aberthaugh is *not* a man of violence. Violence terrifies him and he's quite likely to faint if someone points a gun at him.

Dr. Malcolm Aberthaugh

11th-level Terran scientist/6th-level medic

STR 9	INT 17
DEX 12	WIS 12
CON 8	CHA 11

TECH 18

AC 10, hp 20, Dmg nil, THACO 14
General Knowledge 30%, Memorize 80%, Notice 5%, Gadgeteering 72%, Biology 97%, Mathematics 55%, Physics 47%, Library Search 54%, Diagnose 55%, Life Suspension Tech 15%, Treat Critical Wounds 25%, Treat Disease 15%, Treat Light Wounds 25%, Treat Poison 5%, Treat Serious Wounds 20%, Treat Stun/Paralysis 75%.

Phase 7—Lucky 13

Run this phase if the PCs decide to visit Dr. Aberthaugh's home—whether before or after they check out the trauma clinic. Read the following:

Ring 3, Sector A, number 13. That's the address you got from the datanet. It's in a middle-class residential region of Tycho City—not the kind of place you'd expect a famous, and no doubt rich, scientist like Dr. Aberthaugh to live.

There is one door, opening onto the public thoroughfare, and no windows. The place is surrounded by other, similar apartments—each separated from its neighbor by thick Lunar rock. If you want to get in, you're going to have to go through the front door.

Beside the door is the standard access keypad that contains the electronic lock for the door, a doorbell, and an intercom.

The PCs have three choices: ring the bell, try to defeat the electronic lock, or break down the door. Considering that the door opens onto a public thoroughfare, option three isn't a particularly good idea.

If the PCs ring the doorbell, there's no response from inside. This leaves them with their only option being picking the lock. If the PCs manage to defeat the lock, read the following:

Success! The door glides open.

The apartment is even smaller than you thought. The front door opens directly onto the apartment's living room. The furniture is rather spartan. One feature which indicates the wealth of the apartment's owner is the screen which fills the entire wall opposite the door.

There's an armchair, the kind mounted on a swivel base, facing the screen. Over the back of the chair you see the head of a tall man. Dr. Aberthaugh, you presume?

The figure doesn't turn, or even look your way, in reaction to the sound of the door opening. After a moment, though, the man in the chair speaks. His voice is quiet and sibilant, almost a whisper. "Come in," the man in the chair urges. "I've been expecting your visit—*NEO scum!*"

The chair spins. A Terrine warrior watches you from the chair, a nasty smile on its face. On its head it wears a "bald-head" wig, the kind you'd see in a novelty shop. Its eyes are as steady and threatening as the muzzle of the heat gun it points your way.

"Oh, yes, we've been expecting you," it hisses—enjoying itself thoroughly. "Haven't we, boys?"

The three doors that open into the living room slide open, on cue, each filled by two large—and armed—figures.

lives to achieve that goal. As soon as the doors open, the RAM operatives will open fire and try to cut the PCs down. Other than winning a toe-to-toe battle, the PCs' only chance of survival is to make it back out to the public streets. The RAM agents will fire a last volley of shots after the fleeing PCs, then will make themselves scarce.

If the firefight inside the apartment goes on for long, the Lunarian police will arrive. Ten police will arrive on the scene in 1d8 + 8 rounds; use the statistics from **Watering Hole**. If the Terrine is still on the scene when the police arrive, it will blow itself up by simultaneously detonating the 5 hand grenades it's carrying. This will destroy the evidence of RAM's involvement and will almost certainly put paid to any other people unfortunate enough to still be on the premises. (The 5 grenades will inflict 20d10 hit points of damage on anyone within the blast radius; save versus explosion for half damage.)

Terrine

7th-level Terrine warrior

STR 17	INT 8
DEX 15	WIS 12
CON 17	CHA 6

TECH 10

AC 4, hp 54, Dmg 2d6 (heat gun), THACO 15 (12 with heat gun)
Battle Tactics 98%, Demolitions 30%, Leadership 46%, Move Silently 24%, Notice 82%.

RAM Thugs (x6)

3rd-level Terran warrior

AC 4, hp 8,9,13,16,21,22, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol) or 1d10 (rocket pistol), THACO 18 (17 with specialized weapon)
Battle Tactics 45%, Move Silently 36%, Notice 45%.

The Terrine and six other RAM agents want the PCs dead and will sacrifice their

Map 2: Aberthangh's Apartment Key

1. Living Room. The screen of the entertainment center will explode with impressive—albeit harmless—pyrotechnics if it is hit by a stray shot.

2. Bathroom.

3. Kitchen.

4. Bedroom. In the drawer of a night table beside the bed is a small hand-held computer, apparently forgotten by Dr. Aberthangh. There is one file in the computer: a copy of Aberthangh's research notes. These are described in the section on the clinic's computer system. This version of the file isn't protected or encrypted at all. Anyone can view it, print it or download it. (They can also just pocket the computer, of course.)

Getting Back On Track

If the PCs survive this phase, their next step depends on what they've already learned. They might decide to make a midnight visit to the trauma clinic—see **The Doctor Is In**—or they might just have decided that all is not as it seems and pursue more leads, as described in **Research**. Alternatively, they might think they know all they have to know and decide to go right after Col. January in his safe house. In this case, go to **Phase 8—Penetration**.

Phase 8—Penetration

Run this phase whenever the PCs are ready to go after Col. January. This can happen early in the adventure—if the PCs have overlooked the clues leading them elsewhere—or after they've gone through every other phase in the adventure, or are somewhere in-between.

Safe House

The apartment where Col. January is awaiting the arrival of the RAM executive yacht is a pleasant place in the upper-class area of Tycho City and is generally reserved for off-

planet VIPs. Built into the main wall of Tycho crater, it has a balcony which extends out of the rock giving a spectacular view over much of the city. Apart from the balcony, which is about 100' above road level, the only way into the apartment is the single front door. This door opens onto a public thoroughfare.

Col. January never leaves the apartment. His newly "implanted" personality includes a sense of paranoia. He believes that enemies—particularly his erstwhile colleagues in NEO—are waiting for him to step outside so they can kill him.

Predictably, security around the apartment is high. The government of Luna has accepted January's request for political asylum and feels an obligation to keep their guest breathing until the RAM vessel arrives. There are four Lunarian police permanently stationed outside the door of the apartment and another four patrolling the street below the apartment's balcony. In addition, there is an extended squad of 12 police on permanent call. If a fight breaks out, or if a policeman sees anything out of the ordinary, him will call for help. The extended squad will arrive in 1d3 rounds. (Use the statistics from **Watering Hole** for the police.)

Col. January's implanted personality includes a deep fear for his safety and the urge to hire additional personal security. In response to this, he employed the services of a small security company, known as Lunar Shield Security. Unknown to January, and to the Lunarian police, Lunar Shield is owned lock, stock, and barrel by RAM. The "personal security consultants" staying with the colonel in his apartment are actually RAM Internal Affairs agents. There are five of these "consultants" on duty at all times.

The security consultants are well-trained and highly motivated and will give their lives, if that's what it takes, to keep January from being killed or kidnapped.

"Security Consultant" (× 5)

5th-level Martian warrior

AC 4, hp 23,23,30,31,40, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol) or 1d6 (mono knife) or special (sonic stunner), THACO 16 (14 with laser pistol)

The RAM delegation aboard the executive yacht is scheduled to arrive 48 hours after the PCs met with Jerry McCoy, or 48 hours after they arrived in the Free Fall Bar & Grill for the first time. The "security consultants" are in constant radio communication with the yacht and know that the schedule hasn't been changed. In addition, the actual delegation members carry cards that unmistakably identify them. Any group posing as members of the delegation who "conveniently arrived early" would be cut down on the spot.

The apartment was well-stocked with food and other supplies before January arrived. Thus, there's no need for food deliveries or similar services, and the security consultants know this. Presumably, if some vital system within the apartment were to break down, the guards might admit a "repair team," but only if the team's identification was absolutely impeccable, and only after calling their employer.

There is one person who is allowed virtually free access to the apartment, and that's Dr. Malcolm Aberthaugh. Each day he visits January and uses a portable scanner—similar in concept to his full-scale Project Brainwave hardware—to confirm that January is continuing to integrate his new personality. The security consultants know Aberthaugh well, of course. They don't understand anything about his work beyond the bare essentials, and might be persuaded that a particular test requires the presence of several "lab assistants." If they can get the good doctor to play along, and if Aberthaugh can control his fears long enough to pull it off, this might represent the best way for the PCs to get into the apartment.

Map 2: January's Safe House Key

1. Entry Hall. The door is always secured with a sophisticated electronic lock. On the outside is a keypad incorporating doorbell and intercom. The door can be opened from inside by pushing a single button. The door's controls can be overridden by the apartment's computer system.

2. Guest Bathroom.

3. Living Room. Against one wall is an extensive entertainment suite incorporating video, sound, phone, and computer equipment. During the day, January and two of his guards are here; at night, three guards are present.

4. Balcony. The sliding glass door is controlled by buttons inside and outside. A single key on the interior keypad disables the outside keypad. The door is also under the control of the apartment's computer system which can override the manual controls at any time. The "glass" of the sliding door is actually the same high-density crystal used in spaceship viewports and is impenetrable by laser and projectile fire.

5. Dining Room.

6. Kitchen. During the day, one guard is present here; at night, the kitchen is empty.

7. Master Bedroom. During the day, this room is empty.

8. En Suite Bathroom.

9. Guest Bedroom. Day and night, two of January's guards are here playing cards.

Computer Security

Luxury apartments like this usually have elaborate computer controls to make life more comfortable for their owners. The central computer can control all heating, ventilating, and lighting. It also operates the autokitchen and runs the entertainment suite. It also handles safety and emergency systems.

These apartments also have their own full environment control—air supply, pressure monitors, etc.—and can keep their occupants alive, completely autonomously, even if the environment control for the rest

of Tycho City fails. This environment system is also under the control of the apartment's computer.

All this would be nothing more than interesting trivia if it weren't for one fact: the leader of the RAM cell which orchestrated the entire January affair is a Digital Personality (DP) named Himem.dos. The fact that the apartment has such a sophisticated computer system means that Himem.dos can supervise his prize—January—personally.

Luckily for the PCs, Himem.dos doesn't have any weapons he can use directly against them. This doesn't mean he's helpless, however. He can control the front and balcony doors, making it impossible for the PCs to escape by either of those routes. Alternatively, he can use either door as a weapon, by shutting it hard on a PC trying to go through the doorway. A PC attacked in this way must successfully make a Dexterity check to avoid the door; otherwise the PC suffers 1d4 hit points of damage from the impact.

The DP has complete control over the apartment's lights and the extensive entertainment suite and will use both to hamper the PCs and assist the RAM agents.

Himem.dos has one particularly lethal form of attack that it will use if the PCs have defeated the "security consultants." It will seal the doors, then use the environmental controls to pump all the air out of the apartment. This takes 3 rounds; after that, everyone in the apartment is in danger of suffocation.

When everyone is unconscious, the DP will re-pressurize the apartment, but only after it's called for another squad of 5 RAM agents to deal with the PCs. (Use the same stats as for the security consultants.) Note that Himem.dos will use this technique even if it puts January at risk. The DP reasons that, if RAM can't have him, the only good January is a dead January.

If they're trapped by the DP, the PCs have various options. The most obvious is to blow open the front door or the door to the

balcony, if they have the necessary equipment. Alternatively, they can try to defeat the electronic systems. A character with one of the following skills—Repair Computer, Repair Electrical, or Programming—can attempt to open up the control panel for either door and override the computer's control. This is a Difficult task, but if it is successful, the door opens allowing air in and the PCs out.

Although they may have escaped with their lives, the PCs should realize that leaving a "living" RAM DP behind them isn't a good idea. After all, Himem.dos will quickly rebuild its organization and continue to cause trouble for NEO. Of course, destroying a DP is easier said than done.

Destroying Himem.dos

The first phase in destroying the DP is to prevent it from escaping from the apartment computer system. Himem.dos entered the system through the one connection between the apartment and Luna Main (the Luna world computer)—the phone system. If the PCs destroy the phone, which is part of the entertainment suite, the DP is trapped and can't leave the apartment.

There are two places in the apartment that the DP can hide: in the control system itself, or in the powerful personal computer that is part of the entertainment suite. Himem.dos can move back and forth between these two systems virtually instantaneously. It's a simple matter to destroy the computer—or the whole entertainment suite, for that matter—forcing the DP into the control system.

The apartment's control system is located behind an access panel in the living room. The entertainment suite is directly in front of this panel. It's a job of only one round to open the access panel, exposing the system's circuitry, and of another round to destroy the system. If the DP is trapped in the control system when the PCs destroy it, Himem.dos is destroyed. Once the control system is wrecked, all functions of the

apartment—doors, lights, etc.—revert to full manual control.

If the PCs destroy both computer systems without first wrecking the phone, Himem.dos simply flees down the phone line, returning to Luna Main. The DP can return as an on-going nemesis for the PCs.

Himem.dos

3rd-level Digital Personality

AC 8, hp 17, THACO 18

Himem.dos is a very task-oriented DP. Like all DPs it is highly intelligent and is a very good leader of this arm of RAM's Luna organization. It is totally ruthless when it comes to "spending assets" to achieve a goal.

Interrogating the Guards

If the PCs manage to keep one of the security consultants alive for interrogation, they can conceivably find out the details of the entire RAM plan.

The security consultants don't know the names of any RAM agents other than their direct colleagues. They do know the identity and nature of their leader, Himem.dos, and that the DP is currently inhabiting the apartment's computer system.

Of course, extracting this information from a surviving "consultant" won't be easy. The RAM agents are willing to sacrifice their lives to see the plan go through, so threats of death won't persuade a captive to spill his guts. PCs will have to be very creative to learn anything whatsoever from their prisoners.

Col. Willis January

And what about Col. January through all of this? After all, he's the key player in the whole adventure. The new personality which has been implanted in him is basically non-violent.

For this reason, January doesn't have a weapon of his own and won't take active

part in a firefight between RAM and the PCs—initially, at least. The colonel's transplanted personality is more unstable than Dr. Aberthaugh predicted, and the good doctor's daily checks have failed to reveal that January is already starting to suffer "personality rejection." The symptoms of this are crippling headaches—which January hasn't mentioned to anybody—and unpredictable, violent rages. Even though January has managed to control these rages—so much so that his RAM guards don't know of their existence—they are still there and are much more likely to occur when the colonel is in violent surroundings.

In each round that combat takes place near January, there is a 5% chance that the colonel will suffer a homicidal rage. The rage lasts for 1d6 rounds—after which he collapses into sleep for 1d20 rounds—or until he's subdued or killed. When January awakes after such a rage, he will remember nothing of his actions.

If January is possessed by a violent rage, the RAM operatives around him have a difficult situation on their hands. They can't very well kill their prize, but neither can they let him kill them. Thus, RAM operatives will always engage an enraged January using non-lethal combat.

Col. Willis January

11th-level Terran warrior

STR 15	INT 16
DEX 12	WIS 6*
CON 13	CHA 16

TECH 10

AC 10, hp 62, Dmg by weapon, THACO 10 (7 with laser pistol, 8 with rocket pistol)
Battle Tactics 82%, Leadership 140%, Notice 91%, General Knowledge 56%, History 71%

*: This low score is a side-effect of Dr. Aberthaugh's brainwashing technique.

January's WIS is normally 18 and will return to this score when the transplanted personality is removed.

Col. January is a handsome, athletic man in his early fifties. He has a strong jaw and piercing blue eyes. He is highly intelligent, well-read, and is an excellent military leader.

The personality he has received is that of a non-violent RAM loyalist. Initially, he will see the PCs as enemies and his RAM guards as allies. If the PCs mention important facets of his old life—NEO, Commander Turabian, Buck Rogers, Salvation station, etc.—he will start to show doubt. Although he won't totally believe the PCs, he'll no longer be completely loyal to RAM either. In this condition, a charismatic character should be able to persuade him to let Dr. Aberthaugh remove the implanted personality (assuming the PCs have access to Dr. Aberthaugh, of course).

Getting Back On Track

The PCs will probably win or lose the adventure in this phase. If they've rescued January and have Dr. Aberthaugh on their side, go to the section **Curing January in Concluding the Adventure**. If they've gone down trying, go to **The Consequences of Failure** in the same chapter. If Aberthaugh is still alive but not with the PCs, they should consider tracking him down at the trauma clinic and "recruiting" him.

Possibly the PCs have been repulsed by the RAM guards: they're still alive, but January is still in RAM custody. If this is the case, they might try to ambush the RAM delegation when it arrives, or lie in wait aboard the executive yacht. Go to **The Delegation**.

Phase 9—The Delegation

Use this phase if the PCs decide to deal in some way with the RAM executive delegation coming to collect Col. January. Perhaps they wish to ambush the delegation and then impersonate them to get the "security consultants" in the safe house to hand over January. Alternatively, they might want to ambush the entire group as it takes January from the safe house to the yacht. Finally, the PCs might have already assaulted the safe house, only to be repelled, and see ambushing the delegation as their last chance to successfully complete their mission.

Dramatis Personae

The delegation consists of three high-ranking RAM executives, five Internal Affairs operatives, and two Terrine warriors who are officially listed as "personal bodyguards" for the delegation leader. The delegation members are discussed below.

Sarah Demianovich

3rd-level Martian rogue

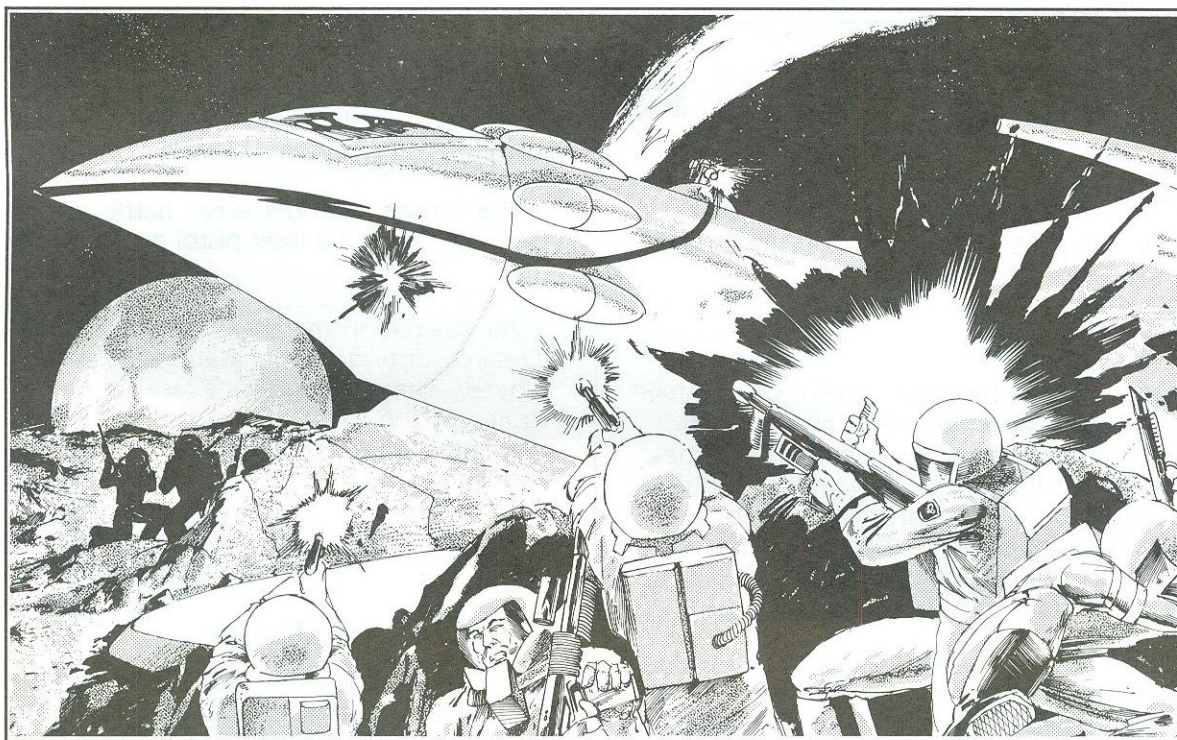
STR 12	INT 12
DEX 16	WIS 10
CON 9	CHA 16

TECH 8

AC 4, hp 16, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol), THACO 20

Hide in Shadows 45%, Move Silently 42%, Fast Talk 45%, Open Lock 20%, Bypass Security 3%, Notice 45%.

The leader of the delegation, Demianovich, is tall and regal—even by Martian standards. She is also a hard, ruthless, corporate shark. She is in her mid-forties, young for her exalted position in the RAM organization. Unlike the other members of the delegation, Demianovich believes—correctly—that her continued survival is of more worth to RAM than the success of the



January mission. Thus, to save her life, she will sacrifice the mission, and any other members of the delegation that it takes, to keep her breathing. If it looks as though she might be killed, she will surrender immediately, explaining to the PCs that RAM will be glad to ransom her for a huge sum of money.

She wears smart clothes and carries a concealed laser pistol.

Ross Babbit

7th-level Martian warrior

STR 14	INT 14
DEX 12	WIS 10
CON 14	CHA 13

TECH 10

AC 4, hp 53, Dmg 1d10 (rocket pistol), THACO 14 (11 with rocket pistol)
Battle Tactics 64%, Leadership 83%, Move Silently 28%, Notice 105%.

Babbit is officially Demianovich's "executive assistant." In fact, he's her hatchetman, bodyguard, and part-time lover. Babbit is handsome and athletic in his mid-thirties with dark hair and dark eyes. He is loyal to RAM and to Demianovich, and will do whatever it takes—even give his life—to keep Demianovich alive and see the mission to its successful conclusion. Only Demianovich knows that Babbit is a warrior. The other delegation members think he's simply Demianovich's "pretty-boy," and Babbit is careful to never draw attention to his considerable combat abilities. (He sees this secret as a valuable "edge.")

Babbit wears smart clothes and carries a rocket pistol and mono knife (both concealed).

Yuri Kamarov

3rd-level Martian warrior

STR 12	INT 10
DEX 14	WIS 7
CON 10	CHA 10

TECH 11

Leadership 45%, Economics 45%, General Knowledge 40%, History 40%.

AC 4, hp 10, Dmg 1d10 (mono sword), THACO 18 (17 with mono sword)

Kamarov is the junior executive member of the delegation, but he is by far the most arrogant in manner. He is in his late thirties, short—particularly for a Martian—and prematurely bald. His smart clothes are of a military cut, resembling those of a Prussian general of six centuries earlier (or, according to less complimentary opinion, the garb of an escapee from a comic opera). His military “uniform” extends to a scabbard at his side that holds his beloved mono sword. His warrior skills come more from the fact that he fences for pleasure than that he has ever had any true military training. Kamarov is very sensitive about his appearance and will immediately challenge anyone who comments on it to a duel.

Despite his arrogant swaggering and posturing, Kamarov is a coward. If it looks like his precious skin is at serious risk, he’ll cower in terror. In a duel, he’ll fight until he’s reduced to 2 hit points, then surrender.

Internal Affairs Operative (× 5)

4th-level Martian warrior

AC 4, hp 20,21,30,34, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol) or 2d6 (heat gun), THACO 15 (13 with specialized weapon)

Drive Heavy Ground Vehicle 60%

The five Internal Affairs operatives wear smart clothes. Three are armed with laser pistols, the other two with heat guns. Each operative is specialized in the weapon he carries, giving him a +2 bonus to hit.

Terrine Warrior (x2)

5th-level Terrine warrior

AC 2, hp 31,39, Dmg 1d8 (laser pistol) or 2d8 (rocket rifle), THACO 16 (14 with laser pistol)

The Terrine warriors wear battle armor. Each carries both a laser pistol and a rocket rifle.

All delegation members carry electronic ID cards distinguishing them as RAM employees. These cards can be reprogrammed to accept the ID of a new person. Reprogramming an executive’s card requires an Impossible Electronic Repair Check, while reprogramming any other card—belonging to an IAD thug or Terrine warrior—requires only a Difficult Electronic Repair Check.

Schedule and Route

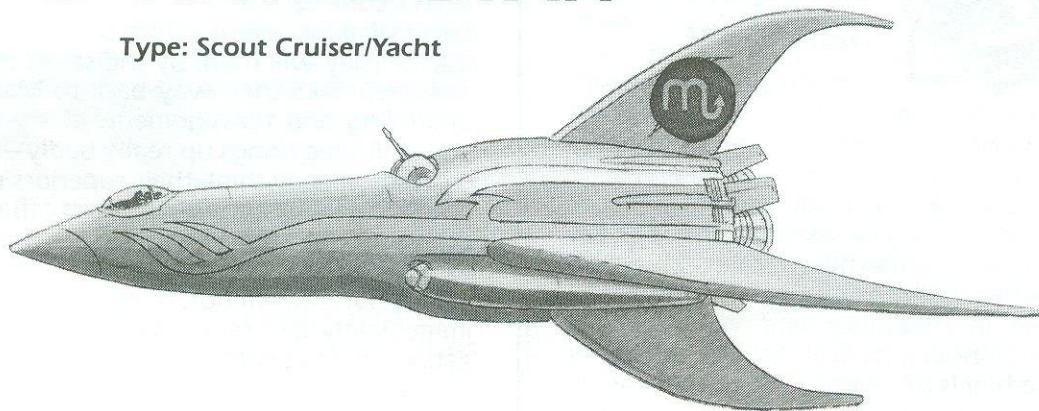
The RAM executive yacht, the *Coprates Star*, arrives on schedule, exactly 48 hours after the PCs’ meeting with McCoy (of after they first arrived at the Free Fall Bar & Grill if they didn’t meet up with McCoy at all). It sets down in the rocket launch bay nearest the fuel pump shacks on the Tycho Spaceport map from the XXVc™ role-playing game boxed set.

Arrangements have been made for a shuttle bus to meet the ship. This bus is an electrically-powered ground vehicle similar in appearance to a streamlined, elongated van, capable of travelling at a maximum speed of 30 mph (2,640 feet per round) and capable of seating 25. For anyone sitting upright in the vehicle, the bus’s body gives 75% cover; for a passenger crouching on the floor, cover is complete. The bus’s driver must always be sitting upright. The vehicle itself is sufficiently armored that it can’t be harmed by personal weapons.

The entire delegation boards the bus, with one of the IAD operatives driving. The trip to January’s apartment takes 30 minutes. On arrival, January is transferred to the bus. If there has been some trouble—

COPRATES STAR

Type: Scout Cruiser/Yacht



Attributes

Tonnage: 35
Length: 70 feet
Width: 17 feet
Cargo: 17 tons

Hit Points:

Hull 140
Sensors/Commo 35
Controls 35
Life Support 70
Fuel 105
Engine 105

Armor Class: 8 (Civilian)

Weapons: 2 Missile Mounts
1 Beam Laser

Crew: 8

Speed: 4

Reaction Bonus: -1

AC Defense Bonus: -2

e.g., an assault on the trauma clinic, Dr. Aberthaugh's apartment, or the safe house itself—any surviving members of January's IAD bodyguard (described in **Penetration**) will accompany the rest of the delegation back to the spaceport. Otherwise, the IAD operatives from the safe house leave to go about other duties.

The bus returns January and the delegation to the spaceport. Everyone boards the yacht and the vessel immediately takes off. Once outside Luna territorial space, six RAM Krait fighters and one scout cruiser take up station and escort the *Coprates Star* back to Mars.

The *Coprates Star*

The *Coprates Star* is a 35-ton pleasure cruiser, identical in structure and weaponry to Ardala Valmar's *Princess of Mars*, although slightly different in appearance. It is painted with standard RAM executive colors displaying the RAM logo on its flanks and rear

fin. When the vessel is underway, the five Internal Affairs operatives serve as crew.

Getting Back On Track

This phase represents the last chance for the PCs to capture or kill Col. January. If the *Coprates Star* takes off, their only choice is to engage it ship-to-ship while it's still within Lunarian space—not a good idea, considering Lunarian sensibilities—or to take on the yacht and its escorts in neutral space—again, not a good idea, since six Krait fighters and a scout cruiser are probably more than enough to toast whatever vessel the PCs own. In other words, if they blow it here, the PCs have failed. Go to **The Consequences of Failure** in **Concluding the Adventure**.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE



uring January

Even if the PCs manage to kidnap/rescue January, the colonel isn't out of the woods yet. The personality implanted by Dr. Aberthaugh's Project Brainwave machine is still in place and January is beginning to reject it. Unless someone does something, the colonel's headaches will grow worse, his rages will increase in frequency and violence, and within 24 hours, he will die. The only way to save him is to reverse the personality implant.

If Dr. Aberthaugh is still alive and working with the PCs, and has his Project Brainwave machinery—or an engineer capable of jury-rigging a replacement—this is a simple matter. All it takes is hooking January to the machine for two hours and removing the “synthesized” personality. Aberthaugh could do it in his sleep.

But what if Aberthaugh is dead or otherwise unavailable? If the PCs have access to the doctor's equipment, a character can try to perform the personality removal. To even try it, the character must have one of the following skills: Life Suspension Tech, Biology, or Programming. The process is a Difficult task. If a particular character tries and fails, he or she cannot try again (although another character with an appropriate skill can do so). Without the doctor, access to Aberthaugh's equipment—which is in the trauma center—is an absolute necessity. Without Aberthaugh to guide him or her, even the best engineer can't jury-rig substitute equipment.

The RAM Agents

The PCs will be hard-pressed to track down the RAM agents on Luna and make them pay for their crimes. As soon as January is

killed or captured, the agents in this arm of RAM's Luna operations will go deep undercover, making every effort to cover their tracks. They will then, by the safest means possible, make their way back to Mars for debriefing and reassignment. (If the RAM agents fouled things up really badly—more correctly, if they think their superiors might read it that way—there's a chance that one or more RAM agents might decide to defect to NEO to save their lives.)

If the DP, Himem.dos, is still “alive,” it will immediately start rebuilding its local organization, using agents from other RAM “cells” on Luna.

The Consequences of Failure

So what happens if the PCs fail to kidnap or kill January? What if the colonel is still alive and is whisked away from Luna aboard the *Coprates Star*?

The consequences won't be as dire as NEO fears, or as good as RAM hopes. Although RAM will gain significant propaganda value from the fact that January “defected” in the first place, they won't extract much sensitive information from him.

Within 12 hours—long before the interrogation is even partially complete—January will become incapacitated by crippling headaches, punctuated by increasingly violent rages. In 18 hours, he will be a raving lunatic, and within 24 hours, he will be dead.

Certainly, RAM will have learned some information that's damaging to NEO, but the results are nowhere near as catastrophic as predicted. Some NEO “assets” are compromised and a few operations are aborted. But, all in all, the damage to the organization is relatively minor.

After the death of January, RAM has a choice to make: announce the death and try to hang it on NEO—*somehow*—or hush

the whole thing up. Since there's no reasonable way to shift the blame to NEO, RAM chooses the latter course. According to RAM news releases, January lives a comfortable and productive life in the executive enclaves of the Coprates Chasm arcology. He chooses to be somewhat of a recluse, RAM claims, which explains why he's never heard from again.

The Consequences of Success

But what if the PCs killed January, perhaps without learning the true nature of RAM's plot? According to the mission orders the team received, this outcome must be classed as a success, assuming that NEO wasn't implicated in the assassination. (RAM will certainly try to make sure that NEO is implicated, of course.)

Over time, however, the true story will start to come to light. Other NEO operatives on Luna will pick up on some of the anomalies that the PCs missed. Eventually, NEO headquarters will reconstruct the entire story. Their reaction will depend on the PCs' reliability and success record in the interim and might range from acceptance—"It was an honest mistake"—to probation—"You blew it, boys, *big time*." This is entirely up to you.

Circumstances will be similar if the PCs rescue January but are unable to cure him. (Perhaps the team never met up with Dr. Aberthaugh, or accidentally killed him.) January's personality rejection will follow the time course described earlier, and the colonel will be dead within 24 hours of his abduction/rescue. Again, the reaction of NEO headquarters will depend on the report the PCs turn in. If NEO leadership thinks the PCs did their best, and their failure to cure January was due to circumstances beyond their control, the mission will be considered a "qualified success." If, however, NEO headquarters believes the PCs could have done better, this will be reflected in future missions—"Guarding the garbage dump *again*?"—and in the way the leadership deals with the PCs.

Political Repercussions

The political repercussions of this mission depend on how the PCs handled it. If the team engaged in gratuitous violence, and their identities as NEO operatives become known, then relations between NEO and Luna will be greatly strained. This is particularly true if Lunarian policemen or innocent passers-by fell to wanton laser fire. The worst possible outcome would be if the PCs assassinated January in such a way as to cause excessive "collateral damage" and then were identified as NEO agents (this might happen if one or more of the PCs was captured or killed). In this case, political relations between NEO and Luna will suffer as discussed above, and the organization will suffer greatly in popularity when it becomes known that they killed one of their own people.

On the other hand, if the PCs can prove to the Lunarian authorities that the whole January issue was a RAM plot, and that RAM agents were working on Luna, then it is Mars that will suffer Luna's wrath, and a cooling of diplomatic relations.

Project Brainwave

If the PCs succeed fully in their mission, they'll probably have both Aberthaugh and his Project Brainwave technology in their possession. As referee, you should stress to the PCs that using this technology to brainwash others is morally and ethically wrong, and not the kind of thing that good NEO members should get involved in. Dr. Aberthaugh himself will stress this and will categorically refuse to allow his invention to be used for morally doubtful purposes.

Project Brainwave will prove valuable to NEO anyway. A session under the machine can detect, and quickly reverse, any normal form of brainwashing.

Project Brainwave—Private File ABERTHO4, continued

... experimentation with Project Brainwave indicates that my initial high hopes for this procedure were not unfounded. The new techniques for recording a complete personality engram seem to be more efficient than I had hoped. The personality of a willing subject can be totally encoded in less than two hours. (There is evidence that the process would be as efficient with an unwilling subject, but of course experiments in this direction would be highly unethical and will never be performed.)

The computer incorporated into the Project Brainwave hardware is capable of performing selected edits—deletions, transpositions, and insertions—on this record. It is theoretically possible to synthesize a complete personality record from scratch, as it were, without having a recorded personality record to start from. This, however, would take much more processing “horsepower” than the Project Brainwave system contains. I suspect that the procedure is beyond the capabilities of any computer system, with the possible exception of the new generation of supercomputers reportedly being built on Mars. The usefulness of such a synthesized —“forged”—personality record would seem to be low anyway, considering the strong possibilities of “personality rejection” described below.

The new generation of hardware has greatly enhanced the “write” phase of the process. The new electrode net

is hardly more complex than a standard electroencephalogram headset, and the new co-processors allow the data encoded on the personality tapes to be run through the headset much faster. Advanced data compression algorithms also seem to speed the integration of the tape information by the neurons of the brain. With a willing subject, an entire set of personality tapes can be “written” to the brain in under a day. In an unwilling subject—such as a delusional psychotic, the patient for whom this treatment is intended—the process is considerably slower, of course, due to mental resistance to an “alien”—in this case, healthy—personality. Level two of data compression seems to pose the best chance for overcoming this kind of resistance, however.

Evidence keeps arising to indicate that, should a “false” or inappropriate personality be fed into a healthy brain, the brain will eventually “reject” the new personality. This rejection will probably take the form of blinding headaches, leading to flashes of irrational violence, and eventual brain death. Extrapolations indicate that this rejection will probably take place within six days of the personality transfer. This projection will never be confirmed, of course, since the risk to the experimental subject would be too extreme to allow suitable tests to be performed.

Subject: Willis January

Day 1: The subject arrived at the clinic as expected. Condition was nominal, considering the sedatives involved. Biological age appears to be early thirties, although chronological age is more than a decade older. The subject's health is excellent, apart from a minor concussion sustained during acquisition. The procedure will begin once he has fully metabolized the sedatives.

Day 2: The subject is free from the effect of the sedatives. Although the principals in the case describe the subject as psychotic, suffering from delusions and megalomania, the clinical evidence does not fully support this diagnosis. In fact, the clinical signs seem to indicate that the subject is fully rational and in touch with reality. However, his claims that he is, in fact, a high-ranking officer in some shadowy paramilitary organization is consistent with some delusional structure. It would seem that these delusions are at such a deep level, and of such a profound degree, that his psyche has totally integrated them. This will be a very interesting case.

Day 3: We have run the first series of personality tapes, but the subject is fighting the process to a degree I have never seen. Despite the ethical breach involved, I have scanned the tapes, and they have set my doubts to rest. The tapes

describe the personality of one who has been a loyal executive of a major mercantile combine based in Coprates Chasm, Mars. The lifestyle such an executive would enjoy must be comfortable in the extreme. It strikes me as very unlikely that someone in Mr. January's position would willingly forego such a lifestyle. This reassures me that the background I received—describing a person who suffered a personality breakdown sufficient to cause the subject to flee his old life—is, in fact, correct. We will go to level two this evening.

Day 4: The subject has ceased to resist the process. The second set of personality tapes arrived today, and—since I have no further reason to doubt the good offices of my principals—I have run them without viewing them first. Complete success is just around the corner.

Day 4 (evening): The tapes have all been run and the subject seems to have totally integrated them. There was some emotional trauma when I explained to the subject the depths of his previous delusions and the actions he took based on them, but that quickly passed. I have no reason to delay in classifying this patient as cured.

Case Status: Closed.

Phases of the Moon

by Nigel D. Findley

You're heading toward Luna for a little R&R after your last mission for NEO. Thoughts of the pleasure domes drift through your mind as you gaze idly at the commo board. Your reverie is shattered by an unexpected message: a top secret, Code Omega, "squeal" transmission. There will be no questions asked—just take the mission and do it.

You quickly unscramble the transmission and watch the view-screen light up with the face of Commander Turabian. His look is grim as he relays his information.

"Colonel Willis January is defecting to RAM. That's right, *defecting*. Your mission is to intercept him, using whatever means necessary. The information he knows about NEO is vital and could destroy the organization. You didn't know it, but January was your commanding officer for your last mission. I don't have to tell

you what that means to your survival should he successfully defect to RAM."

A chill washes over you. Your life won't be worth a plugged credit if January pulls this off.

"By the way, Luna has offered January asylum until RAM agents pick him up. They won't take kindly to interference with their protection. You'll have to take care of the January problem and not antagonize the Lunar government at the same time."

The viewscreen goes black.

Phases of the Moon is a 32-page adventure for the XXVc™ role-playing game, designed for four to six characters of levels 4–7. You must own the XXVc science fiction role playing game rules in order to play this module.

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